Ethnicity and the negotiation of televisual meaning: A French case study

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ETHNICITY AND THE NEGOTIATION OF TELEVISUAL MEANING: 
A FRENCH CASE STUDY

by

JOANNA J. HELCKÉ

A Thesis
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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the relationship between ethnicity and television viewing in France by means of a case study focusing on the situation comedy *Fruits et Légumes*. The programme, which was partly financed by the French government via the Fonds d'Action Sociale (FAS), portrays the everyday life of an Algerian family living in France, and was intended to be a French version of *The Cosby Show*. The FAS was aiming to produce a television series that would not only reassure the French public about the "innocuous" nature of the Maghrebi population in France but would also encourage it to identify with an immigrant family. The present study set out to investigate the role of ethnicity in shaping viewers' perceptions of the programme and the extent to which *Fruits et Légumes* may have encouraged greater understanding among viewers of different ethnic origins.

A sample of 49 viewers was constructed so as to encompass three ethnic groups ("native" French people, those of Maghrebi origin and people originating from sub-Saharan/Central Africa), gender differences, two age groups (18 to 30 year olds and those over the age of 40), and two levels of education (those with less than a baccalauréat and those with university education). These respondents viewed a sample episode individually and then took part in one-to-one, in-depth interviews. Using Hall's three proposed reading positions - dominant, negotiated and oppositional in relation to the preferred meaning within the text - as a basic structure within which to analyse decodings of the episode, a further set of interpretive categories was evolved for the purposes of this study. Having classified viewer decodings of the programme, patterns in these readings were analysed, so as to ascertain whether there was a correlation between these distributions of decodings and respondents' ethnicity, gender, age or educational level.

It was found that nearly a third of all decodings diverged significantly from the preferred meaning. Numerous patterns amongst viewer responses were identified, and ethnicity was found to be the main variable shaping these interpretive
communities, although in certain instances gender, generation and educational level were the defining factors. These results do not imply, however, that ethnicity will invariably have the greatest influence on the decoding process, as it would seem probable that if the programme had been "non-ethnically marked", ethnicity would have shaped decodings to a lesser extent.
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Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases [...] if you prick us do we not bleed?

William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* (1596-97)

On dit "l'Arabe", "l'immigré", "l'Arabe", "le petit beur" alors qu'on est tous pareil, moi je dis qu'on est des gens égaux. [...] On a les mêmes doigts, on a les mêmes yeux, on a les mêmes mains.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: television audiences and ethnicity in France

1.1 Introduction

During the 1990s the debate about immigration and ethnic minorities in France has revolved increasingly around the concept of “integration”. The widespread though often ambiguous currency of this term in France is linked to problems associated with the settlement and social incorporation of minorities originating mainly in Third World countries. The degree to which minorities of immigrant origin are being incorporated (“integrated”) into French society, and the policy options best suited to achieving that end have been high on the political and academic agenda (Weil and Crowley, 1994). Effective incorporation of minority ethnic groups into the “receiving” society depends, in part, on the attitudes of the majority population. Television, the single most important source of information and entertainment for mass audiences, undoubtedly plays a significant role in shaping popular attitudes. To the extent that viewers of different ethnic origins shared, until relatively recently, a basically homogenous diet of programmes, national television had considerable potential for disseminating similar ideas and attitudes among the viewing public as a whole, thus contributing to the construction of the “imagined community” (Anderson 1990) that is the nation.

The Fonds d’action sociale (FAS), the principal public agency responsible for facilitating the “integration” of minority ethnic groups in France, has sought to harness the power of television by supporting programmes designed to improve inter-ethnic relations. The FAS’s concept of “integration” has often been ambiguous, oscillating between cultural assimilation on the one hand, and the mutual acceptance of differences on the other. Over the last 20 years, the FAS’s audiovisual policy vis-à-vis minority ethnic groups has evolved from the financing of programmes that catered specifically for the immigrant population - often with assimilationist tendencies - to
supporting programmes aimed at sensitizing the general public to the minority ethnic presence in France. In spite of the FAS's continuing interest in, and contribution towards the French televusual landscape, very little research has been conducted on its audiovisual policy. Such research as has been undertaken in this area (Humblot 1989, Hargreaves 1993) focuses mainly on the changes of emphasis in the FAS's policy, rather than on its impact on France's ethnically diverse viewing public.

In order to investigate the role of television in bridging ethnic divides within French society, I decided to undertake research on one of the FAS's biggest investments in recent years, the television sitcom *Fruits et Légumes*, featuring a family of Maghrebi origin living in France. As a co-financer of the series, the FAS had a number of aims, but its key objective was to encourage majority ethnic viewers to be more favourably disposed towards minority ethnic groups. How did viewers understand and react to *Fruits et Légumes*, and did they perceive the programme as the producers had intended? If so, can this, and other programmes help to develop a sense of community across ethnic divisions? In exploring these questions, I decided to use reception analysis methodologies.

Key features of the methodological approach and the overall structure of the thesis are outlined in the remainder of this section. The next two sections summarise the background to this research by means of a literature survey designed to situate the study in relation to existing knowledge about ethnic relations and the media in France, as well as to audience reception analysis within the field of media studies. The final section of this chapter gives a more detailed account of the methodology on which this thesis was based.

As a means of shedding light on the role of television in a multi-ethnic society, the present study examines the various phases in the communication process structuring *Fruits et Légumes*, from its making to the reception of a sample episode of the series among an ethnically diverse audience in France. The production process is analysed in detail in chapter 2, revealing the competing objectives of the various production partners, and the extent to which each party influenced the final version.
Annotated scripts for the series were collected, interviews with the different production partners conducted, and correspondence between the various parties acquired. Investigation of this information on the production process was combined with a systematic analysis of the broadcast version of the sitcom, in order to illuminate the complexities involved in the construction of meaning within the programme. Through this investigation, tensions - particularly surrounding the FAS's notion of "integration" - are uncovered within the encoded meanings of the series. As shown in chapter 2, the concept of "integration" has been used in many different and sometimes contradictory ways in the debate over public policy towards immigration. As a result of these shifting definitions of "integration", the FAS's encoded message in *Fruits et Légumes* is deeply ambiguous.

In order to investigate the extent to which the preferred meanings within *Fruits et Légumes* were successfully transmitted to an ethnically diverse audience, a sample of viewers was constructed on the basis of four variables: ethnicity, gender, generation and educational level. Ethnicity is a complex and contested term revolving around demarcations between social groups perceived as having distinct origins (Rex and Mason, 1986; Hutchinson and Smith, 1996). In the case of immigrant minorities, perceived ethnic boundaries are associated with distant territorial origins which are seen as defining distinct social communities characterized by significant cultural differences. Ethnic boundaries are by their very nature social constructions, not only because the features by which they are defined are culturally conditioned, but also because those features may exist more at the level of perception, than as objective realities. For the purposes of this research ethnic groups have been defined with reference to territorial origin, but it should not be inferred from this that these categories are to be regarded as rigidly bounded cultural communities. On the contrary, one of the main aims of this research is to investigate the extent to which perceived ethnic divisions may be cross cut or even outweighed by other factors. Whilst ethnicity was the main focus of the present research, the aim was to investigate the relative importance of this factor compared with the three other variables.
examined in the decoding process. In this way it was hoped to identify interpretive communities among the viewers, and to establish which of the variables shaped these interpretive communities to the greatest extent. The sample was constructed, therefore, in such a way that respondents' decodings of the episode could be compared systematically across the four parameters. The basic structure of the panel of respondents was developed around three main ethnic groups: "native" French people (understood in the present context as those whose parents and grandparents are French), people of Maghrebi origin and those originating from sub-Saharan/Central Africa. Within each of these three ethnic groups, two age-groups - people aged 18 to 30 years old and those over the age of 40 - and two levels of education - people with less than a baccalauréat and those having a minimum of two years of university education - were included, and within each of these sub-groups of respondents there was an equal number of men and women. Respondents viewed the episode of Fruits et Légumes chosen for the study within their homes, or in the case of some pupils, at college, and this was followed by in-depth, semi-structured interviews about the programme. The episode used for the reception analysis was chosen because of the important issues it broached regarding relations between the majority ethnic population and people of Maghrebi origin, as well as between first- and second-generation Maghrebs in France.

Interviews were transcribed so that viewer decodings of the programme could be analysed. Once transcribed, responses to each question were examined across the sample of viewers, and categories based on different types of response were gradually developed. Using Hall's encoding/decoding model (1973) as a basic structure, these categories of decodings were analysed in relation to preferred meanings identified through my analysis of the production process and the broadcast programmes. In this way, it was possible to map the extent to which viewer decodings either corresponded with or diverged from preferred meanings within the media text. These aspects of my findings are set out in chapter 3. The next analytical step was to investigate "clusters" (Morley 1992: 54) or groupings of decodings, and to see whether correlations could
be established between these distributions of decodings and the respondents’ ethnicity, gender, generation or educational level. Using this method it was possible to ascertain which parameter(s) shaped each cluster and, in turn, it could be seen which of the four variables had the greatest influence on the decoding process as a whole. The results of this analysis are examined in chapter 4. In the final part of the thesis, the general conclusions of the study are discussed in relation both to wider issues regarding the potential role of television in facilitating inter-ethnic relations, and the general field of reception analysis.

1.2 Ethnicity and the media in France

Until the early 1980s, immigration and ethnic relations in France attracted relatively little research. The few researchers active in this field were mainly concerned with economic aspects of the migratory process (labour market conditions, financial remittances, etc.), reflecting the primacy of (usually male) immigrant workers in the initial development of minority ethnic groups originating in the Third World. Since the 1970s, with the rise of family settlement and the emergence of immigration as a major issue in French politics, the volume and breadth of research dealing with minorities of recent immigrant origin has increased markedly. There is now a growing body of published work by scholars from a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds including political scientists, urban sociologists, historians, educationalists and students of literature (for overviews of published research, see Dubet (1989) and Babylone (1989)).

Among the many general surveys of immigration in France are Ogden and White (1989), Amar and Milza (1990), Hargreaves (1995) and Khellil (1991). In familiarizing myself with the background on ethnic relations in contemporary France, I drew not only on these and other general studies, but also on a range of more specialized works. On the demography of immigration these included INSEE (1996 and 1997) and Tribalat (1995 and 1996). Historical overviews of immigration in
France - such as Noiriel (1988) and Stora (1992) - were also drawn on. With reference to the politics of ethnic relations in France, Wihtol de Wenden (1991), Weil (1991) and Schnapper (1990) were some of the works that proved to be very useful. Works focusing on the cultural aspects of immigration in France were of particular relevance when analysing viewer responses to *Fruits et Légumes*. On the issue of Islam in France, for example, these included Etienne (1989), Kepel (1987) and Gaspard and Khosrohavar (1995).

Despite the growing body of work on these and other aspects of immigration in France, research on the relationship between immigration and the media is still very patchy. In particular, there has been very little work on the role of ethnicity in the reception of media texts. The overwhelming majority of media research relating to immigration in France has focused on the representation of immigrants and ethnic minorities in media texts. This tendency is apparent in the titles of special journal issues such as those produced by *Migrants-Formation* (1990) and *Mscope* (1993). Very little work has been done on the role of ethnicity in media production and reception processes. The press has also received rather more attention than the cinema or electronic media such as radio and television. Yet television is by far the most widely consumed of the mass media. In attempting to study the role of the media in shaping inter-ethnic perceptions, there is therefore a strong case for focusing on television.

Early work on the media was fostered during the 1970s by the Centre d'Informations et d'Etudes sur les Migrations (CIEM), now known as the Centre d'Informations et d'Etudes sur les Migrations Internationales (CIEMI), whose monthly Newsletter, *Presse et immigrés en France*, drew on a large collection of newspaper cuttings to provide a commentary on press representations of immigration and related matters. *Presse et immigrés en France* was replaced in 1989 by the bi-monthly *Migrations société*, which still includes regular surveys of press coverage. Although well documented, most of the press surveys published in these journals are fairly impressionistic in nature. The emphasis is on providing rapid syntheses and
commentaries on press coverage of current events rather than investigating systematically a media corpus using rigorous analytical methods. Hames (1989), Champagne (1991) and Battegay and Boubaker (1993) also adopt fairly loose narrative approaches to a range of case studies, drawing mainly on press sources.

More methodologically rigorous studies of the press have been carried out by Seguret (1981), Hourant et al (1986), Bonnafous (1991), Lavergne and Siblot (1993) and Gastaut (1994), using a variety of content and discourse analysis methods. Valuable but isolated research on news production processes has been conducted by Giroud, and Villain (1995). Polac (1991) offers rare insights into the work of minority ethnic journalists. With the exception of Allouche (1994), there has been practically no research on newspaper readership among particular ethnic groups.


The preponderance of studies of media representations, rather than media production or consumption studies, would seem to be due to at least two main factors: firstly, obtaining media texts (public by definition) is easier than accessing media production processes (requiring special authorisation) or media reception (in the heads of audiences); secondly, it was widely assumed until relatively recently that media images are "passively" consumed and internalised by the audience. However, as is discussed in the following section, reception studies such as Morley's *Nationwide audience: structure and decoding* (1980) and Ang's *Watching Dallas: soap opera and the melodramatic imagination* (1985) have shown that audiences actively read media texts in ways not necessarily intended by the programme-makers. In particular, it is far from certain that people from different ethnic backgrounds will view programmes identically and be moulded by them into a single, unified and shared (national) consciousness. Studies such as Liebes and Katz's research into
cross-cultural readings of *Dallas* (1990), for example, have highlighted significant differences of interpretation along ethnic divisions.

There has so far been very little audience research throwing light on the role of ethnicity in shaping viewers' perceptions of television broadcasting in France. Standard audience measurement panels used for charting nationwide viewing patterns make no special provision for minority ethnic groups. While variables such as age, gender and socio-professional status are taken into account by organisations such as Médiamétrie in setting up panels and analysing viewing habits, audience surveys of this kind yield no information on the pertinence of ethnic differences. A handful of small-scale studies have investigated programme preferences among Maghrebis (Chaabaoui 1989, Hargreaves and Mahdjoub 1997), Asians (Raulin 1990), West Africans (Diop and Ba 1994) and Turks (Gokalp et al. 1997). There has, however, been no attempt to conduct a comparative investigation of the influence of ethnicity in the decoding of specific programmes.

**1.3 Audience research**

In spite of a marked absence of research on ethnicity and television audience reception in France, elsewhere, reception analysis - including work on ethnicity as a factor in subjectivity - has been a fertile area of research, and a source of much debate concerning different approaches and methodologies.Whilst it is commonly acknowledged that David Morley's work on the *Nationwide* audience (1980) was groundbreaking and significantly changed the focus of audience research (Fiske 1987, Jensen 1991, Moores 1993, Price 1993, Boyd-Barrett 1995), there would appear to be less consensus among media theorists surrounding the evolution of audience research prior to Morley's application of Hall's encoding/decoding model (1973). Thus, on the one hand, Jensen and Rosengren (1990) distinguish five traditions of audience research - effects, uses and gratifications, literary criticism, cultural studies and reception analysis - whilst on the other hand, McQuail (1994)
divides approaches to audience research into three main traditions: the structural, behavioural and social-cultural traditions. Yet again, Morley (1992) states that prior to the "interpretative paradigm" (which was, to a large extent, launched by his analysis of viewer decodings or interpretations of the Nationwide programme) mainstream research was dominated by one basic conceptual approach - the "normative" paradigm - and he distinguishes a number of shifts within this tradition. Rather than producing an exhaustive chronicle of the various dynamics in audience research since the early part of this century, this section highlights a number of significant changes that have occurred, focusing in particular on the most recent addition to audience research approaches: "reception analysis" (Ang 1995) which "has attempted to grasp communication [...] in terms of social meanings" (Morley 1992: 47). It is within this latest approach that the present study of audiences and ethnicity is situated.

A key question that has always been at the centre of communications research is whether media messages have effects on viewers (Moores 1993). The Frankfurt School was one of the earliest proponents of the view that the audience was like a patient receiving a syringe-full of influential media messages. This premise was based on what is often called the School's "pessimistic mass society thesis", reflecting the disintegration of German society into Fascism, a breakdown which was attributed, at least in part, "to the loosening of traditional ties and structures, leaving people atomized and exposed to external influences, especially to the pressure of the mass propaganda of powerful leaders, the most effective agency of which was the mass media" (Morley 1992: 45). As a result of this "hypodermic" conceptualization of the communication process, the Frankfurt School's main preoccupation tended to be with the text which was seen as the site of meaning (Jensen 1991).

In response to this view of the audience as passive and ideologically manipulated by the media, American researchers - who agreed, in broad terms, that the media had effects, but were neither convinced that this influence was all-powerful,  

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1 Morley refers to broadly the same types of approach as the "interpretative paradigm" (1992), which in turn, is part of what McQuail calls the "social-cultural tradition" (1994).
nor that it was in any way direct - attempted to put this theory to the test by developing empirical research (see, for example, Blumer 1933, Peterson and Thurstone 1933, and Lazarsfeld et al. 1944). Much of this early effects research was of a semi-experimental nature, in which viewers were exposed to certain types of televisual content (often portrayals of violence), in an attempt to assess the possible (harmful) effects of media on the audience's behaviour (see Blumer and Hauser 1933; for a later survey of these developments see McQuail 1994). This American "behaviourist" tradition largely dominated the field of communication research from the 1930s to the 1960s.

Despite this tendency to focus on the possible effects of the media, a number of alternative approaches were developed during the same period. One of the leading perspectives was the "functionalist" approach (described in Howitt 1982, Jensen 1991, Morley 1989, McQuail 1994) which concentrated on the general functions of the media for society as a whole, as well as for individual viewers (see Lasswell 1948, for example). Attempts were made by researchers to interpret both the motives behind audience choices of programmes, and the needs that television viewing fulfilled. These types of concerns re-emerged at a later date in "uses and gratifications" research and this approach was hailed as the way forward for enquiry into mass communications (for critical evaluations see Ang 1995 and Morley 1992). Underlying this model is the idea that the audience is active (as opposed to the perception among early effects researchers of the viewer as passive), choosing what to watch in terms of the gratifications that will be derived from a particular programme (see Blumler 1979). Certain studies, however (for example, Goodhart et al. 1975), provided strong evidence of habitual, unselective media use. The approach also emphasized the fact that different viewers may use and interpret a programme in ways not expected or intended by the producers. Thus, the questions being asked no longer revolved around what the media do to the audience, but what viewers do to the media (Moores 1993). Much of the empirical research in this tradition takes the form of questionnaires that viewers are asked to complete, on why they watch certain programmes, and over the
years, these studies have highlighted a relatively consistent pattern in terms of the reasons that members of the audience mention (see Edelstein et al. 1989, McQuail 1994, and Ang 1995 for further details).

In spite of the success that this approach has had in mapping the reasons why people choose to watch certain programmes, a number of criticisms have been leveled at the uses and gratifications tradition by theorists such as McQuail, Ang, Hall and Morley. Whilst not all the problems that have been identified with this tradition will be discussed here, two criticisms in particular, would seem relevant in terms of the approach used in the present reception analysis. Firstly, as McQuail, Ang and Morley point out, the uses and gratifications approach examines individual uses of the media from a psychological perspective that is dissociated from the social situation of the viewers. In other words, the audience is conceived of as "an atomized mass of individuals [...] abstracted from the groups and subcultures which provide a framework of meaning for their activities" (Morley 1992: 53). As will be seen in the following section, the approach used in this particular study of audiences and ethnicity attempts to situate viewers within the socio-cultural frameworks that inform them as an audience. A second problem identified with the uses and gratifications model is its tendency to perceive the media message as being equally open to any interpretation, when according to Hall, "connotative codes are not equal among themselves" and the message is "structured in dominance" by the programme-makers' "preferred reading" (Hall 1973: 13). Similarly, Morley points out that the encoding process by the producer(s) "exerts [...] an 'over-determining' effect [...] on the succeeding moments in the communicative chain" and that as a result, the assumption within the uses and gratifications perspective "of an unstructured mass of 'differential interpretations'" is fundamentally flawed (Morley 1992: 52). As will be highlighted in chapter 2, the producers of *Fruits et Légumes*, the sitcom used as a basis for this reception analysis, clearly preferred certain meanings and messages over others.

Towards the end of the 1960s, and parallel to the uses and gratifications approach, an alternative "critical" paradigm was formed. This approach was
characterized by a move from a behavioural perspective (both effects, and uses and gratifications research focused on the behaviour of audiences) to an ideological focus, deriving its philosophical inspiration from Marxism and drawing on a number of theoretical disciplines, such as linguistics, semiotics and psychoanalysis (discussed in Hall 1988, Ang 1989). During the 1970s, the critical tradition was largely preoccupied with the media text as the source of meaning, and Moores (1993) argues that in some ways this approach was rather similar to that of the "pessimistic mass society thesis" of the Frankfurt School, which, as discussed above, perceived the audience as prisoners of the text. Critics of this approach often attacked theoretical discussions on films and film viewers in the British journal *Screen* as excessively text-oriented (see Ang 1989, Jensen 1991, Moores 1992, Morley 1992 for critical discussions).

Towards the end of the 1970s, members of the Media Group at Birmingham University's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies - Hall and Morley in particular - took issue with "screen theory", arguing that whilst the text clearly had the power to prefer certain meanings over others, readers are active interpreters who will not necessarily accept these "privileged" meanings. They went on to point out that the social and cultural frames of reference of the viewer will inform and shape decodings (Lull 1991, Moores 1993, Ang 1989). Thus, Hall's encoding/decoding model marked a move away from *Screen* 's "tyrannical textual preoccupation" (Silverstone 1994: 142). This focus on the audience as active may, in some ways, appear to be a shift in the direction of the uses and gratifications view of the audience as actively choosing what programmes to watch, and interpreting these programmes in ways unintended by the producers. However, a fundamental difference is that the encoding/decoding model has been used by Morley and others to focus on groups of viewers who share "a cultural orientation towards decoding messages in a particular way" (Morley 1992: 54), rather than individual interpretations of text analysed from a psychological perspective.
Hall's seminal paper on the encoding/decoding model (1973), which informed Morley's study of viewer interpretations of the *Nationwide* news magazine, conceptualized both the production, text and reception of the television message. According to Hall, a "raw" event cannot be transmitted by a television news-cast to the audience in that form: first, it must "be made to mean" (Moores 1992: 144). In other words, through a process of encoding, the event is constructed as "meaningful discourse", and becomes a "story" (Hall 1973: 2). Central to Hall's model is the idea that "the codes of encoding and decoding may not be perfectly symmetrical" (Hall 1973: 4). Hall saw this potential for asymmetry between encoding and decoding as a consequence, on the one hand, of the fact that television texts are always open to more than one possible reading - they are, in other words, polysemic - and, on the other hand, of the fact that the audience may decode the message in what Eco (1972) called "aberrant ways". With regard to the polysemic nature of the text, Hall asserted that polysemy must not be seen as synonymous with total indeterminacy "because there exists a pattern of 'preferred readings'" (Hall 1993: 98). Thus, the text is not open to be read in any way that the viewer chooses, as "encoding will have the effect of constructing some of the limits and parameters within which decodings will operate" (Hall 1993: 100). However, Hall went on to point out that there is no guarantee that the preferred meanings within a television text will be successfully communicated to the viewer. This leads one to the issue of aberrant readings - the second reason Hall identified for a possible lack of symmetry between encoding and decoding. Hall warned that aberrant decodings must not be confused with the concept of "selective perception" whereby viewers are seen to produce purely individual, random readings. He claimed that decoding "patterns exhibit, across individual variants, significant clusterings" (Hall 1993: 100). In other words, as Nightingale suggests, "Hall's model allowed [...] for communication to be understood as an act of community, as group action, or as culture speaking through the work and leisure practices of ordinary people in community" (Nightingale 1996: 30).
The encoding/decoding model was developed from a Marxist perspective, whereby the encoding process was perceived as hegemonic, and the television message was seen to support what Hall referred to as "the dominant cultural order" (Hall 1973: 13). He defined this order as the way in which "any society/culture tends, with varying degrees of closure, to impose [...] its classifications of the social and cultural and political world, upon its members" (1973: 13). Within this context, therefore, the television message was politicized, and the "preferred" or "dominant" meanings in the media text were seen to have the "institutional/political/ideological order imprinted in them" (1973: 13). Class was the main analytical concept in Hall's encoding/decoding model, hence the initial focus on working-class audiences in empirical reception studies (Nightingale 1996: 26-27). From this standpoint, Hall elaborated three hypothetical decoding positions that were based on Parkin's notion of "value/meaning systems" (Parkin 1971: 79-102). Parkin (who identified three value systems: dominant, subordinate and radical) argued that "values are much more likely to flow in a 'downward' than an 'upward' direction" (Parkin 1971: 81) and that, therefore, whilst the dominant value system will find adherents among working-class communities, values originating within the latter group will find little acceptance within the "dominant class". Thus, according to Parkin, whilst class may be a broad indicator of the meaning system to which an individual is likely to adhere, it is not a guarantee of this (Nightingale 1996: 37). Hall transformed Parkin's meaning systems into decoding positions that were structured in relation to the discourse in the media text (this discourse being seen to embody the "dominant cultural order").

In the first decoding position, which Hall termed the "dominant-hegemonic position" (Hall 1993: 101), the viewer accepts the preferred reading and has, therefore, interpreted the message within the "dominant code". The second position Hall identified is the "negotiated code", which "contains a mixture of adaptive and oppositional elements" (1993: 102). In this instance, the viewer decodes, to a large extent, within the dominant code, whilst at the same time operating "with exceptions to the rule" (1993:102). Finally, Hall proposed a third, "oppositional position", where
the viewer decodes the message "in a globally contrary way" (1993: 103). In proposing this model, Hall moved the debate beyond the notion of "effects", and opened the way to conceptualizing "audiences as communities within social/discursive formations" (Nightingale 1996: 38).

Thus, the encoding/decoding model, encompassing the concept of "differential readings", ushered in a new era of audience research which set out to explore both textual production and audience response. This new approach, which is now generally referred to as "reception analysis" (Jensen 1991, McQuail 1994, Ang 1995), investigates - through empirical, qualitative research - the extent to which "individual readings [of television texts] are patterned into cultural structures and clusters" (Morley 1992: 54). In other words, rather than examining the ways in which isolated individuals interpret texts (as in the case of the uses and gratifications tradition), reception analysis attempts to identify what some researchers refer to as "interpretive communities"2: groups of viewers who decode texts in a similar way. Thus, the role of the reception researcher is to examine the "social production of meaning" (Jensen 1991: 137), that is, how people in their social and cultural contexts make sense of television messages. As will be discussed in the following section, the present analysis of ethnicity and viewer decodings of television texts is situated within this approach.

Whilst reception analysis is a relatively recent area of inquiry, Jensen has identified within it three main phases of research (1991: 138-9). Early reception analysis, which was launched by Morley's landmark study of viewer interpretations of the Nationwide news magazine (Morley 1980), sought to apply the encoding/decoding model as defined by Hall (1973). Thus, the focus was on factual programmes such as the news, "preferred" meanings were defined in terms of the dominant ideology, and attempts were made to link decodings to the audience's economic class position. A second area of research was concerned with women as

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2 Janice Radway (1987) took the literary critic, Stanley Fish's (1980) notion of "interpretive communities" as a starting point for her empirical research into how women "read" or interpret romance novels. It should be noted that some theorists, such as McQuail (1994: 54) refer to "interpretative communities", but that in this study Radway's term "interpretive" is used.
viewers, and with so-called "feminine" genres, such as the soap opera (Hobson 1982) and the romance novel (Radway 1984). In these studies, the focus shifted from the question of ideology to the issue of pleasure and women's individual resistance through these genres. Finally, more recent research has examined the reception of television texts according to ethnicity (Liebes and Katz 1990, Bobo 1995).

The notion in reception analysis of "differential decodings" shaped by the social and cultural positions of the viewer, has proved to be a breakthrough in audience research (Moores 1993, McQuail 1994). On the one hand, the media text is no longer seen as all-powerful (as in the case of early "effects" research and screen theory), and on the other hand, audience activity is now understood to be structured by complex frames of shared references that inform viewers (unlike uses and gratifications researchers who perceived the audience as atomized individuals). Whilst previous approaches tended to focus on either the text or the audience, reception analysis combines these two areas of research. As Jensen points out, the underlying assumption in reception analysis is "that there can be no 'effects' without 'meaning'" (1991: 134). Thus, the struggle over meaning between text and reader lies at the heart of this approach.

In spite of the clear conceptual advances made by this approach, a number of theorists have been critical of reception analysis. One of the most vociferous critics of the "new audience research" has been James Curran. His concerns regarding reception analysis - which he refers to as "new revisionism" - are two-fold: on the one hand, he accuses "new revisionists" of merely reinventing the wheel, and on the other hand, he argues that reception researchers place too great an emphasis on audience autonomy, thus implying that the media have only limited influence (Curran 1990: 135-164, 1995: 505-510). To bolster his first observation, Curran points to a number of studies predating reception analysis which focused on the need to interpret media messages within their social and cultural contexts. Morley strongly counters this criticism by asserting that Curran has the gift of "20/20 vision-in-hindsight" (1992: 23). In other words, Morley contends that it is only in the light of reception analysis that it is now
possible to reassess the importance of certain early audience studies. Regarding the second problem with reception analysis that Curran identifies - that the issue of audience activity has obscured that of media power - Ang maintains that an active audience is not synonymous with a powerful audience (Ang, 1994) and that, therefore, the focus in reception analysis on differential readings does not necessarily indicate a move away from the question of media power.

John Corner, like Curran, also expresses concern regarding certain work in the field of reception studies which he perceives as over-emphasizing, on the one hand, the polysemic qualities of the media text, and on the other hand, audience freedom in decoding (Corner 1991). In his critique, Corner refers in particular to John Fiske's notion of a "semiotic democracy" (Fiske 1994: 95), which, in his opinion, underestimates textual determinacy. Fiske's approach has also come under fire from Morley who asserts that his (Fiske's) understanding of the encoding/decoding model fails to take on board the importance of "preferred meanings" within the media text (1992: 27). As will be seen in chapters 2 and 3, the various production partners of Fruits et Légumes certainly attempted - with varying degrees of success - to privilege certain meanings whilst suppressing others during the making of the series. Clearly, the concept of a "preferred meaning" is central to Hall's model and to reception studies using this model as a springboard for examining viewer interpretations of media texts.

Finally, before moving on to examine six key audience studies that were drawn on when developing this research, it should be noted that in recent years a new area of inquiry into audiences has grown out of the reception analysis tradition. This latest approach focuses on the contexts - usually domestic - within which media consumption occurs (McQuail 1994, Ang 1995). It investigates "family viewing [...] as a dynamic set of cultural practices" (Moores 1993: 31), and points to the fact that "the use of television cannot be separated from everything else that is going on around it" (Morley and Silverstone quoted in Ang 1996a: 249). Thus, this approach sees television viewing as an activity that is "embedded" within the myriad practices of everyday life (Moores 1993: 8, Gillespie 1995: 54, Morley and Silverstone quoted..."
in Ang 1996a: 250). Studies conducted from this perspective (such as Ang 1996b and Morley 1986) explore what some researchers refer to as "the politics of the living room" (Moores 1993: 8, Ang 1995: 216), that is, the power relations within the home, across gender divisions and generations.

This approach too has its critics, especially regarding modes of enquiry and the definitions surrounding these methods. Whilst it would be inappropriate to go into the full details of the debate surrounding this latest area of research - as it is with reception analysis that this study is concerned - it would seem necessary to briefly point to the controversy surrounding the use of the term "ethnographic" to define the methodologies used both in reception analysis and research into television within the domestic context. A number of theorists, including Fiske (1987) and Moores (1993), refer to reception studies conducted in the 1980s (such as Morley 1980, Hobson 1982, Ang 1985) and research on television within the family (Morley 1986) as examples of the use of ethnographic modes of enquiry (Nightingale 1989). This assertion is, however, rejected by researchers such as Nightingale (1996) and Gillespie (1995) who are of the opinion that in-depth/group interviews (Morley 1980), letters written by viewers (Ang 1985) and short-term participant observation (Hobson 1982), cannot be defined as ethnographic methodologies. As Nightingale points out, ethnography "has a life within the discipline of anthropology" (Nightingale 1996: 113-4), and ethnographic research within this discipline requires "intensive, long-term participant observation" (Gillespie 1995: 54). As will be seen in the following section, this particular reception study - which uses in-depth, semi-structured interviews as a method of collecting data - would almost certainly be referred to as ethnographic by Fiske and Moores. I would, however, concur with Nightingale and Gillespie that a study of this kind should not be termed "ethnographic" but rather, "qualitative", although as is discussed below, the approach used in this reception analysis is more fine-grained than many studies of audience decodings.

The remainder of this section focuses on six examples of audience research from the 1980s and 1990s which proved particularly instructive in developing the
approach used in this reception analysis. The first of these is Morley's *The 'Nationwide' audience: structuring and decoding* (1980), which attempted to empirically test Hall's encoding/decoding model. The five remaining studies are Hobson's *Crossroads: the drama of a soap opera* (1982), Radway's *Reading the romance* (1984, second edition 1987), Liebes and Katz's *The export of meaning: cross-cultural readings of Dallas* (1990), Jhally and Lewis's *Enlightened racism: The Cosby Show, audiences and the myth of the American dream* (1992), and Bobo's *Black women as cultural readers* (1995). Clearly, this list of reception analyses is by no means exhaustive, and other studies, such as Buckingham's *Public secrets: EastEnders and its audience* (1987) and Gillespie's *Television, ethnicity and cultural change* (1995), also proved useful when setting up this audience research. The six research projects examined here broadly fit into the three phases in reception analysis identified by Jensen (1991) and discussed above. Morley's project falls into the first phase, focusing on a factual genre - news - and attempting to link decodings to the class positions of the audience. Hobson's and Radway's studies can be classified as part of the second phase, concerned with women as viewers, and genres, such as the soap opera, often associated with women. Finally, Liebes and Katz's, Jhally and Lewis's and Bobo's reception analyses fit into the most recent group of studies focusing on ethnicity.

Morley's *Nationwide* research was the first empirical study to challenge *Screen*'s conceptualization of the text-reader relationship through the application of Hall's encoding/decoding model. There were two stages to this project. First, Morley and Brunsdon (1978) carried out an in-depth analysis of the series in order to disclose the preferred meanings within the programme. The series was examined as a whole, and an episode that was shown to viewers in the second stage of the research, was taken to be representative of the sum of all the episodes. Their analysis aimed, on the one hand, to reveal the ideologies present within the various themes broached in *Nationwide* (such as the family and the nation), and on the other hand, the production practices used to encourage viewers to accept the preferred meanings.
In the second stage of the project, Morley (1980) attempted to empirically test Hall's three hypothetical decoding positions - dominant, negotiated and oppositional. His research consisted of 29 group interviews that took place within the institutional settings from which the groups were drawn. Each group was made up of people from a similar socio-economic background, the idea being that it would then be possible to compare the various interpretations of Nationwide both across these different groups and in relation to the "preferred meanings" identified within the programme by Morley and Brunsdon. Morley discovered that the viewers did not necessarily read Nationwide in the same way as the researchers, and he then mapped the different groups' decodings of the programme in terms of their distance from the dominant meanings encoded (1980: 136). His study revealed that "social position in no way directly correlates with decodings" because "the apprentice groups, the trade union/shop stewards groups and the black F.E. student groups all share a common class position, but their decodings are inflected in different directions by the influence of the discourses and institutions in which they are situated" (1980: 137).

Although Morley's project remains probably the most influential reception analysis to date, a number of concerns have been voiced regarding the research. Not all these criticisms will be discussed here, although it would seem worth noting those relevant to the development of this particular study of audiences. One of the main limitations to Morley's work - which has been identified by Morley (1992: 125) himself - is the fact that he chose to concentrate on class, to the near exclusion of other variables such as gender, age or ethnicity. Because the groups of interviewees were formed in terms of predetermined socio-economic categories, systematic comparisons could only be made across class positions. A second point raised by critics is that no attempt was made in the project to take into account either the domestic context in which viewing usually occurs (Moores 1992: 146), or the personal histories of the interviewees involved in the research (Nightingale 1996: 68). As will be seen in the section on methodology below, these issues have, to varying degrees, been addressed in this reception analysis.
To a certain extent, Hobson's (1982) study of women who were regular viewers of the soap opera *Crossroads* addressed some of the problems identified in Morley's study of the *Nationwide* audience. Her project focused on women viewing the programme within the household setting. In so doing, her work emphasized the differences between viewing within the domestic context, and watching a programme in a room specifically set up for an academic study of audiences. Hobson's project - like Morley's - consisted of two main components. The first stage involved following the production process of *Crossroads* in detail. Thus, whilst Morley and Brunsdon analysed the text, Hobson followed the making of the series. However, Hobson's investigation of the production process was not so much aimed at revealing the preferred meanings within the soap opera, as at examining an internal struggle which was occurring at the time. This dispute was caused by the decision to eliminate the lead character, causing dissatisfaction among fans of the series. According to Nightingale, Hobson's focus on the power struggle between the producers and the audience was not an investigation of "a struggle [...] over textual meaning, but over production decision-making" (1996: 71).

The second stage in Hobson's research concerned the audience. Whilst Hobson does not specify how many women took part in her study, she does state that her methodology involved observing the women viewing *Crossroads* within their homes, and interviewing these women after the programme. In an attempt to ascertain what made the programme popular, most of the questions Hobson asked the viewers revolved around their likes and dislikes regarding the soap opera. Rather than examining the women's negotiations of meanings within the text, Hobson's study investigates their viewing practices and how these are intertwined with the daily routines of domestic life.

To a certain extent, Hobson's project could be classified as part of the current trend in audience research - that of seeing television viewing as an activity integrated into everyday life - rather than as reception analysis. Her decision not to examine the encoded meanings structuring the text, and her assertion that thirteen million viewers
means "thirteen million possible understandings of the programme" (1982: 136),
indicates a clear move away from Hall's notions of "preferred meanings" and
"clusterings" within the decodings. Clearly, whilst Hobson's approach addresses some
of the limitations identified in Morley's work - in particular his neglect of the context
of television consumption - a number of other criticisms can be levelled at the
Crossroads study. Firstly, in the same way that Morley's reception analysis was
criticized for focusing almost exclusively on class, Hobson's study centres solely on
gender. A second problem is the lack of analysis of preferred meanings within
Crossroads. Although Hall's encoding/decoding model was elaborated with specific
reference to factual genres, this does not imply that other genres, such as the soap­
opera, do not embody preferred meanings. As McQuail points out "specific messages
are 'encoded', often in the form of established content genres (such as 'news', 'pop
music', 'sport reports', 'soap operas' [...])" (1994: 54), and it would seem probable that
a soap opera like Crossroads encoded significant ideological positions on matters
such as gender relations. However, these encoded textual meanings were not explored
because Hobson saw meaning as constructed essentially by the audience. As will be
discussed in chapter 2, in the case of the present study of ethnicity and audience
decodings, preferred meanings could certainly be identified within the sitcom used as
a basis for the research.

Whilst focusing on book reading rather than television viewing, Radway's
(1984) investigation of women who read romance novels is, in a number of ways,
similar to Hobson's research. Radway's study situated women's reading practices
within the family context, examining how they negotiate their household
commitments in order to give themselves the time to read and escape into the fictional
world of the romance novel. In the second edition of Reading the romance (1987),
Radway professed a similar theoretical position to that of Hobson. According to
Radway, there is no intrinsic meaning within the text, and there can be as many
interpretations as there are readers. However, where her stance differs from that of
Hobson is that, in her opinion, these interpretations of the text are grouped according
to the cultural competencies and social positions of the readers. Clearly, this approach is reminiscent of Hall's notion of "clusterings". As noted earlier, Radway developed this approach from Fish's concept of "interpretive communities". Thus, there were two main thrusts to Radway's project. On the one hand, Radway examined romance-reading as a means of escape from, and individual resistance to the daily routines of domestic life, and on the other hand, she attempted to correlate regularities in the interpretations of novels with socio-economic positions. The methodology used in Radway's study, consisted of group and one-to-one interviews with readers, observation of a shop specialising in romance novels, including informal chats with the owner of the shop, and written questionnaires sent to regular romance readers.

It is noteworthy that in the introduction to the second edition of Reading the romance (1987), Radway states that one of the criticisms that has been leveled at Morley's Nationwide project parallels objections against her own study, in that whilst Morley concentrated excessively on class, her project focuses exclusively on gender. She goes on to say that she would be particularly interested in exploring comparative readings of romance across age, class, "race" and gender, a point which has been taken on board in constructing the present study.

Liebes and Katz's (1990) project examines readings of Dallas in a number of countries - the U.S.A., Israel and Japan - as well as by four different ethnic groups in Israel (Russian immigrants, Arab Israelis, Moroccan settlers and second-generation Israelis in Kibbutzim). Their main aim was to investigate whether Dallas is viewed and interpreted in the same way by people across the world. As with Morley's study, there were two stages to their research: analysis of the media text, followed by an investigation of audience decodings of the programme. In view of the large amount of research already conducted on Dallas - see, for example, Ang's Watching Dallas: soap opera and the melodramatic imagination (1985) - Liebes and Katz examined other academics' analyses of the series, as well as producing their own reading of the soap opera.
The second stage of the project involved assembling small groups of friends and neighbours - all fans of *Dallas* - within each country, as well as within each of the four ethnic groups in Israel. These ethnically homogenous groups then viewed an episode of *Dallas* and discussed it in the presence of an interviewer who directed the conversation through a series of open-ended questions. The various groups of viewers watched different episodes of the series, and so audience interpretations of the programme concerned the overall meanings of the soap opera as opposed to readings of specific scenes within one particular episode. As will be discussed in the following section, it was decided during the elaboration of the present study of ethnicity and decodings that all interviewees would be shown and questioned about the same episode so that detailed comparisons could be made between viewer interpretations of particular scenes. In this way, it was hoped that it would be possible to capture decodings of the programme at the earliest point in the interpretative chain. In other words, this approach would maximise the chances of getting as close as possible to the "unadulterated" interpretations produced by viewers. Liebes and Katz's findings highlighted ethnicity-related regularities in the patterns of decodings. Their analysis distinguished between clusters of decodings produced by what they described as culturally "traditional" groups of viewers - Moroccan Jews and Arabs - and those, such as the kibbutzim groups, which they defined as less traditional.

Just as Morley's study can be criticized for focusing exclusively on class, and Hobson's and Radway's respective projects for centering solely on gender, Liebes and Katz's research can be criticised for concentrating purely on ethnicity. Their study does not differentiate between respondents by gender, age or educational level, although they acknowledge that "there is every reason to expect important differences along such dimensions as well" (1990: 22). Clearly, whilst a list of influencing factors does not stop at the four variables mentioned above\(^3\), one cannot assess the relative extent to which ethnicity moulds viewer interpretations of media texts without including other variables such as gender or age. One of the main purposes of the

\(^3\) See, for example, Fiske's list of "subjectivities" (1987).
present study is to examine not only the ways in which ethnicity shaped viewer decodings of *Fruits et Légumes* but also the *relative* influences of ethnicity, gender, generation and educational level.

Unlike Liebes and Katz's study which focuses exclusively on ethnicity, Jhally and Lewis's project includes both ethnicity and class, and to a lesser extent, gender. Their audience study examines the ways in which viewers interpret issues of "race" and class in the black American sitcom, *The Cosby Show*. The project also aims to explore how ethnicity, class and gender influence people's interpretations of the programme, and the sample of respondents was structured so as to examine these variables. Thus, interviews were conducted with small, ethnically-homogenous groups of people - 23 black groups and 27 white groups - and both sets of groups were subdivided in terms of their social class. Most groups also included men and women. Whereas in Liebes and Katz's research project respondents viewed different episodes of *Dallas*, in Jhally and Lewis's study viewers were required to watch a specific, pre-selected episode of *The Cosby Show*. This is similar to the approach used in the present study, where respondents viewed a sample episode of *Fruits et Légumes* which was taken to be representative of the series as a whole. As discussed above, the advantage of this approach is that detailed comparisons of decodings of specific scenes can be made across the sample of respondents.

Jhally and Lewis's analysis of audience readings consisted of four stages. The first stage focused on the media text which they divided into lexias (Barthes, 1974:13), or segments of meaning. Having broken up the episode into units of meaning they explored the ways in which the audience built up the programme through their own readings of the episode. They went on to analyse viewers' understandings of the overall meanings of the programme, an approach which was incorporated into the present study where respondents were asked to discuss what they thought the sample episode of *Fruits et Légumes* was about. In the final stage, Jhally and Lewis attempted to discover those resources of meaning that the viewers
drew from their cultural environment, in order to interpret the programme. In turn, responses were related to gender, ethnicity and class.

Their analysis of viewer decodings highlights the ambiguity of *The Cosby Show’*s message, as is suggested by the title of their book. Black viewers were divided in their reactions to the sitcom: on the one hand many were pleased to see positive representations of black Americans, whilst on the other hand, some were critical of the lack of socio-economic representativity of the Huxtables. A more disturbing finding was that, on watching *The Cosby Show*, a significant proportion of white viewers became convinced of the lack of racism in American society, thus denying that racism may still be present even if some black people achieve economic equality. Jhally and Lewis also explored readings of the sitcom across class divisions, and they found that white working class and lower middle class respondents were able to identify with the Huxtables and categorize them as "average" despite the fact that the Huxtables are clearly an affluent family.

Unlike the audience studies discussed above, Jhally and Lewis's project cannot be criticized for focusing uniquely on one variable. However, while in principle their research explores three variables - ethnicity, class and gender - it is noticeable that Jhally and Lewis put far greater emphasis on ethnicity and class, than they do on gender. This contrasts with the research design of the present study which puts equal emphasis on four variables, the aim being to evaluate the relative influences of these parameters on the decoding process.

Whilst Bobo's study deals with both ethnicity and gender, her approach and aims are, in a number of ways, very different from those of Jhally and Lewis. Bobo's research centres on black women as an interpretive community, exploring their responses to three very diverse films: *Waiting to exhale*, *Daughters of the Dust*, and *The Color Purple*. Thus, rather than comparing cross-ethnic interpretations of one particular media text, as in the case of Jhally and Lewis's project, Bobo focuses exclusively on one group of viewers - black women - exploring the ways in which they decode three films that represent black women in extremely different ways.
Whilst being concerned with the viewers' interpretations of the films, Bobo's study also concentrates very specifically on the ways in which the black women's readings of *The Color Purple* resist the predominant views within the film. She argues that their reconstruction of *The Color Purple*, filtering out the negative images within the film, is part of the tradition among black women to resist domination, from slavery through to today.

Bobo's research consisted of two main phases: formal analyses of the film texts as well as a review of media coverage of the films, followed by an investigation of responses to the three films. To this end, Bobo conducted group interviews with black women. In the case of *The Color Purple*, two groups watched the film and were interviewed. At the beginning of each interview Bobo asked the women whether they were religious, as she felt that religion was a key aspect of the film. With reference to this decision to enquire about the respondents' religious practices, Bobo stated that it "is important to go beyond a quick and superficial analysis of their statements and to consider their responses within the totality of their lives and within the full range of black women's past" (1995: 100). Clearly, this is an important point: people's interpretations of, and reactions to a text can only be understood within the context of the wide range of experiences that inform them. In line with this, in the present study respondents were asked a variety of questions regarding their lives, extending from education and employment through to politics and religion.

In the same way that Radway (1987) comments on her own decision to focus exclusively on gender, Bobo highlights her awareness of appearing "essentialist" and "reductive" by categorizing her respondents as "black women" (1995: 24). Morley, who was widely criticized for concentrating solely on class in his *Nationwide* project, defends Bobo's analysis against such criticisms, stating that "it is the great virtue of Bobo's work to offer us a clearly grounded analysis of the specificities of the responses of (at least some) Black women viewers to mainstream material of this kind" (1992: 16). In view of the fact that reception analyses have only recently begun to focus on questions of ethnicity, investigation of purely minority ethnic responses
to media texts is of particular interest with regard to groups - like black women - which have, until now, been largely ignored in analyses of media decodings. Like Bobo in the American context, in working on France's Maghrebi population the present study opens up a new area of investigation. In addition, rather than assuming that media readings produced by Maghrebis are necessarily specific to them as an ethnic group, this research goes beyond the methodology that Bobo applies, by also interviewing a sample of majority ethnic respondents. In this way, it is possible to bring out more clearly, features that are attributable to ethnicity.

The six reception studies examined above have been drawn on in a number of ways during the elaboration of the present research projet. Morley's use of Hall's encoding/decoding model in his analysis of audience responses to the Nationwide programme has been taken as a basic structure for examining viewer interpretations of Fruits et Légumes, although as will be seen in the following section and in chapter 3, the model has been greatly modified and expanded for this purpose. Like Morley, Radway, Liebes and Katz, Jhally and Lewis, and Bobo in their reception studies, this research analyses the media text as a reference point against which to assess viewer decodings. In addition, as in Hobson's project, data from the production side are also used in the present study. However, whereas Hobson followed the production process so as to examine a dispute concerning the decision to eliminate one of the central characters in Crossroads, data from the production of Fruits et Légumes are used to illuminate the completed media text. Radway's application and expansion of Fish's notion of "interpretive communities" is used here with reference to ethnicity. In the same way that Liebes and Katz examined cross-cultural decodings of Dallas, the present study analyses the reception of Fruits et Légumes across different ethnic groups (although only in one country). However, whilst Liebes and Katz focused exclusively on ethnicity, this reception analysis attempts to assess the relative influence of four variables - ethnicity, gender, age and educational level - on viewer interpretations of the programme. Jhally and Lewis's interview framework, pertaining to The Cosby Show, was used as a starting from which to construct the interview
questions relating specifically to *Fruits et Légumes*. Finally, Bobo's assertion that it is necessary to consider the viewers' "background, histories, and social and cultural experiences" (1995: 99) informed the elaboration of the set of questions that respondents were asked. Thus, interviews consisted of three main parts: questions regarding the programme, questions concerning the respondent's television viewing habits and general media consumption, and questions about the interviewee's background.

1.4 Methodology

Having outlined the main changes of approach in audience research throughout this century and examined the reception analysis tradition in some detail, in this section I focus on the methodology developed and used in the present study of ethnicity and viewer decodings of television texts. The research undertaken here investigates the ways in which ethnicity - and also gender, generation and educational level - shaped viewer interpretations of a sample episode of the French sitcom, *Fruits et Légumes*. By evaluating the relative influence of each of these four variables, interpretive communities are identified within the audience. Thus, using detailed analysis of viewer decodings, the study explores how the different variables unite groups of viewers at certain moments in the viewing process, only to divide them at others. By extension, the research illuminates the issue of whether television can help to unite socially and culturally diverse people through a common viewing experience.

In broad terms, the research design of the present study can be divided into three main phases: firstly, the methods used to analyse the media text so as to identify the preferred encoded meanings within the series, secondly, the techniques used to generate data on the reception of the programme among viewers, and finally, the methodology used to interpret the data collected on audience decodings of the episode. This three-tiered research design is very similar to Jensen's summary definition of reception methodologies which refers to "a comparative textual analysis
of media discourses and audience discourses, whose results are interpreted with emphatic reference to context, both the historical as well as cultural setting" (1991: 139). The following sub-sections examine the elaboration of the three stages of research, focusing both on the reasons for choosing certain methods rather than others, and on the problems encountered during the fieldwork and analysis. Thus, whilst the advantages of the present research design will be highlighted, so too will the limitations.

1.4.1 Encoding

Establishing the preferred meanings within a media text is not a simple task and, ultimately, it depends on the interpretation produced by the researcher. In the final analysis there can be no absolute test of scientific validity when attempting to uncover preferred meanings. It is from this perspective that Radway, in her introduction to the second edition of *Reading the Romance* (1987), acknowledges her feminism, saying that it has affected the way she evaluates readers' interpretations of romance books. During the analysis of *Fruits et Légumes*, the aim was to be as impartial as possible. It is nevertheless sensible to acknowledge that I not only have a particular interest in issues relating to ethnicity, but also an antiracist position which is closer to the British perspective on minority ethnic groups than to the French universalist approach. There were also many occasions during the analysis of the data when I was conscious of my position as a woman. Being aware of these potential subjectivities is, at least a partial safeguard against such problems. Moreover, as will be seen below, this study had the unusual advantage of being able to follow the entire production process, thus shedding light on the construction of meaning within the programme. Access to many different sources on *Fruits et Légumes* - interviews with the production partners, correspondence between the parties, annotated versions of the scripts, and so on - helped to ensure that any risk of error was minimalized.
It was seen in the previous section that most reception studies conduct in-depth analyses of the media text used as a basis for the audience research. The main objective of these analyses is to reveal preferred meanings encoded within the text, as well as the textual means used by the producers to privilege these meanings over others. It was also noted that Hobson went beyond analysing the finished product, that is, the programme that is broadcast, and followed the entire production process of the series that her research focused on. However, as was noted earlier, Hobson's detailed study of the making of Crossroads was not specifically aimed at uncovering the construction of meaning within an individual episode of the soap opera, but rather, at examining a dispute concerning the decision to eliminate a central character in the series. By contrast, the present study draws on production data alongside the finished product to illuminate preferred meanings within a specific episode of Fruits et Légumes. In this way, it is expected that a relatively complete picture of the construction of meaning within the text will be produced. A total of five main sources were drawn on to analyse the encoded meanings within the series: different versions of the scripts for the sitcom, written correspondence between the various production partners, interviews with these different parties, the broadcast version of the programme, and newspaper reviews of the series when it was first aired on France 3 (which has recently been renamed F3).

As will be seen in the next chapter, many of the scripts underwent numerous changes due to pressure from the various production partners, and as a result, there were two or three versions of most scripts. The writing of the series took a year to complete - from 1993 to 1994 - and during this period different versions of the scripts were collected for purposes of this research, and the changes analysed. The first version of each script also included annotations by the script editor and these notes proved revealing in terms of subsequent changes that were (or were not) made. Once the series had been broadcast on television and videotaped, comparative analyses between the various versions of the scripts and the finished product were conducted.

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4 Morley refers to these textual means as "signifying mechanisms" which promote certain meanings whilst suppressing others (1992: 21).
Written correspondence between the different production partners of the series was one of the most revealing sources of information in terms of the construction of meaning within *Fruits et Légumes*. Letters between the *Fonds d'action sociale* (FAS), which part-financed the sitcom, and the television production company, Cinétévé, highlighted the differing aims of these two parties. In this correspondence the FAS explicitly stated its objectives with regard to the programme, and commented on numerous scripts, as well as on specific scenes within some episodes. Access to these letters, as well as to the various versions of the scripts, together with analysis of the broadcast version of the programme, meant that it was possible to assess the extent to which the FAS and Cinétévé achieved their respective goals. Correspondence between the script-editor and the director of Cinétévé was also acquired, and this disclosed the fact that the script-editor's aims were not entirely consistent with those of the other production partners. Thus, analysis of the various letters sent between the parties revealed the different expectations that each production partner had, and in turn, this shed light on tensions that sometimes existed within the encoded meanings of *Fruits et Légumes*.

Interviews were conducted with the different production partners at various stages prior to, and during the making of the series, as well as after the programme had been broadcast. Thus, interviews spanned a five year period, from 1992 to 1997. The director of Cinétévé, Fabienne Servan-Schreiber, was interviewed both in 1992 when *Fruits et Légumes* was merely an idea and had not yet obtained financial backing, and in 1994\(^5\) when the sitcom was in the process of being produced. Similarly, Jean-François Barruel who was in charge of the project at the FAS, was interviewed at different moments during, and following the production of the series. Interviews with Henri de Turenne and Akli Tadjer, the two script-writers, were of particular importance because whilst having their own ideas and objectives regarding *Fruits et Légumes*, they were also subject to pressures from the other production partners.

\(^5\) Both these interviews were conducted by Professor Alec G. Hargreaves before work was started on the present thesis.
partners. By conducting interviews at different moments during the making of the programme, it was possible to ascertain what the various parties were trying to achieve and how these objectives may have shifted over the three year period from the initial idea for the series to when it was broadcast on France 3. Retrospective interviews were also carried out with the script-writers in 1997, nearly three years after the programme had been aired on television. These interviews were specifically concerned with the episode that was used as a basis for the reception analysis, and were conducted in the light of data collected on viewer decodings of the episode. Clearly, it is necessary to be aware of the fact that the scriptwriters may not have fully remembered the intricate details of scripting that particular episode. As a means of, at least partly, resolving this problem the scriptwriters viewed a video recording of the episode at the beginning of the interview. It is realized, however, that this was not a complete solution to the problem, although it almost certainly helped.

When the series was broadcast during the summer of 1994 it was videotaped so that each episode could be analysed and compared both with the different versions of scripts and with the objectives voiced in the correspondence and in the interviews held with the various production partners. In this way, it was possible to assess the extent to which each party influenced the overall shape of the sitcom. On the basis of this analysis of the finished product, one episode, entitled *La Composition française*, was chosen to be used for the audience research. This episode was analysed in-depth and, as will be seen in the following section, a series of open-ended questions based on the episode was constructed.

The final source to contribute towards a fuller understanding of *Fruits et Légumes* was the press coverage of the programme when it was aired on France 3. Articles written about the sitcom in a wide range of newspapers and magazines were examined so as to gauge the general media response to the series. In addition to this, the ratings figures of the sitcom were obtained, in order to assess the commercial success of the series.
All these sources of information were fed into the analysis of the encoded meanings within *Fruits et Légumes*. By following the production process in this way, tensions were revealed between the various partners with their respective agendas. As will be discussed in chapter 2, the analysis highlighted the fact that the different parties exerted pressure on the scriptwriters to modify certain aspects of the series. Thus, by following the making of *Fruits et Légumes* it was possible to investigate the influences shaping meanings within the programme. If the analysis of preferred meanings had focused exclusively on the media text, these tensions within the encoded meanings of the series would not have been fully disclosed.

1.4.2 Decoding

In reception analysis the generation of data on the audience side has tended to take the form of interviewing (either of individuals or groups) or participant observation, and this is sometimes backed up by written questionnaires. Thus, Morley conducted group interviews (1980), Hobson's study consisted of short-term participant observation and one-to-one interviews (1982), and Radway combined these methodological approaches and also included questionnaires (1987). More recent studies of audiences, such as Gillespie's *Television, ethnicity and cultural change* (1995) use ethnographic methodologies, such as long-term participant observation, so as acquire "naturally occurring data" (Silverman 1993). Clearly, all methods pose certain problems and the choice of methodology for any study is not only based on considerations of what would be the “ideal” approach, but also on practical issues such as the time and resources that are available for the research. Thus, Morley points out that the initial aim in the *Nationwide* project was to combine both one-to-one and group interviews but due to a lack of resources, only group interviews were conducted (1980: 33). As is discussed below, a similar methodological compromise had to be made in the present study. Within the practical constraints to which the research was subject, the choice made appeared to be the best for this particular project.
Sample

Liebes and Katz, in their analysis of the reception of *Dallas* among people of different ethnic origins (1990), constructed a sample of viewers on the basis of their ethnicity alone. Thus, they interviewed ethnically-homogenous groups of people, and in this way, it was possible to compare, systematically, the responses across these groups. Similarly, Morley built up a sample of groups based essentially on class, and each of these groups was expected to vary from "dominant" through to "oppositional" decodings of the programme. In both cases, therefore, the samples of respondents were constructed on the basis of one variable that was being tested. The other studies discussed in the previous section were very different, as the samples were not developed to test variations of interpretations between different groups of viewers. Bobo's (1995) sample, for example, consisted of only one interpretive community - black women - and her objective was, in part, to examine differences in their decodings of very diverse filmic representations of black women.

The present study differs significantly from any of those examined in the previous section. Whilst ethnicity is the main concern of this research, the sample was not constructed purely on the basis of this variable, as was the case in Liebes and Katz's project. The aim was to investigate the relative influences of ethnicity, gender, generation and educational level on the decoding process. In this way, it was hoped that it would be possible to reach a conclusion as to which shaped decodings of *Fruits et Légumes* to the greatest extent. Thus, the sample was constructed in such a way that it was possible to compare respondents' interpretations of the programme across all four variables.

In order to be able to compare responses across these variables, the sample had to include different ethnic groups, men and women, two age-groups, and two levels of education. The basic structure of the sample was developed around three main ethnic groups that are present in France: "native" French people (understood in
the present context as those whose parents and grandparents are French), people of Maghrebi origin, and those originating from sub-Saharan/Central Africa. However, as is discussed below, it was not possible to construct a complete sample across these three ethnic groups.

Within these three ethnic groups an equal number of men and women were required, as it was expected that significant differences of interpretation would be detected, both between men and women across the ethnic groups, and between men and women within each ethnic group. The sample also had to include two age-groups which, in broad terms, consisted of 18 to 30 year olds and those over the age of 40. The choice of these two age-brackets was intended to correspond with two generations within the minority ethnic groups: the first generation who spent their formative years in their respective countries of origin, and the second generation who were either born in France, or came to France at a very young age. As far as possible the aim was for respondents to be aged between 18 and 25 in the expectation that this would heighten contrasts with those aged 40 or over, but in a few cases, due to problems in finding respondents of the desired age (discussed later), people up to the age of 30 were included among younger respondents. With the inclusion of generation as a variable in the sample, each ethnic group was divided into two age-groups, and within each age-group there was an equal number of men and women. The possible influences of educational level were also explored in the study, and therefore, two levels of education were included in the sample: people with less than a baccalauréat, and those having a minimum of two years of university education. Thus, each ethnic group had an equal number of men and women, and these groups of men and women were divided into two generations, and in turn, these groups were sub-divided into two educational levels.

In order to build the sample in such a way that systematic comparisons could be made across the four variables, it was necessary to locate respondents that corresponded to each possible combination of the four parameters. Thus, a total of
24\(^5\) different "categories" of respondents were required for the study. In view of the fact that there was such a large number of combinations of variables, it was not possible to have many interviewees within each category. It was decided, therefore, to aim for a sample made up of three respondents per combination of variables, that is, a total of 72 (3 x 24) respondents. As will be seen, however, constructing the sample along such strict parameters proved so complex that whilst over 80 interviews were conducted, only 49 of these were eventually used in the reception analysis, which meant that some categories consisted of less than three respondents. Conversely, as interviews were obtained with more than three respondents in certain groups, some groups contain four interviewees.

The sample was constructed through contacts in France\(^6\) who helped in locating people fitting the requirements - in terms of variables - of the research. These initial contacts, as well as the early interviews conducted, acted as a springboard for finding further people who were willing to participate in the research. In this way the process snowballed, and it was possible to build up the sample. It was found that this method, whereby people asked friends to take part in the study, was very successful from the perspective of making respondents feel at ease during the interview. The majority of respondents had been reassured by friends who had already participated in the project that there was nothing to worry about and that the interview was quite entertaining\(^7\). A criticism that could be leveled at this method of building a sample is that respondents were likely to be from similar backgrounds because they were friends of other members of the panel of viewers. In defense it should be pointed out that a large number of contacts helped construct the sample, and these people came from very diverse backgrounds. However, in spite of the numerous people who assisted in locating respondents, it proved very difficult to find interviewees matching exactly the various combinations of parameters that were required. The main problem

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\(^{5}\) Four variables can be combined in 24 different ways.

\(^{6}\) Interviews were carried out in Paris, Lyon, and Montbéliard.

\(^{7}\) It should be noted, however, that respondents who had already taken part in the study were asked not to tell prospective interviewees what the subject-matter of the programme was, to guard against this prejudicing the results.
confronted when developing the sample was that whilst I had numerous connections with "native" French, and Maghrebi people, this was not the case with regard to people of sub-Saharan/Central African origin. In the time available it was not possible to build up a sufficiently wide network of contacts able to locate interviewees who both originated from this region and who fitted the different combinations of variables. In view of this difficulty and of the limited time and resources available for the research, it was decided that efforts should be channeled into completing all the necessary interviews with "native" French and Maghrebi respondents, as these two ethnic groups were essential to the research.

In spite of having a wide range of contacts among "native" French and Maghrebi people, other difficulties were encountered when setting up the panel of respondents. As discussed above, two age-groups were specified - 18 to 30 year olds and those over the age of 40 - and these were intended to correspond with first- and second-generation people within the minority ethnic groups. However, a number of people who appeared to match all the necessary variables, and who were willing to take part in the study, were discovered to be of the "wrong" generation in terms of the research. These people were men or women of Maghrebi origin with university education, and over the age of 40. They were not, however, first-generation Maghrebis as was necessary for the project, but second-generation people of Maghrebi origin who had grown up in France and were now in their 40s. Thus, they did not correspond to the combination of variables required to construct the sample and could not be legitimately included in the panel. Clearly, grouping their interpretations of the programme with those produced by first-generation Maghrebis over the age of 40 would not have been sensible.

This connects up with a further problem encountered during the construction of the sample. It was found that whilst certain categories of respondents were relatively easy to locate for the study - 18 to 30 year olds with a minimum of two years of university education, for example - others, such as first-generation Maghrebis with university education, were extremely hard to find. As a result, the main gaps in
The final sample used for the research are located within the latter group of people. The following figure summarizes the sample that was finally constructed and used as a basis for the reception analysis. It can be seen that whilst the "native" French panel was almost complete, a few gaps are to be found within the Maghrebi panel of viewers, although overall that sample is also relatively complete. On the other hand, it was not possible to establish a full sample of respondents originating from sub-Saharan/Central Africa. Consequently, the analysis of viewer decodings of *Fruits et Légumes* focuses on "native" French and Maghrebi viewers, although occasionally, clusters of decodings have been identified within the third ethnic group, and these are highlighted and discussed in Chapter 4.

**Figure 1.1: Sample of respondents used in reception analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories of respondents</th>
<th>&quot;Native&quot; French</th>
<th>Of Maghrebi origin</th>
<th>Of sub-Saharan/Central African origin</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-25 year old women with less than baccaulæat</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-25 year old women with a min. of two years of university education</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-25 year old men with less than baccaulæat</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-25 year old men with a min. of two years of university education</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women aged 40 or more with less than baccaulæat</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women aged 40 or more with a min. of two years of university education</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men aged 40 or more with less than baccaulæat</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men aged 40 or more with a min. of two years of university education</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The full list of respondents who participated in the study can be found in the bibliography (section 1.4.2). In the analysis and presentation of data all respondents were given an "identity code" in order to retain their anonymity. For full details of
this code, which is used throughout chapters 3 and 4 when respondents are quoted, see section 1.4.2 of the bibliography.

**Interviews**

Data for reception analyses are usually generated by conducting interviews or through participant observation (Jensen 1991: 139). Radway, as discussed above, also used written questionnaires in her study of romance-reading (1987). However, the use of questionnaires alone would be too inflexible a method for examining the subtleties of viewer decodings of particular scenes within a programme, partly because it does not allow for the possibility of seeking clarifications. Moreover, in terms of the present study, a significant proportion of the interviewees could not read or write French, and filling out a questionnaire would have been an impossible task. Thus, decisions regarding the methodology to be employed centred on issues concerning the specific type of interviews to be used, rather than the question of whether or not to collect data through interviewing as opposed to written data collection.

One of the first considerations was whether interviews should be one-to-one, or a combination of both group and one-to-one. Reception studies vary greatly in their choice of interview type. Whilst Jensen used one-to-one interviews in his study of viewer responses to Danish news (1991), Morley chose group interviews whilst professing that ideally he would have conducted both one-to-one and group interviews in his *Nationwide* project (1980). Within the context of the present reception analysis, a pilot study was conducted as a means of elucidating the issue. Prior to implementing the pilot study, it was already clear that in-depth, one-to-one interviews were essential because of the numerous variables being tested in the research. Liebes and Katz, for example, were only investigating the possible influences of one variable, ethnicity. It was, therefore, possible to conduct group interviews with ethnically-homogenous respondents. Similarly, Morley's interview groups were uniform in terms of socio-economic position. On the other hand, in the
present case it would have been both impossible and undesirable to create groups that were homogenous in terms of ethnicity, gender, generation and educational level. The question was, therefore, whether the one-to-one interviews should be accompanied by group interviews, and if so, what type of groups?

One of the aims of the pilot study was to test three interview options: one-to-one interviews, one-to-one interviews followed by group interviews with members of the families of the respondents, and finally, one-to-one interviews followed by group interviews with friends invited by the respondents. The study was conducted prior to the completion of Fruits et Légumes and so one episode of a similar type of sitcom, La Famille Ramdam, was used as a basis for the research. A total of 13 pilot interviews - divided between the three methods outlined above - were carried out. On the basis of the results obtained, and of the experience of conducting these interviews, a decision was made regarding the type of interview to be used for the main body of research.

The pilot study revealed a number of advantages and drawbacks with each of the three alternatives. In the case of one group interview with a family, for example, it was found that the wife corrected an inaccurate statement that her husband had made about himself during the one-to-one interview that he had previously given. The family group interview functioned, in other words, as a check on how frank the respondent participating in the one-to-one interview had been. On the other hand, during another group interview with a Maghrebi family, the daughters refused to discuss the programme in the presence of their father, and it was only when their father eventually left the room that they spoke freely about the episode. Whilst this is a situation that could also occur within a "native" French family, it would seem to point to the particularities of gender relations, as well as of generational hierarchies within many Maghrebi families. Thus, although family group interviews may be appropriate for some families, they are not necessarily helpful for others (unless the intention is to investigate, say, family structures within different cultures).
By contrast, interviews with groups of friends did not appear to produce such problems and the respondents were plainly at ease with each other. At a practical level, however, getting groups of friends together for an interview was a laborious task as everybody had to be available on a given day. Though mundane, this is an important point as fieldwork time was limited, and it had to be decided whether the effort of gathering groups together for interviews was worthwhile in terms of the overall aims of the research.

It was provisionally decided that whilst the priority was to locate respondents that matched the four variables required for the one-to-one interviews, attempts would also be made to conduct group interviews, with the respondents being allowed to decide whether they preferred family groups or groups of friends. However, it did not always prove possible to organise a group interview to accompany each one-to-one interview. It would not, therefore, have been possible to compare group interviews across the entire spectrum of the sample, and so the final decision was to focus the analysis solely on the in-depth, one-to-one interviews.

A further choice to be made concerned the structure of the interviews. Interviews can range from being highly predefined - where the wording and sequence of the questions are fixed and respondents' answers are allocated a specific time limit - to being completely open-ended, with interviewers giving little or no direction. The one-to-one interviews in the present research were semi-structured. Thus, each respondent was asked the same set of prespecified questions, but the sequence of these questions changed with each interview so as to maintain as "natural" a conversation as was possible in the given circumstances. If, for example, a respondent spontaneously discussed a particular scene, the prespecified questions relating to that scene would be asked at that point rather than at a later stage in the interview, even if this meant changing the order of the interview. A total of 80 questions had to be covered during the interview and these were memorized as questions on paper were found to be intrusive during the pilot study. It was noted that respondents would stop talking if the interviewer glanced down at the questions. An obvious disadvantage of
conducting the interview entirely by memory was that occasionally, questions were forgotten. In addition, respondents were sometimes asked the same question in a number of different ways. This was mainly done to overcome linguistic difficulties with some of the first-generation Maghrebi interviewees. Thus, if a question had not been understood in its initial form, it would be rephrased so as to aid comprehension. Care was taken, however, not to distort the underlying essence of that question. In keeping with the semi-directive interview, respondents could give answers that were as long or short as they liked, and could digress freely from the issue of the programme they had just watched. As a result, the length of interviews varied greatly, ranging from one and a half to over three hours. The semi-structured interview was deemed to be the most suitable option in terms of interview-types as it allowed respondents to focus on those aspects of the programme that were of particular interest and importance to them, whilst at the same time, guaranteeing that all questions were covered.

As discussed above, Bobo, in her study of black women as cultural readers (1995), commented on the necessity of interpreting respondents' decodings within the context of their social and cultural experiences and background. This is an approach that is shared by the present research, and to this end, the questions viewers were asked concerned not only the episode of *Fruits et Légumes* that they had watched but also their daily television viewing habits, and general information regarding their personal backgrounds. In terms of the questions asked about *La Composition française*, these were as open-ended as possible so as to encourage spontaneous responses and avoid predefining viewer decodings of the programme. Early questions - such as "c'était à propos de quoi cette émission?" - asked about general aspects of the programme, whilst later questions tended to be about specific incidents occurring within the episode. This sequence of questioning contrasts in significant respects to that used by Liebes and Katz who started with open-ended questions and gradually progressed through a series of more closed questions (1990). The aim in the present

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8 For details of the questionnaire that was used, see annex.
study was to use open-ended questions even when asking about particular scenes. In addition, while most of the reception studies discussed in the previous section centered on general questions about the programmes used in the research, requiring a process of post-viewing reflection by respondents, the present study specifically aimed to capture the most immediate and spontaneous level of decoding, focusing as far as possible on the moment of viewing itself.

Another issue that had to be considered when developing the research design concerned the location in which interviews were to take place. Whilst the present study does not aim to investigate the living room politics of television viewing - as does, for example, Ang's *Living room wars: rethinking media audiences for a postmodern world* (1996) - it was felt that, ideally, the viewing of the episode and the subsequent interviews should take place within the home, where people usually watch television. In this way, it was hoped that the methodology would be as "natural" as possible. Thus, the majority of interviews were conducted within people's homes, although a number of interviews with 18 to 30 year old respondents took place in the colleges they attended. This was done, however, at the specific request of the respondents who found it easier to organize the interviews within college, and who sometimes stated that they would feel more at ease without their parents present. In two separate instances, young men of Maghrebi origin stated that it would not be possible to interview them within their homes as it would be considered improper for a young woman to be invited home. This highlights the fact that whilst a particular methodology may appear ideal in theory, in practice numerous factors - in this case, cultural - have to be considered and a methodology cannot necessarily be applied uniformly and inflexibly. Clearly, it can be argued, as it has been with reference to Morley's *Nationwide* study in which viewing of the programme and subsequent interviews took place in further education colleges, that people watch programmes in different ways according to the context. Whilst this may be true - and it is partly for this reason that respondents in the present study were asked numerous questions about their viewing habits, as well as those of their families - it can equally be argued
that whether the viewing occurs within the home or elsewhere, the very presence of
the researcher will affect the situation in both instances.

This raises more general questions concerning the possible influences of the
interviewer on the research situation. Hobson acknowledges this problem in her study
of the Crossroads audience but goes on to state that she felt that her presence had
neither affected her respondents nor inhibited their comments (1982: 107). Similarly,
Buckingham, in his research on young viewers of EastEnders focused on the good
relationship that he had with the children he interviewed, denying that his presence in
any way influenced the interview situation (1987: 158-9). Whilst it is certainly of
crucial importance to put respondents at ease both during the viewing of the
programme and throughout the interview, it would seem unrealistic to suppose that
the quality of the relationship between interviewer and respondent can entirely
overcome the problem of the interviewer influencing the research situation. In the
case of the present study, such a wide variety of people (across different generations,
ethnic groups, genders and educational levels) were interviewed that it would be
unsustainable to suggest that the interviewer - a white, British woman - in no way
affected the situation. Liebes and Katz attempted to surmount a parallel difficulty in
their investigation of cross-cultural decodings of Dallas by using interviewers who
were of the same ethnic origin as the various groups of respondents (1990). This is,
however, only a partial solution as it does not cater for the possible influences of
gender (not to mention generation and other factors).

As will be seen in chapter 4, a small number of instances were detected in the
present research, where the interviewer's gender clearly affected viewer responses.
The most conspicuous such case concerned a scene in La Composition française
which made reference to women's lingerie. Viewers were asked their opinions of this
scene and it was found that there was a marked tendency for 18 to 30 year old men,
both "native" French and of Maghrebi origin, to skilfully avoid touching on the issue
of women's underwear. On the other hand, women in the same age group discussed
the scene openly. It would seem probable that this gendered difference in the
responses to the scene was caused by embarrassment on the part of the 18 to 30 year old men at having to broach such an issue in front of a woman of the same age as themselves. On the other hand, no specific instances were observed where the interviewer's ethnicity appeared to influence the research situation. On the contrary, given the sensitivity surrounding the issue of immigration in France, it was noted that the interviewer's status as not French but British, was frequently an advantage when conducting interviews both with "native" French respondents and with those of Maghrebi origin. It was found, for example, that viewers of Maghrebi origin spoke freely about France and "native" French people because the interviewer was not French and was, therefore, perceived as an outsider. Similarly, it was observed that "native" French respondents often assumed a lack of knowledge on the part of the interviewer about immigration in France. As a result, respondents did not appear to have been inhibited by the ethnic origin of the interviewer. Nor, as Bobo suggested within the context of her own research, did they seem to censor their comments (1995: 102).

1.4.3 Interpretation of data

Having generated raw data on the reception of La Composition française, the next stage was to analyse this in such a way that any clusters present in the patterns of decodings could be detected. To this end all the interviews were transcribed and, as in the case of Liebes and Katz’s study (1990), the first analytical step was to repeatedly read through all the transcripts. This procedure was necessary due to the fact that the questions based on the episode were open-ended, and so it could not be known in advance what shape viewer responses would take. Whilst using open-ended questions meant that analysis of the data was far more complex than if questions had been closed with pre-defined categories of responses, it was felt that the advantages of this approach - capturing spontaneous decodings produced by respondents - far

9 It should be noted that transcriptions of interviews include any grammatical errors that respondents may have made.
outweighed the disadvantages. However, as a result of using this methodology, analysing the data was a very long process.

Responses to each individual question were then examined across the entire sample. In this way, a series of categories of decodings were developed for each question that viewers were asked. These categories were based on similarities and differences detected in the ways in which interviewees had responded to a particular question. For example, when respondents were asked a very general question on what the programme was about (question 2), three main categories of response could be identified. Firstly, many viewers perceived the programme as being about the issue of "integration". A second group of respondents decoded the overall meaning of the episode in a slightly different way. In their view, La Composition française was about Maghrebis or Algerians in France. Finally, a small but significant number of interviewees stated that the programme was specifically about issues of identity among second-generation Maghrebis. In contrast to this particular question which produced three main clusters of responses, other questions led to a wider variety of decodings, whilst still others, produced a narrower range of responses.

Detecting categories of decodings among the responses to each question was never a straightforward task as the categories were rarely self-evident. It was generally necessary to go through a process of classifying and reclassifying responses in a number of different ways before a useful categorization was identified. In many cases, responses to questions appeared to be so completely different from each other that initially no meaningful categories could be established. In these instances it was frequently found that when the classification was approached from a different angle, significant clusters were detected among the responses. In particular, a basic distinction emerged between cognitive decodings (these being perceptions or understandings of a given aspect of the programme), and attitudinal decodings (expressed in reactions to a given aspect of the programme). In chapter 3, detailed discussion of viewer responses to La Composition française is structured around this basic differentiation between types of decodings. Through this long process of
analysis it was possible to successfully classify responses to most questions, although in a few instances no categories could be identified. In these cases it was usually discovered that the cause of the problem was that a "wrong" question had been asked about a particular scene or character in the programme. Thus, in one particular instance (see question 14) respondents were asked a question that was too vague, and as a result, answers were so diverse that it proved impossible to insert them into significant categories. By contrast, other more specific questions relating to the same scene (questions 15 to 22) produced a range of responses in which categories could be identified.

When responses had been classified in this way, Hall's encoding/decoding model (1973) was used as a basis to map the extent to which these categories of interpretations corresponded to, or diverged from the programme-makers' intended meanings. It was noted in the previous section that Hall's model was originally developed as a tool to investigate the dissemination and reception of news and current affairs programmes. From this perspective, preferred or dominant meanings within the media text were seen to support what Hall defined as "the dominant cultural order" (1973: 13). The three distinct decoding positions proposed by Hall - dominant, negotiated and oppositional - were structured in relation to these dominant meanings within the television text. Class was the key analytical concept in Hall's encoding/decoding model, and in Morley's empirical study of the Nationwide audience (1980). Whilst it is true that Hall's model is easiest to employ in the analysis of current affairs programmes, Morley argues that it is not as hard to apply to other genres as has been suggested by some critics such as Corner (Morley, 1992). Morley states that "given the hierarchies of discourse routinely offered in fictional texts, [...] it is clearly possible to transpose the model to [...] analysis [...] in the fictional realm" (1992: 21). However, he goes on to warn that it might not always be possible to establish the presence of preferred meanings within a fictional text (1992: 122).

Whilst Fruits et Légumes is a fictional series, it would seem to lend itself particularly well to analysis using Hall's notion of preferred meanings. As one of the
co-financers of the series, the FAS expected *Fruits et Légumes* to contribute towards its "integrationist" objectives. Thus, during the making of the sitcom, the FAS put considerable pressure on the other production-partners so as to ensure that the series embodied the FAS's specific social message. To this end, the FAS had a significant number of scenes and dialogues altered, and insisted on certain fundamental aspects running through the entire series. In short, *Fruits et Légumes* was more than just another French sitcom: it was a tool used by the FAS to further its objectives regarding minority ethnic groups in France. Within this context it is clear that the series had certain preferred meanings regarding inter-ethnic relations in France. Despite being fictional, therefore, the programme could legitimately be analysed in terms of preferred meanings.

It was noted above that according to Hall's model, preferred or dominant meanings are seen to have the "institutional/political/ideological order imprinted in them" (Hall, 1972: 13). It is argued in chapter 3, however, that this is not always true in the case of *Fruits et Légumes* because some of the meanings within the series clearly cut across what Hall refers to as the dominant cultural order. Thus, in the present study, rather than speaking of "dominant" meanings, it would seem more appropriate to use the term "preferred" meanings, these being the messages that the FAS, as well as the other production-partners, intended viewers to decode. Similarly, whilst Hall's first reading position is the dominant decoding - where the viewer is seen to be operating inside the dominant code - in the present study those decodings that correspond with the encoded message are more usefully described as being within the preferred meaning. Hall's second reading position, the negotiated decoding, refers to cases where the viewer largely decodes within the dominant meaning, while adding "a mixture of adaptive and oppositional elements" (Hall 1993: 102). In the present study, the concept of negotiated decoding is expanded and used as an umbrella term for a range of decoding types which diverge to varying degrees from the preferred meaning. Hall's third and final reading position is the oppositional decoding where, as noted in the previous section, the viewer interprets the message in
a contrary manner. Whilst the concept of the oppositional decoding is used in the present study, it differs from Hall's in that it is treated here as an extreme form of negotiated decoding. In all, five types of negotiated decodings are distinguished in the present study. Together with decodings within the preferred meaning and those close to it, this makes a total of seven reading positions.

Having organized viewer interpretations into the seven decoding positions developed from Hall's encoding/decoding model, the next analytical step was to investigate "clusters" of decodings, and to see whether correlations could be established between these distributions of decodings and the four variables - ethnicity, gender, generation and educational level - being tested. In other words, did certain specific "categories" of viewers produce these clustered decodings? At a simple level, for example, it might be found that in data for a particular question, all those respondents whose decodings belonged to a particular cluster were women. Thus, gender would be said to have shaped the decodings in that cluster. Having ascertained that gender was the influencing variable, it would then be necessary to attempt to explain why, at that point in the episode, that particular variable shaped viewer decodings. Through this process of analysis, it was possible to gradually build up a picture of which variables appeared to have had the greatest influence on viewer decodings of *La Composition française*. As will be seen in chapter 4, the completed picture was considerably more complex than had initially been expected. However, before discussing viewer interpretations of the episode, the following chapter examines in more detail the encoding process.
CHAPTER 2

Encoding: the production of Fruits et Légumes

2.1 Introduction

The first episode of the sitcom Fruits et Légumes was broadcast on the state-run channel France 3, on July 25, 1994. Behind the pictures on the screen lay three years of negotiations between the different production partners of the series, negotiations that significantly influenced the eventual shape of the programme. It was seen in chapter 1 that as a means of identifying the encoded message(s) that programme-makers intended to send to viewers, most audience reception studies conduct in-depth analyses of the media text being used in the research. It is rare for audience reception researchers to follow the production process of the programme. Yet an analysis limited to the broadcast version of Fruits et Légumes (or any other programme) cannot expose the complexities involved in the encoding of meanings within the programme, including the relative influences of different production partners in this process. Without this kind of understanding of the encoding process, it is much harder to evaluate the extent to which the encoded meanings of the episode have been successfully communicated to the audience. To provide a suitable basis for analysing decodings later, this chapter examines the construction of meaning within Fruits et Légumes through, on the one hand, an analysis of the production of the series - from the initial concept through to the scripting and eventual broadcasting of the programme - and, on the other hand, an analysis of the 26 episodes of the sitcom that were actually broadcast. What were the objectives of the various production partners? To what extent, and in what ways, did each of these parties succeed in influencing the overall shape of, and encoded meanings in Fruits et Légumes? These issues will be discussed through, firstly, an overview of the various production partners and their respective aims, secondly, an examination of their attempts to influence the programme during the writing of the scripts, and thirdly, an analysis of the broadcast
versions of the 26 episodes. In this way, the chapter will attempt to provide a thorough understanding of the encoded messages to which viewers were exposed.

2.2 Fruits et Légumes: a complex production partnership

Fruits et Légumes is not the first television series to have been inspired by the presence of people of Maghrebi origin in France. The soap-opera Sixième Gauche, produced by Cinétévé and broadcast on France 3 during the summer of 1990, was the first series to focus on France's Maghrebi population through the story of two neighbouring families, one French, and one of Algerian origin. However, it was not until the sitcom, La Famille Ramdam, which was broadcast on M6 during the winter of 1990-1991, that people of Maghrebi origin were the sole stars of a television series (Hargreaves: 1991). Whilst Fruits et Légumes is of the same genre as La Famille Ramdam - it is a sitcom and not a soap-opera - it was partly inspired by Sixième Gauche and produced by the same team of programme-makers.

Before tracing the way in which the initial concept for Fruits et Légumes developed into the series that was eventually broadcast, it may be helpful to comment on the television genre within which the programme is situated. Because they work within broad conventions structuring the general parameters of the media text, genres contribute to "the production of meaning by regulating the viewers' relation to the image and narrative construction for him or her" (Andrew quoted in McQuail, 1994: 264). Fruits et Légumes is a sitcom. The sitcom can be defined as a sub-category of the wider genre of comedy, which "is not just 'light' and 'amusing'" but is also marked "by a 'happy ending' and by its concern with the representation of 'everyday life'" (Neale and Krutnik, 1990:11). Sitcoms conform not only to this broad framework but also to a further set of formulae which are specific to this sub-genre. Thus, the sitcom is a comedy series lasting between 24 and 30 minutes - Fruits et Légumes lasts 26 minutes per episode - with regular characters and setting. Typically, the sitcom's narrative is structured around the disruption of a stable situation, requiring movement.
to re-establish stability but "whereas in the feature film narrative closure is marked by establishing an equilibrium which differs from that disrupted at the start, in the sitcom the end of the episode represents a return to the initial situation" (Neale and Krutnik, 1990: 234). In other words, the sitcom is based on circularity and the situation is never allowed to change. In the classic domestic sitcom, the situation consists of "an 'inside' which is a highly recognizable conception of the middle-class nuclear-family unit" and the plots either arise from conflicts within the family - which are treated as trivial - or from "intrusions from the 'outside' which can easily be rejected" (Neale and Krutnik, 1990: 237). In general, neighbours are an important part of the sitcom, forming "an 'outer circle' of the 'inside'", thus creating a link between the family unit and the outside world (Neale and Krutnik, 1990: 237).

*Fruits et Légumes* does, to a large extent, conform to these standard formulae regulating the sitcom genre. The Badaoui family at the focus of the series represents the tradition nuclear family unit (although they do adopt a teenager in one of the first episodes and he remains a part of the family throughout the series), and is relatively middle-class and comfortably off compared with most Maghrebis in France. The family's "outer circle" is made up of neighbours who come to do their shopping at the Badaouis' shop, and of the children's school friends. The Badaouis live through a variety of fairly trivial or mild family conflicts and most disruptions from the outside world are treated in a light-hearted manner. As will be discussed in the following section, this was a contentious point during the production process, as the FAS expected the series to deal with serious issues regarding ethnic relations in France, whilst the authors insisted that the sitcom genre is not suited to dealing with serious situations.

A further important point regarding the sitcom genre is that, in general, it is "concerned with reaffirming cultural identity, with demarcating an 'inside', a community of interests and values, and localizing contrary or oppositional values as an 'outside'" (Swanson, quoted in Neale and Krutnik, 1990). As a general rule, the viewing public identifies readily with the "inside" of the television family. It could be
argued, therefore, that because *Fruits et Légumes* focuses on a family of Algerian origin living in France, it does not conform to this general formula, as Maghrebis are widely perceived by the majority population as "outsiders" embodying oppositional values. However, as Neale and Krutnik point out with reference to *The Cosby Show*, "racial difference is made acceptable within the parameters of traditional family unity - the Huxtables are an idealized family who 'just happen' to be black" (1990: 243-4). This is very similar to the case of *Fruits et Légumes*, in which the Badaouis represent the perfect family: serious conflicts rarely arise, the family members help each other and the children are good at school. Moreover, in the same way that the Huxtables "just happen' to be black" (1990: 244), the authors of *Fruits et Légumes* wanted viewers to forget that the Badaouis are Algerian. In so doing, the sitcom maintains the notion of shared experiences and interests - an "inside" that is common to majority ethnic viewers and the television characters - whilst placing a family of Maghrebi origin at the centre of the series. These parallels between *The Cosby Show* and *Fruits et Légumes* are - as will be seen below - not entirely coincidental, the television channel having stipulated that it would be willing to co-finance and broadcast "un sitcom sous la forme d'un *Cosby Show* à la française".

Following the success of *Sixième Gauche* both in France and in Senegal, Fabienne Servan-Schreiber, the director of Cinétévé, contacted the script-writers of the programme - Henri de Turenne, a journalist and documentary producer, and Akli Tadjer, a novelist of Algerian origin - and asked them to prepare a second series in 1991. Due to the apparent popularity of the programme in Senegal, it was planned that the follow-up would be co-produced by the Senegalese state television channel, and the authors created a new character loosely based on the life and career of the Franco-Togolese politician Kofi Yamgnane, who had, at that time, just been appointed *secretaire d'Etat charge de l'integration* (junior minister for integration). However, this project fell through at the beginning of 1993 because the various

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1 Interview with Fabienne Servan-Schreiber 6.1.94.
2 See, for example, the article "Sixième Gauche: Omar et Sophie à Dakar", in *Le Soleil* (Dakar), 17 October 1991.
production partners were unable to reach agreement on either the form of the new series, or the financing of the programme.

This failure highlights an important issue regarding both the production of Fruits et Légumes and, as will be seen in the following sections, the construction of meaning within the series. The creation of any television programme requires the collaboration of a number of different parties. Clearly, it is neither sufficient to have an interesting idea for a programme, nor well-written scripts: a production team must be assembled, financial backing must be secured - often from a number of sources - and once the programme has been produced, a television channel must be willing to broadcast the programme. In the case of Fabienne Servan-Schreiber's projet for a second series of Sixième Gauche, this production partnership was further complicated by the involvement of the government agency, the Fonds d'action social (FAS). The FAS, created in 1958, aims to encourage the "integration" of minority ethnic groups into French society through the financing of a variety of projects. As part of its "integrationist" policy, the FAS has, since 1975, had an audiovisual budget and finances a number of television programmes (Hargreaves: 1993). In seeking financial assistance from the FAS, Cinétévé had to consider not only the commercial, technical and artistic aspects of producing the new series but also the FAS's social aims.

The FAS would not commit itself firmly to co-financing Cinétévé's initial proposal drafted by Henri de Turenne and Akli Tadjer (for a second series of Sixième Gauche), and as a result, France 3 withdrew its support for the project. At the beginning of 1993, however, France 3 indicated that it would be willing to accept a new series if it were "un sitcom sous la forme d'un Cosby Show à la française"3. Having achieved this indication from France 3, Cinétévé now had to see whether the FAS would co-finance the series, as without the latter's support, production of such a sitcom could not proceed. After lengthy negotiations that took place in secret within the Cabinet du Ministère des Affaires Sociales, the FAS was finally given ministerial authorization to co-finance the project, and during the summer of 1993, the authors

3 Interview with Fabienne Servan-Schreiber 6.1.94
started work on the scripts for the series. Recording of the sitcom began in March 1994. Two months later the filming was concluded, and the series was broadcast daily on France 3 at 1.30pm from July 25 to August 26, 1994. During the period from early 1993 through to completion of the recordings in May 1994, a complex, and sometimes, arduous, coalition was formed between the script-writers, Cinétvé, France 3 and the FAS.

Whilst the four parties were in agreement that the series would be of the sitcom genre, and would centre on the lives of a family of Algerian origin living in France, their objectives beyond these two basic principles governing the programme were not always convergent. The most fundamental differences were between Cinétvé, France 3 and the authors, on the one hand, and the FAS, on the other, although there were also many nuances among the aims of the former group of partners. At a basic level, Cinétvé, France 3, and the authors were aiming to produce a television series that would entertain the audience and be a ratings success. The FAS, however, was co-financing the series with the specific intention that the programme would "contribuer à l'intégration des populations immigrées ou issues de l'immigration". Whilst these two objectives are not necessarily incompatible - a convivial atmosphere throughout the series could well encourage the audience to be receptive towards a more serious message - they were sufficiently different to cause friction between the parties involved, and ultimately, to create tensions within the encoded meanings of the programme.

In spite of the fact that Cinétvé, the script-writers and France 3 were, essentially, striving towards a shared goal, the encoding process was further complicated by these three parties each having their own distinct agendas regarding the production of the programme. Whilst these divergences were far less significant than the split between their entertainment-oriented aims and the FAS's social objectives, they almost certainly influenced the overall shape of the series and contributed to the construction of meaning within the programme. The arrival in

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4 Letter from the FAS to Cinétvé, 17.3.94.
November 1993 of Bruno Fourcade, employed by Cinétélévé as script-editor, effectively led to the presence of a fifth production partner, with yet his own preoccupations: his task was to ensure that the scripts were written to high professional and technical standards, making full use of the studio space available, and running to the correct length. Thus, each of these parties, with their competing aims and agendas, strove to influence the production process as far as possible, and in turn, this shaped the meanings within the series. It is these attempts, on the parts of the various production partners, to influence the scripting of the sitcom, that will be examined in the next section.

2.3 The scripting of *Fruits et Légumes*

2.3.1 The "Bible"

When producing a fictional television series, it is customary to start with the drafting of what the French call the "Bible", this being a document which summarizes the fundamental characteristics governing the programme. Given the importance of this document, it was the subject of long discussions during which the various production partners put forward their objectives and specific requirements regarding *Fruits et Légumes*. As a result of these negotiations, three versions of the "Bible" were produced by the authors. The first was written in July 1993, whilst the following two versions - drafted in September 1993 and January 1994, respectively - included a certain number of changes that were designed to meet some of the demands made by the FAS in particular.

With regard to the July 1993 "Bible", the FAS made three main stipulations that did not correspond entirely with the initial concept proposed by Cinétélévé and the script-writers. Whilst the latter production partners defined the series as "une comédie dont le but principal est de faire rire"\(^5\), the FAS asserted, on the contrary, that "le but

\(^5\) "Bible" July 1993.
premier de cette série ne doit pas être de faire rire, mais de faire sourire, d'attendrir et de rendre familier et proche cette famille immigrée". Secondly, the FAS expressed regret regarding the near-absence of "native" French characters in the first version of the "Bible". This had been a deliberate choice on the part of Henri de Turenne and Akli Tadjer, due to their previous experience scripting Sixième Gauche where they felt that "nos Français, soit avaient l'air fade, soit, si on voulait les typer par rapport au racisme, étaient odieux". The FAS, however, expected "native" French characters to play a greater role in the series, "l'intégration étant un processus dont les acteurs sont autant les immigres que les 'Gaulois'". A third demand made by the FAS was that each episode should broach "des situations réelles de la vie quotidienne, ainsi que les difficultés de la confrontation entre les générations, entre la famille et les autres personnage, confrontations parfois difficiles mais dont l'issue à plus ou moins long terme conditionne l'intégration". The authors, on the other hand, affirmed that "le sitcom n'est pas fait pour soulever les problèmes sérieux comme on fait dans un documentaire [...] Notre message est subliminaire".

Through these comments, the FAS certainly influenced the shape of Fruits et Légumes, although, as will become clear, not all these recommendations were heeded by the authors and Cinétiévé. With backing from France 3, the FAS ensured that the sound-track to the series would not incorporate canned laughter. Nevertheless, the script writers reaffirmed in the second "Bible" that "le principe du genre, c'est de faire rire", although they went on to add that "il n'est pas question de faire rire des personnages, mais des situations dans lesquelles ils se trouvent". The authors were, in other words, defining the limits of humour within the series: the audience would laugh with the characters rather than at their expense. In so doing, it was hoped that the "native" French audience would be encouraged to identify with the Algerian

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6 Letter from the FAS to Cinétiévé, 7.10.93.
7 Interview with Henri de Turenne and Akli Tadjer, 7.1.94.
8 Letter from the FAS to Cinétiévé, 7.10.93.
9 Letter from the FAS to Cinétiévé, 7.10.93.
10 Interview with Henri de Turenne and Akli Tadjer, 7.1.94.
family in the sitcom, a significant emotional step, in terms of the FAS's "integrationist" project.

In answer to the FAS's second concern, a number of "native" French characters were incorporated into the second and third versions of the "Bible". The most important of these characters was Suzanne, who first appeared in the September "Bible". She was to become a close friend of Farida Badaoui, the mother in the Algerian family, and her role throughout the series was to encourage Farida "à s'émanciper de la tutelle de son mari [Amar Badaoui]". However, in spite of the authors' assertion that the Badaoui family lives "manifestement dans un environnement français", the only "native" French character mentioned by name in the September "Bible" is Suzanne. Whilst it is true that most of the clients who do their shopping in Amar's grocery shop - which inspired the title of the series - are "native" French, their roles are rarely more than secondary. It is not until the drafting of the January 1994 "Bible" that Yoyo, the Badaoui's youngest son, acquires a "native" French friend, Loïc. However, Loïc's role is marginal in comparison with that of Honoré, an adolescent of Senegalese origin who, like Suzanne, first appears in the September 1993 version of the "Bible". Honoré, who is an orphan adopted by the Badaoui family, is described in the "Bible" as "un mauvais garçon repenti, rappeur surdoué, taggeur et blagueur". Thus, rather than developing the "native" French presence in the programme, as the FAS had hoped, Honoré brings a West African dimension to the series.

In accordance with the FAS's third wish, the September 1993 "Bible" stated that "les situations seront inspirées des problèmes de société particuliers aux Beurs et aux immigrés". However, no concrete examples of this are given, and the script writers were only slightly exaggerating when at a later date they commented that "on n'a pas vraiment d'histoire typiquement immigrée". Moreover, in January 1994, two characters mentioned in earlier drafts who would have been particularly apt to

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13 Interview with Henri de Turenne and Akli Tadjer, 7.1.94.
14 Interview with Henri de Turenne and Akli Tadjer, 7.1.94.
illustrate the ethno-cultural dimension of the minority ethnic presence in France - an Italian priest and an imam born in France - disappeared without explanation from the "Bible".

2.3.2 The scripts

When scripting the series, the authors were very conscious of the need to create an Algerian family that was as engaging as possible, as otherwise, it would neither be possible to establish a convivial atmosphere - the foundation of all sitcoms - nor the identification process that the FAS hoped for. The script-writers were, therefore, extremely careful regarding their choice of subject-matter for the episodes: not only was the issue of Islam avoided because it was felt that many "native" French people fear the religion but also "la drogue, toute la criminalité et la délinquance". The FAS, however, proved to be even more prudent, insisting that one episode in particular, La Perle de Tipaza, be abandoned because it focused on a marriage of convenience, designed to circumvent immigration controls. Whilst this censorship was the most extreme case of the influence of a production partner on the script-writing, a number of other disagreements over the scripts emerged, these sometimes leading to significant changes being made.

For example, the first version of an episode called La Quinzaine africaine centred on a polygamous West African family, and was criticized by the FAS for portraying polygamy in too favourable a light. When commenting on the script, the FAS emphasized not only that polygamy was incompatible with French law but also that it was a "source de nombreux problèmes pour la société d'accueil ainsi que pour les familles qui vivent cette situation en France". In conformity with this, in the broadcast version of the episode, Farida is seen having a conversation with the wives

15 During an interview with Télé-Poche Magazine (23.7.94), Nadia Samir, who played the part of Farida in the series, explained the decision not to broach the issue of religion in the following manner: "Il faut à tout prix éviter la provocation et le mauvais goût".
16 Interview with Henri de Turenne and Akli Tadjer, 7.1.94.
17 Letter from the FAS to Cinétévé, 17.3.94.
in the polygamous family, during which she delivers a little speech on the reasons why she considers polygamy to be an unacceptable practice.

In two other episodes - *Aziz s'annonce* and *Le Chat de Suzanne* - the authors portrayed Amar in situations where he was clearly on the verge of being unfaithful to his wife. His behaviour in these episodes was perceived as being incompatible with his role as father-figure in the Badaoui family, and was criticized, not only by the FAS but also by Fabienne Servan-Schreiber - who described the episode as "épouvantable et vulgaire"\(^{18}\) - as well as by Bruno Fourcade. In view of these criticisms, the authors modified Amar's conduct in such a way that he remained, essentially, "fidèle, ‘émoustillé’ mais fidèle"\(^{19}\). Bruno Fourcade also imposed numerous other changes on the scripts, although these were generally of a technical nature, so as to ensure that the scenarios were coherent and that the studio space and decors were used to their best advantage.

The authors did not, however, always yield under the criticisms leveled at their scripts. A character with a secondary role, Momo, worried the FAS because of the description of him in the script as a "voyou et casseur"\(^{20}\). To avoid any characters of Maghrebi origin being depicted in a negative light, the FAS wanted Momo to become Maurice, a "native" French youth: this change never took place. Amar's interest in some paintings of nudes in *Un Amour de Zouzou*, was perceived as excessive by the FAS but no modifications were made to the script. The vulgarity that Suzanne displayed in *Le Chat de Suzanne* was severely criticized, not only by the FAS but also by the director of Cinétévé and the script-editor, and yet Suzanne's behaviour in the episode remained unchanged.

By January 1994, 15 episodes had been written and the final version of the "Bible" had been completed. The comments made by the various production partners required significant changes to be made to the first set of scripts by Henri de Turenne and Akli Tadjer, who had to abandon one episode (on marriages of convenience) and

\(^{18}\) Interview with Fabienne Servan-Schreiber 6.1.94.
\(^{19}\) Comment by Bruno Fourcade in the margin of the first version of *Aziz s'annonce* (July 1993).
\(^{20}\) Quotation from second version of *Les Loulous de Zouzou* (December 1993).
substantially modify many others. Moreover, every one of the 15 scripts underwent technical changes demanded by Bruno Fourcade. Thus, three months before the recording began, 12 episodes still had to be written (an extra episode was scripted to replace the one discarded at the FAS's insistence), although now that the authors were fully aware of the constraints within which they were working, they were able to proceed at a much faster pace by avoiding any situations or dialogues that might have led to controversy. Towards the end of March 1994, the recording of the series began. It was discovered by the producers that the scripts did not fill the 26 minutes that each episode was meant to last, and all the scripts had to be lengthened. The final touches to the last episode were only made shortly before the end of the filming on May 16.

2.4 *Fruits et Légumes*: the broadcast version

To what extent did the broadcast version of *Fruits et Légumes* satisfy the objectives of the various production partners? This is a complex question, which cannot be fully answered without considering, firstly, the precise nature of the programme-makers' objectives and secondly, the pattern of meaning structuring the finished product and its interpretation by television audiences. The complexity of these issues arises partly from the fact that some of the production partners appear to have held objectives which were not always clearly articulated, and partly from the need to draw on the interview data with viewer panels, which are discussed in detail in later chapters. In both respects, it is necessary to distinguish between implicit and explicit levels of meaning. In terms of the objectives of the production partners, the present analysis will reveal tensions between the stated aims of the FAS and unspoken, sometimes contradictory, attitudes which appear to have been implicit in its thinking. Where the interpretation of the finished product is concerned, while much of the programme content is manifest to the researcher, some of it depends on inferences drawn by viewers from gestures or remarks in which the intended message is not spelt out clearly.
In the remainder of this chapter, only those aspects of the programme content which are readily apparent to the researcher will be considered, leaving more fluid areas of meaning to subsequent chapters, where interview data with a variety of panel members are drawn on. The present analysis falls into two main parts. The first of these evaluates manifest aspects of the series against the explicit goals of different programme-makers, while the second focuses on tensions within the FAS's thinking and important ambiguities which these appear to have engendered in the broadcast version of *Fruits et Légumes*.

While this analysis highlights the influences of various production partners in shaping meanings within the series, it is clear that other aspects will also feed into the construction of meaning within the programme. As discussed in section 2.2, for example, *Fruits et Légumes* is cast in the genre of a sitcom. Genres "are specific networks of formulas which deliver a certified product to a waiting customer" (Andrew, 1984: 110). In other words, genres are recognizable to the viewer, and this recognition will help the viewer to decode the programme as intended by the programme-makers. Thus, McQuail points out that "the particular strength of the western genre is that it can generate many variant forms [such as the 'spaghetti' western or the comedy western] which can also be readily understood in relation to the original basic form" (1994:264). In a similar way, therefore, the expectations and constraints associated with sitcoms help to shape the encoding and decoding of meaning in *Fruits et Légumes*. Another factor that undoubtedly contributes to the construction of meaning within any programme concerns the director, as s/he is responsible for supervising the artistic and technical aspects of the filming or video recording. Clearly, any director will have personal views regarding the ways in which the filming should be done - such as camera angles, close-ups and emphasis to be given to particular speeches - and this may, in turn, inflect the meanings within the programme. Similarly, the actors in a programme will have their own ideas regarding the ways in which they should deliver their lines, and these may not always coincide with how the script-writers expected their script to be performed. Thus, an actor's
interpretation of a script could well influence the encoded meanings within a programme. Whilst not without importance, in *Fruits et Légumes* factors of this kind generally serve to inflect or modulate at the margins patterns of meaning which are already tightly structured both by the conventions of the sitcom genre and by the sharply focused agendas of prior production partners, especially the FAS, with its policy-oriented mission, and the script-writers, with their commercial preoccupations. Moreover, because *Fruits et Légumes* was filmed to an extremely tight schedule - 3 episodes were worked on per week and the 26 episodes were completed in two months - there was little scope for artistic development during the shooting of the series, either on the parts of the director or of the actors. *Fruits et Légumes* was essentially a "factory-produced" sitcom working to a pre-defined formula. Thus, the following analysis focuses on the dominant production partners, and in particular on the ambiguities present in the FAS’s thinking, and how these shaped the construction of meaning within *Fruits et Légumes*.

As seen in section 2.2, whilst the writers, Cinétévé and France 3, were aiming to produce an entertaining sitcom that would be a ratings success, the FAS wanted the series to contribute towards its "integrationist" project. It was suggested that these two objectives are not necessarily incompatible, as a jovial and light-hearted atmosphere may encourage the audience to be responsive towards a more serious message. However, analysis of the 26 episodes broadcast on France 3 reveals that the majority focus only very indirectly on genuine social problems, in spite of the fact that the FAS expected each episode to centre on such issues. When a serious problem is depicted in an episode, it nearly always occurs outside the Badaoui family, thus ensuring that the convivial atmosphere in the series is rarely interrupted. In the majority of the episodes, the plot centres on relatively minor incidents occurring within the daily lives of the Badaouis, a family fortunate enough to have no serious problems. In the case of *Yoyo dépouillé*, for example, the Badaouis' youngest son pilfers money from the till in his father's grocery shop because he is being racketeered by young deliquents at school. Rather than exploring the social and psychological
problems associated with racketeering, the episode highlights the amusing aspects of Amar's confusion regarding the inexplicable gap in his accounts.

In only 2 out of the 26 episodes are social issues at the centre of the plot. Toto l'Aristo focuses on the problem of homelessness through the story of a French aristocrat who has fallen on hard times and is helped by the Badaouïs. In view of the fact that homelessness is a social problem that frequently hits the poorest in society, and that ethnic minorities tend to be over-represented among the underprivileged, this episode reverses the widespread stereotype that minority ethnic groups are synonymous with poverty. Rather than the immigrant family playing the role of the assisted, in this episode, the Badaouïs excel in their generosity towards a "native" French person. The only other episode to deal centrally with social issues, is Les Loulous de Zouzou, which focuses on the problems of delinquency associated with the banlieues. One of the Badaouïs' daughters tries to help two repentant delinquents, Honoré and Momo, by inviting them to the Badaouïs' home. When they steal a case of whisky Amar wants to call the police but Zouzou convinces him that prison would only turn them into hardened criminals. Realizing that the difficulties the two youths have encountered are not entirely their own fault, Amar ends up adopting Honoré. Thus, the Badaouïs' kindness and affection serve as an antidote to the troubles afflicting deprived urban areas in France.

These aspects of the series were no doubt intended to contribute to the FAS's overarching aim, namely the "integration" of minority ethnic groups. However, when the FAS's stated objectives are compared to the requests it made and the end product, important tensions come to light. These cannot be fully understood without an appreciation of the complexities and ambiguities that surround the idea of "integration" in the debate over public policy towards immigrant minorities in France.

Immigration became one of the most divisive issues in French politics during the 1980s. Fearing that these divisions were primarily benefiting the extreme-right Front National, mainstream parties began to build a new consensus around the notion of "integration", which became the watchword of public policy under governments of
both left and right during the 1990s (Weil and Crowley: 1994). As the principal public agency responsible for assisting minority ethnic groups, the FAS has played a key role in promoting "integration". Despite the apparent cross-party consensus around this concept, it has in fact been beset by ambiguities (Bonnafous 1992, Hommes et Migrations 1994, Revue française des affaires sociales 1997).

The word has been used in many different and sometimes contradictory ways. Three of these are of particular note in the present context. Some politicians, particularly on the right of the political spectrum, use it as a virtual synonym for "assimilation", that is, the adoption of majority ethnic norms by groups of immigrant origin (a process known as acculturation), together with the abandoning of their distinctive cultural practices. Others regard "integration" as a process of mutual acceptance by majority and minority groups, which in some cases may include adaptation and change on both sides. A third perspective focuses on the idea of the participation of minorities in "mainstream" society, without this necessarily implying cultural change. Traces of all three approaches are present in the objectives explicitely formulated for Fruits et Légumes by the FAS.

In its most succinct and categorical statement of objectives, the FAS told Cinétévé that "l'objectif recherché par le FAS à travers le financement de cette série [est de] contribuer à l'intégration des populations immigrées ou issues de l'immigration, et favoriser l'évolution des mentalités du public français pour une meilleure acceptation de la différence"21. This would appear to point to "integration" of the second type, with the emphasis falling on the acceptance of cultural differences rather than on changing majority or minority groups. In pursuing this goal, the FAS wanted the series to engender sympathy and identification on the part of majority ethnic audiences vis-a-vis minority ethnic characters. In this way, the programme would have a performative function: it would not simply represent the "integration" process but would positively facilitate it by encouraging suitable attitudes among majority ethnic viewers. At other times, however, FAS officials appear to have

21 Letter from the FAS to Cinétévé, 17.3.94.
thought more in terms of simply portraying successful "integration" on screen. For this reason, they asked the programme-makers to include more majority ethnic characters, "l'intégration étant un processus dont les acteurs sont autant les immigrés que les 'gaulois'". Here, the FAS appears to have in mind the third perspective on "integration", that of participation, without this necessarily involving cultural change. Yet at other times, FAS officials spoke of the need to represent cultural conflicts both within the minority ethnic family and in relations with the majority population, "confrontations parfois difficiles mais dont l'issue à plus ou moins long terme conditionne l'intégration". In principle, such an outcome might be achieved through "integration" of the second or third types. In practice, however, the FAS appears to have assumed that cultural changes were necessary on the minority ethnic side but not among the majority population. In other words, although this was never explicitly stated, there was an implicit presumption in favour of assimilation.

The evidence pointing towards this implicit assumption is of two main types. Firstly, as was discussed in the previous section, a number of story-lines and incidents were either inserted or eliminated at the insistence of the FAS, and these suggest a need for minority ethnic adaptation to majority norms rather than the opposite. Thus, regarding *La Quinzaine africaine*, it will be remembered that FAS officials wanted the episode modified in such a way that polygamy was depicted in a less favourable light, and they suggested that this could be achieved "par un regard critique de Farida notamment et des autres personnages de la famille". As a result of the FAS's intervention, in the broadcast version of this episode Farida is seen lecturing the Senegalese family staying at the Badaouis' home on the reasons why she considers polygamy to be an unacceptable cultural practice. This is the most conspicuous instance of cultural change being depicted on screen and clearly the movement is expected to be on the minority side towards majority norms. By contrast, virtually no movement of the majority population towards minority cultural norms is seen in the

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22 Letter from the FAS to Cinétévé, 7.10.93.
23 Letter from the FAS to Cinétévé 17.3.94.
series, and FAS officials made no requests for the dramatization of such a process. In practice, therefore, the FAS's view of "integration" would appear to be assimilationist, despite its paying lip service to "integration" of the second type, that is, mutual respect for differences.

A second key feature of the series which implicitly points to assimilationist assumptions lies in the de-ethnicization of the Badaoui family. Whilst the viewer is told that Amar used to do the washing up in small Maghrebi restaurants when he first arrived in France, today, he is the proprietor of a grocery shop with a predominantly "native" French clientele. Thus, even before the curtain is raised, Amar's upward mobility has distanced him considerably from the working classes in which first-generation Maghrebis tend to be concentrated. Although Reda, the Badaouis' eldest son, has difficulty securing a stable job, the family is, on the whole, sheltered from unemployment, a problem which affects minority ethnic groups in France with particular severity. According to the press dossier drafted by the programme-makers to accompany the broadcasting of *Fruits et Légumes*, Amar "reste cramponné à ses racines culturelles et aux traditions [...] mais il est tolérant au fond et prend la vie 'de biais' pour ne pas faire de vagues ni d'histoires"²⁴. This considerably overstates Amar's conservatism. In practice, he and Farida are both very much at ease in French society. Whilst many first-generation Maghrebis are illiterate and have to rely on their children to deal with administrative documents, Amar and Farida both speak flawless French, and can read and write perfectly. As will be seen in chapters 3 and 4, a number of the respondents who took part in the audience reception study commented on this aspect of Amar and Farida, which they perceived as unrepresentative of first-generation Maghrebis.

It was also stated in the press dossier that although Farida had grown up in a poor village in the Kabyle region of Algeria, in France she had been to an *école des arts ménagers*, and had worked "dans des familles bourgeoises" which had given her "un certain vernis dont elle est très fière et qu'elle transmet à sa famille". Moreover,

the former television presenter for TF1, Nadia Samir, who was chosen to play the part of Farida, is seen sporting plunging necklines and short skirts, clothes that it would be unlikely to see a first-generation Maghrebi woman wearing. As will be seen in the following chapters, this extremely de-ethnicized portrayal of Farida led to confusion among some viewers, who were unsure whether she was "native" French or Algerian.

The Badaouis' high level of de-ethnicization is emphasized in *Amar ce héros*, where Amar rescues his "native" French neighbour from a gas leak in her home. Convinced that Amar has saved her life, she telephones the newsroom at one of the television channels and they send a film crew to interview Amar. The journalists were planning a report on "le héros arabe", only to discover that the grocery shop "ne fait pas couleur locale" and Amar "ne fait pas immigré". In an attempt to give the news report a more "genuine" feel, the journalists make Amar wear a fez and rearrange the products on the shelves around him, in such a way that he is surrounded by packets of couscous and dates. The interview is, however, so lacking in "authenticity", that it is never broadcast.

In short, therefore, the Badaouis are "des presque-Français moyens qui vont devenir tout à fait français" (Humblot 1994). As a result of this heavy de-ethnicization, it is rare to see "les difficultés de la confrontation entre les générations" that the FAS had initially stated it wanted the series to focus on. Having spent their formative years in their respective countries of origin, first-generation Maghrebis tend to be less thoroughly acculturated than their children who have, to a large extent, been socialized in a French environment, and these inter-generational differences can lead to tensions and conflicts within the family. However, Farida and Amar are so de-ethnicized that arguments between the children and the parents in *Fruits et Légumes* rarely take the form of a cultural shock between what in more typical immigrant families would be the parents' Arab-Muslim-Algerian values and those acquired in France by the children. If the FAS had been committed

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25 Quotations from the broadcast version of *Amar ce héros* (November 1993).
26 Letter from the FAS to Cinétévé 7.10.93.
to the portrayal of cultural differences between first- and second-generation Maghrebis, it might have been expected that it would reaffirm its request for more episodes to centre on such incidents. However, it did not, and *La Composition française* is the only episode to focus on a crisis of this sort.

In this episode, Zouzou, who is in her final year of school, finds herself having to make difficult decisions when her teacher sets an essay on "les raisons d'aimer son pays". Born in France and, therefore, of French nationality, Zouzou is conscious of the fact that if she does not refer to Algeria in her essay, her father will be profoundly hurt, but on the other hand, she feels more French than Algerian. However, when she ventures to comment on this, her father contradicts her forcibly, stating that she is Algerian and not French. Zouzou goes on to ask the "native" French neighbour, Monsieur Baudoin, why he loves his country, and, in turn, a long argument ensues between Baudoin and Amar over why this or that person should be classified as French or Algerian. Thus, *La Composition française* raises some important issues and is the only episode to focus on a problem that is specific to ethnic minorities - that of identity among the second-generation. According to Akli Tadjer the episode was "celui qui définissait plus les gens par rapport à leurs origines" and the audience "apprenait leur attachement par rapport à leur pays". As ethnically-based issues were more prominent in this than in any other episode, it was selected for use as a stimulus for the audience reception analysis, where panels were established on the basis of ethnic origin.

It could be argued that the minority ethnic characters were largely de-ethnicized in the series in order to maximise the chances of majority ethnic viewers identifying with the Badaoui family. Yet if the FAS had been serious in its commitment to "une meilleure acceptation de la différence" - "integration" of a kind that involves mutual acceptance of cultural differences - it ought to have encouraged the programme-makers to include the sympathetic portrayal (rather than the

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27 Quotation taken from the broadcast version of *La Composition française* (January 1994).
28 Interview with Akli Tadjer, 24.4.97.
29 For a synopsis of the sample episode see Chapter 3, section 3.1.
obliteration) of cultural differences in the minority ethnic characters. In all three versions of the "Bible" the authors stated that their aim was to "rendre populaire et attachante une famille de beurs qui a les mêmes problèmes que tout le monde, afin que les téléspectateurs se familiarisent avec eux, les adoptent et finissent par s'identifier à eux [...] en un mot, qu'ils oublient que ce sont des immigrés [my emphasis]". At no point did the FAS challenge this approach. Mutual respect for differences, to which the FAS paid lip service, could only occur if there were differences to be seen on screen. If FAS officials readily acquiesced in the de-ethnicization of the Badaouis - there is no record of them asking the script-writers to include more marked cultural differences - this suggests that they tacitly favoured the de facto assimilation of the immigrant family into mainstream norms. Thus, the implicit encoded message was, in some respects, different from the message that the FAS explicitly stated that it was trying to convey. As will be seen in the following chapters, these deep ambiguities within the FAS's thinking complicate the analysis of viewer decodings of the programme. When deciding whether a message has reached the audience, it is necessary to ascertain whether the intended message is the one the FAS explicitly spoke of - mutual acceptance of differences - or the one it appeared to implicitly want - assimilation.

2.5 Conclusions

The aim of this chapter was to examine the construction of meaning within Fruits et Légumes through an analysis both of the production process, and the broadcast version of the programme. This analysis highlighted a number of important issues regarding the encoded meanings that were being communicated to the audience. The first observation that can be made concerning the production of the series, is that unlike a novel, Fruits et Légumes was not a single-authored work; there were many parties involved in the production process and they all influenced the encoding of meanings within the programme to varying degrees and in various ways. As was seen,
whilst the script-writers, Cinétévé and France 3 were essentially aiming to produce an entertaining sitcom that would be a ratings success, the FAS wanted the series to further its "integrationist" project. Beyond these two fundamental objectives it was revealed that the various parties had their own agendas regarding specific details of the programme. The encoding process was further complicated by the arrival of a script-editor employed by Cinétévé, and by the fact that the series was written by two authors - one of French, and one of Algerian origin - who were drawing on significantly different frameworks of reference. Whilst in most instances the intended meanings were relatively clear-cut, as a result of this complex production partnership, there was not always a single, unified meaning or message being sent to the audience. As will be seen in the following chapter, for example, the two script-writers had not always encoded the same intended message in a given scene, and these divergences appeared to stem from their differing backgrounds.

A second key issue highlighted by this chapter's analysis of the production process, concerns the ambiguities surrounding the FAS's stated objectives, and its unspoken, implicit attitudes towards the concept of "integration". It was seen that whilst the FAS appeared to want the programme to encourage greater mutual acceptance of cultural differences, many of its requests during the making of the series pointed, on the contrary, to a wish to suppress such differences. In view of the heavy de-ethnicization of minority ethnic characters, it might have been expected that if the FAS had been genuinely committed to fostering "integration" of this type, it would have asked the script-writers to portray greater cultural differences. There is, however, no record of FAS officials having done so. These apparent contradictions between, on the one hand, the FAS's explicitly stated aims, and on the other hand, its demands (or lack of demands) during the production process, would seem to suggest that within the FAS's thinking there was an implicit presumption in favour of assimilation. The FAS's encoded message was, therefore, profoundly ambivalent.

The presence of numerous production partners with competing objectives, and the ambiguous nature of the FAS's notion of "integration", meant that identifying the
intended encoded messages within the programme was not always a straightforward process, as preferred meanings were sometimes debatable. As will be seen in the following chapter, this, in turn, complicated analysis of viewer decodings of the programme, and would seem to have contributed towards a significant proportion of decodings being differential.
CHAPTER 3
Getting the message: from encoding to decoding

3.1 Introduction

The FAS, as one of the co-financers of Fruits et Légumes, had a very specific social message that it wanted to send to viewers via the programme. As was shown in the previous chapter, the FAS was aiming to produce a television series that would not only reassure the French public of the "innocuous" nature of the Maghrebi population but would also encourage it to both identify with an immigrant family and, according to the FAS's statements, accept its ethnic specificities. The episode selected for analysis, La Composition Française, was one of the more successful ones from the FAS's point of view because of the wide range of important issues it raises - from the Algerian war of independence to questions of identity and nationality - albeit in a lighthearted way, as is the nature of sitcoms. But if La Composition Française was successful in terms of it being an interesting plot that raises important issues concerning France's Maghrebi population, to what extent was it successful in transmitting the ideas of the production partners to the viewers?

Whereas chapter 2 analysed the making of Fruits et Légumes, and the influences of the competing production partners on the construction of meaning within the programme, in short, the encoding process, this chapter examines viewer reception or decoding of the message. To what extent does the audience decode or interpret La Composition Française within the producers' and script-writers' preferred meaning(s), and do the viewers react to the programme as intended by the makers? By what means do the encoders try to win over the audience to preferred meanings, and did these methods work? These issues are approached through a study of viewer decodings of specific scenes and characters in La Composition Française, focusing, firstly, on cognitive decodings, that is, understandings of the scenes and of the
characters, and secondly, on attitudinal decodings, in other words, reactions to the
scenes and to the characters.

Using Morley's adoption of Hall's three proposed reading positions (based on
Parkin's meaning-systems) - dominant, negotiated and oppositional in relation to the
preferred meaning within the media text (see Parkin 1971, Hall 1973 and Morley
1980) - as a basic structure within which to analyse decodings of *La Composition
Française*, a further set of interpretive categories has been identified for the purposes
of this study. Thus, cognitive decodings have been divided into those decodings that
fall within the preferred meaning, and those that do not, termed here as "differential"
or "negotiated" decodings. These negotiated decodings have been further sub-divided
into varying types of negotiation, because, as Richardson and Corner point out,
Parkin's categories are problematic due to their being insufficiently discriminating
(Richardson and Corner 1992). Thus, a total of seven types of decodings have been
identified, depending on the degree to which they diverge from the preferred
meaning, and the manner in which they diverge.

Firstly, and as already mentioned, there are those decodings that are within the
preferred meaning. These correspond with the intended encoded message. Hall (1973)
refers to those viewers who decode within the preferred meaning as operating inside
the dominant code. In other words, their frameworks of knowledge correspond with
the dominant cultural order¹. In the case of the reception analysis of *Fruits et
Légumes*, it is not always appropriate to define decodings within the preferred
meaning as operating inside the dominant code because some of the preferred
meanings within the text cut across what Hall refers to as the dominant cultural order.
Having said this, however, these preferred meanings are still largely constructed by
the encoders within the meaning systems of the dominant cultural order, and so the
encoded message will naturally reflect this order even if it is attempting, to a certain
extent, to change it. It is suggested, therefore, that in this case it is more correct to

¹ Hall also refers to this as "perfectly transparent communication" because the encoder and decoder
are working within the same frameworks of reference (Hall 1993: 101).
term decodings that correspond with the encoded message as merely being within the preferred meaning.

Secondly, some decodings diverge slightly from the preferred meaning, and are referred to here as "close to preferred meaning". Moving further away from the preferred meaning into the negotiated decodings, there are those decodings termed here as "non-perceptions" or "lacunae". These are decodings that have taken place in the absence of the mobilisation of knowledge that is vital for understanding the intended overall meaning of the scene. Clearly, television messages are not constructed within a social vacuum and are shaped by, and in turn shape, the wider social context (Philo 1993: 254, Hall 1993: 92). Thus, messages contain implicit assumptions about what is common or shared knowledge within society, assumptions that are situated within a political and cultural framework (Hall 1993: 92). A viewer approaching a television message from within a different framework of reference, may well "miss" part of the message due to a cultural "gap" in their knowledge, hence the non-perception or lacuna decoding.

A fourth type of reading identified here is the "wrong' focus decoding". In this case, the viewer focuses on an aspect of the scene that the encoders did not intend viewers to concentrate on, and this leads to a "mis-reading" where the full encoded message of the scene is not received by the viewer. Moving yet further away from the preferred meaning, there is the "alternative decoding2. In this instance, the decoder creates an alternative account which though not contradictory to the preferred meaning, is a very different interpretation of it. "Contradictory" decodings were also identified, where the viewer interprets the media text in a way that runs counter to the preferred meaning. The decoder is, however, apparently unaware or unconscious of the fact that this is contradictory to the preferred meaning. Finally, certain readings can be classified as "oppositional", whereby the viewer understands and deconstructs the encoded message within the preferred meaning, in order to reconstruct it within a

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2 Kitzinger (1993), in her work on audience understandings of AIDS, also identifies alternative accounts of media messages.
different framework of reference, a framework which rejects the main ideas within the text\(^3\).

Beyond these seven main categories there are those decodings where it is not clear how the respondents decoded the message and which, therefore, are considered "uncategorizable" and are classified as such. In some cases, respondents did not give answers to questions concerning certain scenes, and these are classified as "non-responses". Finally, in a small number of instances respondents were not asked certain questions and these have been listed separately as "question not asked". As was noted in chapter 1, the interview questions were memorized - as questions on paper were found to be intrusive - and sometimes, therefore, questions were forgotten. More frequently, however, certain questions remained unasked due to a lack of time. In cases where respondents were only available for a limited length of time, it was necessary to decide during the interview which questions to prioritize, and which to dispense with.

Using these categories of decodings, it is possible to assess the extent to which readings of *La Composition Française* coincide or not with the preferred encoded message, and to subsequently identify interpretive communities amongst the viewers, as is discussed in chapter 4.

The cognitive decodings analysed here are based on responses to 19 open-ended questions which the viewers were asked about the episode. Questions varied from being related to specific scenes to being about specific characters in the programme. In all, there were 825 responses to the 19 questions. Of these 825 decodings, slightly over half - 429 - are within the preferred meaning, and a further 81 are close it. Although 53 decodings cannot be categorized, this still leaves 262 decodings that are differential. In other words, nearly a third of all decodings diverge quite significantly from the preferred meaning. Moreover, as will be seen, many of

\(^3\) In *The 'Nationwide' audience: structure and decoding* (1980), Morley defines *oppositional* decodings as those "where the underlying problematic is consciously registered and rejected". Similarly, Hall, in *Encoding, Decoding* (1993) defines the *oppositional* decoding as being when the viewer "detotalizes the message in the preferred code in order to retotalize the message within some alternative framework of reference".
the differential decodings contradict or oppose messages that are of crucial importance to the encoders.

The cognitive decoding results are summarized in statistical form in the table below. The left hand column indicates the question\(^4\) that respondents were asked, and the second column from the left, the total number of usable responses obtained for that question. The upper row specifies the different types of decoding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Total Usable Responses</th>
<th>Preferred Decodings</th>
<th>Close to Preferred Decodings</th>
<th>Non-Percieved Decodings</th>
<th>&quot;Wrong&quot; Focus Decodings</th>
<th>Alternative to Preferred Decodings</th>
<th>Contradictory to Preferred</th>
<th>Oppositional to Preferred</th>
<th>Non-Categorizable</th>
<th>Non-Response</th>
<th>Question Not Asked</th>
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<td>Q7</td>
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<td>38</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
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Based on the results in the above table, the next sections analyse the main convergences and divergences between the cognitive readings of *La Composition Française*. As discussed in chapter 1, when respondents are quoted in this, and the

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\(^4\) See annex for questionnaire used.

\(^1\) It should be noted that whilst there were 49 responses to this question, some viewers' decodings fit into more than one decoding category, hence the fact that the decodings add up to 51 and not 49 as would be expected.
following chapter, they will be identified using a code so as to retain their anonymity. The first figure of the code indicates the number of the interviewee, and letters are used to point out the ethnic origin of each respondent:

A - "native" French viewers
B - viewers of Maghrebi origin
C - viewers originating from sub-Saharan/Central Africa

If the respondent is male the letter "M" is used and female viewers are given the letter "F". Letters are also used to indicate the educational level of each respondent: the letter "L" refers to interviewees with lower levels of education (less than a baccalauréat), and the letter "H", those respondents with higher levels of education (a minimum of two years of university education). The final figure gives the age of the interviewee. For example, the identity code 15.B.M.H.24, indicates that respondent number 15 is a 24 year old man of Maghrebi origin, with university education.

Before exploring viewer readings of La composition française it may be of use to provide a summary of the episode.

Scene 1: The Badaouis' grocery shop

Amar, the father, is serving a client who he coaxes into buying far more than she had originally intended. Yoyo, the Badaouis' youngest son, arrives from school with a classmate, Svetlana. He introduces Svetlana to his father and a comic discussion follows, as Yoyo attempts to explain that she is Bosnian, and therefore Muslim, like themselves. The father is surprised to discover that she is Muslim because she does not look Arab.

Uncle Aziz arrives and greets Amar and Yoyo warmly. Yoyo proceeds to test his Uncle on a piece of history that he has learnt at school that day: he asks him to name the head of the Franks who stopped the Arab invasion at Poitiers. Uncle Aziz answers comically that he did not know because he had not come to France via Poitiers.
Scene 2: the kitchen/living room
Svetlana and Yoyo are having afternoon tea prepared by Farida, the mother. Farida asks Yoyo how school has been that day, and Yoyo teases Svetlana, saying that lessons are slowed down by the presence of immigrants such as her.

Scene 3: Zouzou's bedroom
Yoyo and Svetlana go to see Zouzou - the Badaouis' teenage daughter - who is in her bedroom doing her homework. Zouzou complains about the difficulty she is having in writing an essay on "les raisons d'aimer son pays". Initially Yoyo sees no problem with the essay title until Zouzou points out that the difficulty lies in deciding which country to refer to. A discussion ensues over whether she should refer to France or Algeria, and how her father would react if she chose France, and her teacher, if she focused on Algeria.

Yoyo points out that he too has problems with his essay on "les vacances à la neige", in view of the fact that he has never been skiing.

Scene 4: the living room
Farida and Uncle Aziz are watching a soap opera, when Yoyo and Svetlana come in. Yoyo says that he would like to watch the Winter Olympics so as to give him ideas for his essay, but Farida refuses to let him change channel. Svetlana leaves and Yoyo goes to his bedroom.

Scene 5: the grocery shop
A sales representative is trying to convince Amar to buy a stock of sausages for his clients but Amar refuses to taste the products because, being Muslim, he does not eat pork. In his attempts to persuade Amar to buy his products, the salesman tells Amar about recent sad events in his life: he used to work as a sales representative of women's underwear until he acted improperly and, as a result, lost both his job and his wife. Amar listens to the story, along with monsieur Baudoin, the Badaouis'
neighbour who comes round frequently to see the family but rarely does any of his shopping in their grocery shop.

Scene 6: Yoyo's bedroom

Yoyo is lying on his bed reading a comic book when his mother comes in and tells him that the soap she was watching is over and that he can now watch the Winter Olympics.

Scene 7: the grocery shop

The sales representative is still trying to convince Amar to buy his products and he suggests that monsieur Baudoin should taste the sausage for Amar. Monsieur Baudoin pronounces the sausage good and Amar takes the occasion to sell him a sausage and to order a stock of them. Monsieur Baudoin unwillingly accepts the sausage and points out that he actually came to ask Amar if he wanted to play cards. Amar says that he cannot leave the shop but suggests that monsieur Baudoin joins him for a drink upstairs in the house.

Scene 8: the living room

Uncle Aziz and Yoyo are watching the Winter Olympics when Amar arrives with monsieur Baudoin. Yoyo calls Zouzou as he thinks that Amar and monsieur Baudoin might be able to help her with her essay. Zouzou comes in and tells them about her essay on "les raisons d'aimer son pays". She then goes on to ask monsieur Baudoin why he loves France, and he has difficult defining why he feels attached to his country. This sparks off a discussion between Amar, monsieur Baudoin and Zouzou about who has what nationality, with Amar insisting that Zouzou is Algerian, and she insisting that she is French. Monsieur Baudoin and Amar then start to argue, and references are made to the colonization and independence of Algeria.
Scene 9: the grocery shop and living room

Farida is in the shop when Reda, her eldest son, walks in with a large box in his arms. They greet each other and Reda asks his mother if he can leave the box in their store room. He and Farida then go up to the living room where they see Amar and monsieur Baudoin deep in conversation. Hearing that they are talking about nationality Reda produces a dollar note and tells them that it is the only true passport to the world.

Reda then asks Amar and Uncle Aziz to point out the direction of Mecca and comically, they both point in opposite directions. Reda goes on to say that he has the solution to this problem, and he produces his latest business idea: a prayer mat with a compass attached to it. It transpires, however, that Reda has no money to start the business venture and that he has actually come to ask his father for financial assistance. With little complaint, his father agrees to help his son.

Scene 10: the kitchen/living room

Amar is cooking the evening meal and Uncle Aziz is hovering around him in the hope that he will be invited to join them for the meal. Farida comes in and asks Uncle Aziz to help her set the table.

Scene 11: a few days later, the store room

Farida and Amar are in the store room, and Amar is complaining because it is filled with Reda's boxes of carpets. Reda arrives and announces a problem: his compasses do not work. Exasperated, Amar asks him what he is going to do about it and Reda tells his father that he will sell the compasses to him at a very reduced price. He suggests that Amar can give them to his most loyal clients as an incentive to keep doing their shopping at the Badaouis' grocery shop. Farida pushes Amar to accept the offer and he eventually gives in.
Scene 12: the grocery shop
A client is seen leaving the shop with a compass that Amar has given her. Monsieur Baudoin comes in and, despite the fact that he does his shopping at the supermarket, Amar gives him a compass.

Scene 13: in front of the grocery shop
Yoyo arrives from school with a new classmate who he introduces to his mother. Zouzou arrives too, and she and Yoyo discuss the marks they were given for their respective essays. Zouzou tells her brother that the teacher commented on the fact that she did not refer to a specific country in her essay on "les raisons d'aimer son pays". Similarly, Yoyo's teacher commented on the lack of personal details in his essay on "les vacances à la neige". The two laugh, and the episode comes to a close.

3.2 Cognitive decodings within the preferred meaning

For the purposes of this analysis, decodings of the episode can be usefully divided into two groups, the first being viewer decodings of specific scenes and actions, and the second, being decodings of more general aspects of the episode, such as the interpretation of characters, relationships between the characters, and the overall meaning of the episode. This second category is in some ways more important than the first because it is often these more general aspects that carry the overall message of the programme. Clearly, there is overlap between these two categories, as the ultimate aim of each scene and action is, after all, to convey the message of the programme to the viewer, and to encourage acceptance of this message. Similarly, many decodings of these messages take place through the behaviour and actions of the characters.
3.2.1 Decodings of Specific Scenes

Of the ten questions concerning viewer decodings of specific scenes in the programme (see questions 7, 8, 10, 12, 15, 18, 20, 21, 23, 24 in table 1), it can be seen that in six instances - questions 7, 8, 15, 18, 20 and 23 - a majority of respondents decoded the scenes within the preferred meaning, whilst the remaining four scenes - questions 10, 12, 21 and 24 - were decoded within the preferred meaning by less than half of the viewers.

Scenes decoded within the preferred meaning by a majority of viewers

Question 7\(^5\) refers to the scene where Yoyo, the youngest son in the Badaou family, introduces his Bosnian classmate, Svetlana, to his father. The father is surprised to learn that Svetlana is Muslim and he comments: "Musulmane? Mais elle n'a pas l'air d'une arabe"\(^6\). Clearly, the father is confusing ethnicity with religion in this instance, and when the media text was analysed recognition of this confusion was taken to be the preferred reading of the scene.

However, when the two script writers were individually interviewed to ensure that the results of the textual analysis did indeed correspond to the encoded meanings, it was discovered that there were two preferred readings of this scene: firstly, as already mentioned, Amar had confused ethnic origin and religion and believed that all Muslims are Arab, and secondly, Yoyo told his father that Svetlana was Muslim because his father would not want him to bring home a female friend who was non-Muslim. The reason for the co-existence of two preferred meanings within the one scene is due to the fact that Fruits et Légumes had two script writers and that one of the script writers was of French origin (Henri de Turenne) and the other of Algerian

\(^5\) The question asked was: "Que pensez-vous de la réaction d'Amar lorsque Yoyo lui presente sa nouvelle copine de classe, Svetlana?"

\(^6\) Quotation taken from the broadcast version of La composition Française (Tadjer & Turenne December 1993: 4)
origin (Akli Tadjer). Whilst being of Algerian origin, Akli Tadjer was born and brought up in France and is, therefore, of the second generation. Clearly, therefore, the two script writers though both encoding to a large extent within majority cultural norms, have frameworks of knowledge that do not completely coincide- they overlap but they are not identical. Moreover, Henri de Turenne's frames of reference are more likely to be contained by majority cultural norms than Akli Tadjer's because he is "native" French, whilst Tadjer has the added dimension of his Algerian origins.

It might be expected, therefore, that on the one hand "native" French viewers would decode the scene within Turenne's preferred meaning, whilst on the other hand, viewers of Maghrebi origin would decode it within Tadjer's intended meaning. However, of the 38 decodings that are within the preferred meaning, 32 correspond with Henri de Turenne's preferred meaning, and 11 of these 32 readings were produced by viewers of Maghrebi origin. In all, only five interviewees of Maghrebi origin decoded the scene within Tadjer's preferred meaning. This leads one to ask why more Maghrebi origin respondents read the scene within Turenne's preferred meaning than they did within Tadjer's. It would seem likely that the answer lies, at least partly, in the fact that most of the eleven who decoded the scene as Turenne intended have lived in France for many years, or have even grown up in France. Their decoding of the scene would seem to indicate, therefore, a certain degree of acculturation because if one accepts that Turenne's encodings are more likely to reflect majority cultural norms than Tadjer's, then these viewers can be said to have been operating within the "majority" code when they decoded this scene, rather than within the "minority" code.

The following examples of responses highlight the two different types of decodings, the first being within Tadjer's preferred reading and the second, Turenne's:

[...] oui, oui, il faut que ça soit quelqu'un de musulman pour pouvoir fréquenter quelqu'un, parce qu'il croyait que c'était sa petite copine, alors si tu as une petite
copine il faut qu'elle soit musulmane. Pas musulmane, il n'accepterait pas le père. [...] (1.B.F.H.24)

Euh oui ben, ça prouve que le père, donc, considère que pour être musulman il faut être arabe. [...] Je suppose que dans le feuillton ils ont voulu montrer que justement donc, il y avait pas que les arabes qui étaient musulmans, étendre le champs de... ouvrir un peu les yeux aux gens [...] (7.A.F.H.51)

Question 87 is based on the scene where Yoyo asks his Uncle Aziz to name the leader of the Francs who stopped the Arabs at Poitiers. The Uncle, not having had much schooling, is unaware of this historical event and gives an answer that has nothing to do with the question. He says that he does not know who this person was because when he came to France he was not stopped by anyone, and the ticket collector on the train merely asked him for his ticket. The respondents were asked what they thought of Aziz's reply, and a large majority - 38 out of 48 - decoded the scene within the preferred meaning. In other words, they interpreted Aziz's answer as an indication that he did not know the answer, due to a lack of schooling. It would seem likely that because most of these viewers had been through the French educational system - either in France or, in the case of first-generation Maghrebis, under French colonial rule - it gave them a similar framework of reference from which to decode this scene, as most of them would have learned of this historical event at school.

One of the most important scenes in the episode deals with the issue of nationality and identity. Amar discusses this issue with his French neighbour, Baudoin, who asks him why he does not want to acquire French nationality. Amar's reply is slightly allusive. He says that during the 20 years that he was in Algeria he was told that he was French, and throughout the past 30 years that he has spent in

7 The question asked was: "Qu'est-ce que vous avez pensé de la replique d'Aziz lorsque Yoyo lui demande 'qui a été le chef des francs qui a arrêté les Arabes à Poitier?'"
France he has been told that he is Algerian. Clearly, Amar was referring to his differing situations, firstly, under colonial rule in Algeria, and now in France since the independence of Algeria. Here, two levels to the encoded message can be identified: firstly, there is the fact that Amar is referring to the colonization of Algeria, and secondly, there is an intent on the part of the encoders to encourage viewer sympathy for Amar and the paradoxical situations through which he has had to live. There are, therefore, two steps to the process of decoding this scene within the preferred meaning, with the second step being of greater importance in terms of the underlying aims of the programme than the first. The decoder must initially decode the cognitive aspects of the scene within the preferred meaning concerning Amar's allusion to colonial and post-colonial Algeria, and having achieved this first step, s/he must then agree or sympathize with Amar. In other words, the decoder has to go through a cognitive process so as to reach the more important attitudinal one. This will, therefore, be discussed at greater length in section 3.4 on attitudinal responses. Whilst a majority of respondents - 37 out of 48 - decoded the scene (question 188) within the cognitive preferred meaning, understanding that Amar was making reference to the colonization of Algeria, not all of these 37 viewers went beyond this first step to produce an attitudinal decoding of Amar's comment. The following example typifies those cognitive decodings within the preferred meaning that were not accompanied by an attitudinal reading:

Qu'est-ce que je pense de ça? Ben je sais pas en fait parce qu'il faut être à la place de ce monsieur là. Non, mais ce que je dis, je sais pas parce qu'il y a... moi j'ai pas vécu... je suis trop jeune pour avoir connu la guerre d'Algérie [...]. (21.A.M.L.19)

It can be seen that whilst this viewer decoded Amar's comment as making reference to the colonial period of Algeria, achieving a cognitive decoding within the preferred

8 The question asked was: "À un certain moment, Amar explique à Monsieur Baudoin pourquoi il ne veut pas avoir la nationalité française. Que pensez-vous de cette explication?"
meaning, he did not go on to give an opinion on this issue, and produce an attitudinal decoding. Those viewers who did produce attitudinal decodings of the scene will be analysed in the section below.

During the episode, Reda, the eldest son who no longer lives in the parental home, comes round to see his family in the hope that they will help him to finance his new business venture. This latest venture consists of Muslim prayer mats that have a compass attached to them so that practising Muslims can ensure that they are praying in the correct direction. To demonstrate the utility of his product, Reda asks his uncle Aziz and his father to point out the direction of Mecca but to their general embarrassment, neither of them is capable of showing him the correct direction. The encoders said that they were aiming through this scene to reassure the French public - which has been bombarded with media images of purportedly fanatical Muslims - that most Muslims in France are relatively limited in their religious practices and not at all extremist. As Akli Tadjer pointed out with regard to this scene: "ils sont musulmans sans aller à l'église [...] oui, en fait c'est parce qu'ils [Amar and Aziz] étaient pas plus croyants que ça, enfin qu'ils sont croyants mais pas pratiquants. [...] C'est comme les gens qui fêtent Noël et qui vont pas à l'église". Tadjer's joke that Aziz and Amar are Muslim but do not go to church, clearly illustrates the emphasis that he and Turenne were putting on the wish to "banaliser les gens nord-africains [...] pour dire que finalement on vit tous la même chose en France, on vit les mêmes problèmes". Concerning audience decodings of this scene (question 20), therefore, the preferred meaning was that Aziz and Amar, though Muslim, were non-practising, the hope being that this would help to convey the message that Maghrebis in France are not excessively religious. Out of the 42 decodings of this scene, a majority of 27 were within the preferred meaning. For example, one such respondent commented: "peut-être ils font pas la prière. C'est vrai, c'est des musulmans mais ils font pas la prière"

9 Interview with Akli Tadjer 24.4.97.
10 Interview with Akli Tadjer 24.4.97.
11 The question asked was: "Reda demande à Aziz et à Amar de lui montrer la direction de la Mecque. Que pensez-vous du fait qu'aucun d'eux soit capable de répondre correctement?"

Question 23 asked about a scene where Amar and his wife Farida are talking about their son, Reda, and his various failed attempts at setting up businesses. Amar comments that the problem with Reda is that he has seen too much television and has decided that he wants to become the "Tapie Arabe". This was, of course, a play on words, the word "tapis" for carpet and "Tapie" as in the business tycoon Bernard Tapie, being pronounced in precisely the same manner, and it is this pun which was the preferred meaning within this scene. Of the 47 respondents, 30 decoded this scene within the preferred meaning. Of the remaining 17 respondents, 11 had completely forgotten Amar's comment but when reminded, four of them decoded within the preferred meaning. In all, therefore, only seven decodings were not within the preferred meaning. Thus, a high proportion of viewers decoded the scene as intended, including over half of the first-generation respondents of Maghrebi origin. This is worth noting, as clearly, for viewers to understand this pun, they needed to have knowledge of the majority culture. It would seem probable, therefore, that those first generation respondents of Maghrebi origin with lower levels of education that decoded within the preferred meaning, had acquired their knowledge of Bernard Tapie through watching television. In other words, their decodings highlight the important role that television plays in spreading and reinforcing the hegemonic culture in France.

It is of interest to analyse decodings related to questions 15 and 24 together because not only are they both based on scenes containing messages that were crucial to the overall aim of the programme but they also highlight two different textual techniques used by the encoders to encourage viewers to accept the preferred meaning of the media text.

12 This question asked was: "quand Amar dit que Reda veut être le 'Tapie Arabe', qu'est-ce qu'il voulait dire par cela?"
13 The question asked was: "A propos de Zouzou, elle est française ou algérienne?"
14 The question asked was: "Que pensez-vous de la scène où Amar cuisine et Aziz lui donne des conseils?"
Question 15 is based on the scene where Zouzou, the Badaoui's teenage
daughter, is trying to write an essay on "les raisons d'aimer son pays"\textsuperscript{15}, and is unable
to decide whether she should refer to France, which would be her own choice, or
Algeria out of respect for her parents. Having already discussed this scene in relation
to a previous question, viewers were abruptly asked (so as to receive as spontaneous
an answer as possible) whether Zouzou was French or Algerian. Here the encoders
wished to get the important message across to the French audience that second-
generation Maghrebis are French, usually want to be French, and should be accepted
as French. In the scene, Zouzou justifies her definition of herself as French by pointing
out that she was born in Paris, that she has never been to Algeria and that she has
French nationality ("la carte jaune"). To what extent, however, did viewers - especially
"native" French viewers - accept that Zouzou was French? Out of the 40 decodings of
this scene, 24 decodings were within the preferred meaning, and a further 4 were close
to the preferred meaning. These four perceived Zouzou as both French and Algerian.
Thus, a large majority of the audience - many of them "native" French - perceived
Zouzou as French. Of particular importance, though, was the manner in which many
of these respondents explained why Zouzou was French. They verbalized the reasons
for which Zouzou was French in the same way as she did, thus suggesting that they
had picked up these points from the programme. The two following examples are
typical of this type of response:

Elle dit 'mon père est algérien, moi je suis née en France, j'ai vécu pendant 20 ans
en France, j'ai mon papier jaune, ma carte d'identité, donc je me sens française'.
(33.A.F.H.21)

Moi je pensais qu'elle était française puisqu'elle est née en France. (8.A.F.L.41)

\textsuperscript{15} Quotation taken from the broadcast version of \textit{La Composition Française} (Tadjer & Turenne
December 1993).
Many respondents, such as the two quoted below, said that they perceived Zouzou as French because she herself said that she was French:

Elle est française [...] puisqu'elle le dit elle-même. (13.A.F.L.45 + or -16)

Elle est française, elle le dit, [...]. (11.A.F.H.48)

Although the sample of "native" French respondents was not necessarily representative of the French population, it is surprising that such a high proportion accepted that Zouzou was French. Surveys have tended to show quite the opposite: that most "native" French people do not perceive the children of first-generation Maghrebis as French17. These decodings of Zouzou's nationality might, therefore, be an indication that at this point the programme had a discernable effect on some viewers. Indeed, in two instances, viewers actually said that they had not thought of Zouzou as French until she actually asserted that she was. For example, one viewer stated:

Ce qu'elle était pour moi? Elle était arabe. C'était le type arabe, comme moi j'ai le type normand [...] mais apprenant qu'elle est née en France je dis qu'elle est française. (13.A.F.L.45+ or -)

It would appear that because Zouzou explained why she was French, the viewers took this explanation on board and actually accepted her as French. The use of an explicit explanation can in this instance be seen as a relatively successful textual technique for encouraging the viewer to decode within the preferred meaning.

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16 In a small number of cases, respondents refused to state their age, and in these instances, therefore, it was necessary to estimate their ages.

17 The 1990 CNCDH report (1991) on La Lutte contre le racisme et la xénophobie shows that 68% of those French people questioned did not define the second-generation as being French.
Scenes decoded within the preferred meaning by a minority of viewers

Unlike the incident just discussed, where the message is re-enforced with explanation and is, therefore, explicit, the scene relating to question 24 is very different because the message is merely implicit. In this scene, Amar is seen cooking whilst Aziz hovers around him in the hope of being invited to share the meal. The dialogue initially revolves around Aziz hinting that he would like to join them for the evening meal, and then moves on to him giving Amar "helpful" tips on the types of spices that could be added to the dish that he is preparing. The technique used to convey the preferred meaning is visual as opposed to verbal: viewers were being encouraged to decode the scene within the preferred meaning that Maghrebi men are not necessarily chauvinists who expect women to do all the household chores, and that Amar's liberal approach is not particularly unrepresentative of the male Maghrebi population. The preferred meaning, therefore, was intended to make a dent in the widely-held (although often true-to-life) stereotype that first-generation Maghrebi men never help within the home, and that it is the women who do all the housework and all the cooking. However, a relatively low proportion of viewer decodings of the scene is within the intended meaning. Out of a total of 46 responses, only 10 are within the preferred meaning, although a further 11 are close it. These 11 viewers were not surprised to see Amar, a first-generation Maghrebi man, cooking because they perceived this as an indication of his "integration" into French society. Although this decoding of the scene is not exactly what the encoders intended, it would seem to fit in well with the "integrationist" message (in this case tending towards an assimilationist definition of "integration") that the FAS hoped to send to the audience. This lack of success in conveying the preferred meaning would seem to be due to a combination of two factors. Firstly, there is the issue of the credibility of the point that the encoders were trying to get across to the audience: the image of Amar cooking whilst Farida sets the table is nowhere near as believable as - in the previous scene discussed - Zouzou's assertion that she is French and not Algerian. After all, in legal terms Zouzou is
French. Thus Zouzou, in being French, is typical of the second generation, whilst on the other hand, Amar when he cooks is un-typical of a first generation man. Secondly, a purely visual, implicit preferred encoding is almost bound to be less readily decoded as intended, than one which is explicit and backed up by explanation. The encoders were attempting, therefore, to convey a preferred meaning that was not readily acceptable to viewers, using a weak technique. It could well be that if they had used the more forceful textual technique of accompanying this visual image of Amar cooking by some form of conversation where Amar said that he liked to cook from time to time, that a greater number of viewers would have decoded the scene within the preferred meaning.

As already mentioned, three further instances - questions 10, 12 and 21 - in the episode were decoded within the preferred meaning by a minority of viewers. In view of the fact that few respondents decoded these scenes within the preferred meaning, it is more useful to analyse them from the point of view of the negotiated responses than from that of the preferred decodings. These scenes will, therefore, be discussed in the section on negotiated cognitive decodings. Before moving on to that section, however, preferred decodings of general aspects of the episode such as interpretations of characters, relationships between the characters, and the overall meaning of the episode, will be examined.

3.2.2 Decodings of general aspects of the episode

In all, nine questions - questions 2, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 36 and 39 - refer to aspects of the episode that are not based on specific scenes or actions, but on more general aspects such as how the various characters were perceived, what the programme was actually about, and whether the Badaouis were considered representative of Maghrebi families in France or not. Decodings of these aspects of the programme were of particular importance to the encoders because it was often within these fields that the crucial encoded messages of *Fruits et Légumes* were contained. It would not, for
example, be considered a success for the programme-makers if a viewer decoded the specific scene where Amar blurs the distinction between ethnicity and religion (question 7 discussed above) within the preferred meaning, whilst at the same time producing a contradictory decoding of Amar's character as unpleasant because he is, say, too "Algerian" and not "French" enough. Clearly, in this case the latter more general decoding is of greater importance in terms of the ultimate aim of the programme than the former decoding of the specific scene. At the same time, however, these decodings are inextricably linked because the former decoding will certainly inform - at least in part - the latter one.

Concerning responses to the nine questions discussed here, in four instances decodings within the preferred meaning were produced by a majority of the respondents. However, in only one case did a large majority decode within the preferred meaning. This is a significantly lower success rate than amongst decodings of specific scenes and actions, where six out of the ten scenes were decoded within the intended meaning by a majority of viewers, and five out of these six were large majorities. This is not surprising in view of the fact that many decodings of more general aspects of the episode concern the overall message which requires the viewer to draw inferences from the actions in the programme, and so the viewer has to perform a more complex type of decoding.

General aspects of the episode decoded within the preferred meaning by a majority of viewers

In one of the first questions (question 2), respondents were asked to say what the programme was actually about. This was an important question in view of the fact that answers to it would clarify (for the analyser), firstly, whether decodings of subsequent scenes had taken place within the preferred overall framework of the programme, and secondly, whether the encoded themes or meanings of Fruits et

18 Question 2 asked: "C'était à propos de quoi, cette émission?"
Legumes had been successfully transmitted by the encoders to the audience. It can be argued that if the overall meaning of Fruits et Légumes had to be summarized by one concept, this would be "integration". The FAS's ultimate objective through the financing of this programme was to tangibly "contribuer à l'intégration des populations immigrées ou issues de l'immigration"\(^{19}\), and the intention was to achieve this through the portrayal of the process of "integration" of an already extremely well-"integrated" Algerian family in France. Clearly, this overall theme of "integration" encompasses other related themes such as issues of identity and inter-generational conflict. It can be said, therefore, that the preferred meaning of the programme ultimately revolves around the issue of "integration".

Among the 39 responses to question 2, 21 decodings - over half - were within the preferred meaning. A typical respondent defined the encoded themes of La Composition Française as

les relations culturelles entre les gens [...] la confrontation d'une génération qui est arrivée en France, qui avait une culture algérienne et qui a un problème... qui pose le problème d'intégration en termes d'identité culturelle. (24.A.M.H.42)

A further 16 decodings can be categorized as being close to the preferred meaning, and these can be subdivided into two groups of differing decodings. Ten viewers decoded La composition Française as being a programme that is, in general terms, about Algerians or Maghrebis in France. One such respondent said:


\(^{19}\) Letter from the FAS to Cinétévé 17.3.94.
These decodings are close to the preferred meaning because they identify an underlying topic - that of the Maghrebi or Algerian population in France - but they do not go as far as to identify the more general underlying themes that are applicable to any ethnic minority in France, regardless of origin. Eight out of these ten respondents were "native" French and as will be discussed in the next chapter, this specific decoding of what the programme was about may well be linked to them being of French origin. The remaining six respondents that produced decodings close to the preferred meaning, perceived the programme as being specifically about the issue of identity amongst second-generation Maghrebis. Thus, for them the programme was essentially about Zouzou's conflicting emotions when she had to decide whether France or Algeria was her country:

En fait c'est de ce qu'on parlait tout à l'heure, quoi, comment on se considère de quel pays on est. On voit un peu le... la confrontation du père avec les enfants [...]. (16.B.M.H.29)

Ça parlait un peu du problème qu'il y a, euh, enfin, du problème qu'il y a chez les immigrés qui savent pas bien se situer, s'ils sont bien français ou algériens. (2.B.F.L.20)

Once again, this type of decoding is close to the preferred meaning as it identifies one of the underlying themes of Fruits et Légumes but not the others. It is true, of course, that in terms of the story-line of this particular episode, the issue of identity is the central theme. It is interesting to note, however, that all six of these respondents were of Maghrebi origin, four second- and two first-generation, and this will be analysed in more detail in chapter 4.

That nearly all the viewers who responded to this question - 37 out of 39 - identified, to a greater or lesser extent, the overall encoded meanings of the programme is a very successful result for the programme-makers.
Some of the most important questions that viewers were asked, in order to assess whether the encoders' encoded message was getting across and being accepted by the audience, concerned viewer perceptions of the different characters in the episode (questions 26 to 31). In view of the fact that a key aim of the programme was to "[...] rendre populaire et attachante une famille de beurs [...]" 20, audience perceptions of the different members of the Badaoui family were of great importance. To what extent did the respondents like the different characters, and for what reasons? According to the encoders' objectives, not only should the audience like the Badaouis (a key attitudinal decoding) but they should like them for the "right" reasons (part of the cognitive decoding process). This second point is important because if the viewer likes a character but for the "wrong" reasons, a preferred reading has not been fully achieved and the precise message has not reached the viewer. This leads one to the question of what is, or is not, the "right" reason for liking the Badaouis. In the answer to this question lies one of the main problems - in terms of the encoders encouraging viewer decodings within the preferred meanings - of this programme. Due to the competing aims - as discussed in chapter 2 - of the various production partners as well as contradictions within the FAS's thinking, there were often tensions within the preferred meanings of the text. Thus, whilst the FAS stated that it expected Fruits et Légumes to "favoriser [...] une meilleure acceptation de la différence" 21, the script writers hoped "que les téléspectateurs [...] oublient que ce sont des immigrés"22. These two aims are clearly different although not necessarily incompatible. Within the context of these two statements, it would seem that the FAS hoped that viewers would like the characters either because of their ethnic specificities or inspite of them. As discussed in chapter 2, however, the FAS's requests during the production process would seem to suggest that it was merely paying lip-service to the notion of "integration" as mutual acceptance of cultural differences, and that in practice, it expected cultural change to take place on the minority ethnic side. On the other hand,

20 "Bible" September 1993.
21 Letter from the FAS to Cinévé 17.3.94.
22 "Bible, September 1993."
in view of the fact that the Badaouis were highly de-ethnicized, it would seem likely that the FAS *did* hope that viewers would accept the few ethnic specificites that the Maghrebi characters had retained. The FAS's encoded message regarding the Badaoui family was, therefore, deeply ambiguous. The script writers were clear in their aims: they wanted the audience to like the Badaouis for reasons unrelated to ethnic origin, and more to do with those things that viewers discover the Badaouis have in common with them. As seen above, Tadjer points out: "c'était pour quand même banaliser les gens nord-africains [...] pour dire que finalement on vit tous la même chose en France, on vit les mêmes problèmes [...]" (Tadjer: interview 24.4.97).

Bearing in mind these tensions within the preferred meanings, respondents were asked whether or not they liked each member of the Badaoui family, and for what reasons. Clearly, asking respondents to give their opinions of the various characters requires an attitudinal decoding on their part, and therefore, responses to these questions will also be discussed in the section below on attitudinal decodings. However, it is also clear that any attitudinal decoding of a character must, by its very nature, be preceded by a cognitive decoding. In other words, a liking or disliking will be based on a perception of what type of person the character is, which in turn, will be based on an impression of that character's behaviour and actions. There are, therefore, two levels to the process of decoding each character: a cognitive decoding and an attitudinal one.

In terms of the FAS's explicitly stated objectives, the viewer must - as mentioned above - like the character, and accept his or her (minimal) ethnic differences. In other words, the character must be liked for the "right" reasons, and these "right" reasons are at least as important a part of the decoding process as liking the characters, because they are, essentially, part of the basic encoded message. Thus, a viewer may state that the character Amar has retained his cultural origins (cognitive decoding), and that s/he likes Amar (attitudinal decoding) for this reason. This would be a decoding within the full preferred meaning according to the FAS's stated intentions: liking the character as well as greater acceptance of ethnic differences.
A second but different example of a cognitive-cum-attitudinal decoding within
the preferred meaning may also occur: a viewer may assert that the character Amar is a
kind father and husband (cognitive decoding), and that for this reason he is a likeable
character (attitudinal decoding). In this case, the viewer makes no reference to Amar's
ethnicity but focuses instead on some other aspect of Amar's character. Although from
the viewer's response it is not possible to ascertain whether Amar's ethnic differences
were accepted or not, the overall decoding can be classified as being within the
preferred meaning because it in no way contradicts the encoded message. Indeed, this
second example would seem to fit into the script writers' wish for the audience to
forget the Badaouis' ethnic origin. In short, therefore, it can be said that there are two
types of viewer decodings within the preferred meaning, with one being a step further
in the direction of the FAS's expressed objectives, and the other being closer to the
script writers' aims. This highlights the fact that due to there being various encoders
with diverging interests, there is not always a unified preferred meaning to every
aspect of the programme. Whilst the encoded preferred meanings of specific scenes
tend to be relatively unambiguous, the intended meanings of more general aspects of
the episode, such as characters and what the programme was essentially about, are less
clear-cut because it is mainly these aspects that contain the overall encoded messages
of the various encoders with their differing objectives.

Out of the six members of the Badaoui family, three - Amar, Aziz and Yoyo -
were perceived within the intended meaning by a majority of viewers. In the case of
Amar (question 2623), 20 out of the 40 decodings were within the preferred meaning
and a further three were close to it. These 20 decodings can be subdivided into the two
types of preferred meanings discussed above: ten decodings clearly displayed an
acceptance of Amar's ethnic differences, whilst the remaining ten made no reference to
his ethnicity:

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23 This question asked was: "Avez vous aimé Amar, et pour quelles raisons?"
Il est multiple... ouais, il est multiple. Justement il a des racines. [...] Le père c'est pas évident parce que lui il est effectivement déraciné. Il fonctionne certainement beaucoup avec ses souvenirs, mais c'est ça qui est touchant [...] (22.A.M.H.31)

[...] Il était quand même dans le vrai. Enfin, il a quand même ses racines qu'on voit [pause] qu'on ressent, quoi. [...] (2.B.F.L.20)

Le père oui [je l'ai aimé], ben le père c'est quelqu'un qui travaille, qui bosse pour sa famille [...] (16.B.M.H.29)

Le père c'est quelqu'un qui veut du bien pour ses enfants, il les incite à travailler, à avoir, par exemple, un emploi stable [...] (37.B.M.L.43)

In the above examples, it can be seen that whilst all four are within the preferred meaning, only the first two decodings show an acceptance of Amar's ethnic specificities.

The three respondents who produced decodings close to the preferred meaning liked Amar in spite of not being favourably disposed towards certain "ethnic" elements of his character. They did, however, accept these ethnic differences because they were part of his overall character, which they liked:

Un peu trop dans ses coutumes, quand même, parce que... il essayait pas de comprendre ses enfants [...].

J.H: Vous l'avez aimé comme personnage?

Oui, oui, j'aimerais bien avoir à faire à un homme comme ça, franchement. Non, c'est vrai qu'il était sympathique dans le feuilleton. (9.A.F.L.34)

Le père, je trouvais qu'il était assez drôle, très fier de son pays, qu'il était un petit peu intolérant aussi vis-à-vis des gens parce qu'il veut pas que sa fille soit
française, soit d'une autre nationalité que lui [...] mais en même temps il est humain et il fait des erreurs. (33.A.F.H.21)

In the case of the character Aziz (question 28), a practically identical pattern of decodings was found to those for Amar, with 22 out of the 42 decodings within the preferred meaning. Of these 22 decodings, half indicated an acceptance of Aziz's ethnic differences, whilst the other half made no reference to his ethnic origins. This similarity in the distribution of decodings within the preferred meaning of Amar and Aziz is very noticeable, especially when compared with decodings of other characters, such as Yoyo discussed below, which show very different patterns. Possible reasons for these diverging and converging decodings will be discussed at a later stage. With reference to Aziz, the following responses typify the two types of decodings within the preferred meaning:

Oui, il est bien l'oncle, oui. Oui, je trouve que c'est peut-être même le... le... celui que j'ai préféré des personnages. Justement il a gardé... il a vraiment gardé son physique, son accent. Oui, sympathique, naturel. (7.A.F.H.51)

Il a du charme parce qu'il a de l'humour. (23.A.M.H.22)

The first response is a clear example of the two levels of decoding within the preferred meaning having been achieved: the viewer likes Aziz because he has retained his ethnic specificities. From the second response, on the other hand, it is not possible to tell whether his ethnicity has been accepted.

The Badaoui's youngest son, Yoyo (question 31), produced a very different pattern of decodings within the intended meaning from the two characters analysed above. First of all, a much larger number of respondents - 26 out of 35 - perceived Yoyo within the preferred meaning. Secondly, only 4 out of these 25 decodings revealed an acceptance of Yoyo's ethnic differences, whilst the remaining 21
decodings made no reference to his ethnicity. Thus, most decodings within the preferred meaning were of Yoyo as intelligent, spontaneous and generally typical of little boys of his age:

[...] C'est une question de fraîcheur et de naturel, surtout le petit garçon, quoi. Tout ce qu'il dit, tout ce qu'il fait, c'est tout à fait spontané. Ce n'est pas calculé. [...] (12.A.F.H.68)

[...] il a ce côté un peu culoté comme tous les enfants petits dans une famille. [...] il ressemble à tous les enfants d'une famille, qui dirige un peu son monde et qui... qui considère les parents et les autres comme des nuls. (11.A.F.H.48)

As will be seen in the following section on general aspects decoded within the preferred meaning by a minority of viewers, the characters Reda and Farida also produced decodings that were based mainly on perceptions of non-ethnically-marked behaviour, and which made no reference to their ethnicity. It will also be seen that, on the other hand, decodings of Zouzou revolved to a slightly greater extent around her ethnicity. Thus, whilst Amar, Aziz and Zouzou were, to a relatively large extent, decoded in terms of their ethnicity, Yoyo, Reda and Farida were mainly decoded on the basis of aspects of their character unrelated to their ethnic origin.

General aspects of the episode decoded within the preferred meaning by a minority of viewers

Of the 44 decodings of the character Farida (question 27), 18 were within the preferred meaning, in other words, they liked her. However, of these 18 decodings, only two based this liking on references to her ethnicity, whilst the remaining 16 concentrated on aspects entirely unrelated to her ethnic origin, such as her being a good or kind mother:
Ben, elle est simple, elle est bien avec les enfants. Les enfants ont l'air d'être bien équilibrés. [...] Ça se passe bien, quoi. (40.B.H.L.50)

Similarly, very few viewers decoded Reda's character (question 30) in terms of his ethnic specificities, focusing instead on non-ethnically marked behaviour and attitudes. This raises the issue of what constitutes "ethnically marked" and "non-ethnically marked" behaviour. It can be said that if the behaviour of a character is clearly different from what would be normally found among members of another ethnic group in the programme, this would be labeled as ethnically marked behaviour. On the other hand, if the actions of the character do not appear to belong to one or other of the cultures represented in the programme, but might be found within any of them, this would be termed non-ethnically marked behaviour. Clearly, these definitions are formed within the parameters of the programme, and are, therefore, contextual. As well as mainly focusing on the non-ethnically marked aspects of Reda's behaviour, very few of the 40 decodings - only 12 - were within the preferred meaning: only a minority of viewers liked Reda.

In the case of Zouzou (question 29), on the other hand, a slightly larger proportion of decodings within the preferred meaning was based on her ethnicity. Thus, of the 15 who liked her, five referred to ethnic differences, and the remaining nine focused on non-ethnically marked actions.

It would seem that the degree to which decodings focused on ethnically marked features of a character correlates broadly with the degree to which ethnicity was de-/emphasized in the encoding of that character. Thus, although all members of the Badaoui family were highly de-ethnicized, some were more so than others, with Amar and Aziz at the top of the "ethnically-marked" end of the spectrum, Farida at the opposite extreme towards the "de-ethnicized" end of the spectrum, and Zouzou somewhere in the middle. The fact that Zouzou was decoded in terms of her ethnicity by more viewers than were her two brothers, would seem to be partly a result of her
conflicting emotions regarding her Franco-Algerian identity, which led viewers to think of her from the point of view of her ethnicity. Reda provoked disapproval among many decoders, due to his happy-go-lucky attitude towards money and his haphazard attempts at starting up new businesses. It is surprising, however, that very few "native" French viewers decoded Reda in terms of his ethnicity because it might have been expected that his behaviour would encourage them to perceive him within the widespread stereotype of young second-generation Maghrebi men as being delinquent. Thus, although viewer responses to Reda did not reveal an acceptance of his ethnicity, they can be seen as relatively positive because they do not make reference to this stereotype. That most viewers decoded Yoyo on the basis of criteria other than his ethnic specificities could be because he is a little boy, and perhaps the representation of childhood overrides ethnicity. It could also be that "native" French viewers find it easier to identify with a child of Maghrebi origin than with an adult because there is the expectation that one day that child will become French. As already discussed in chapter 2, Farida was extremely de-ethnicized for a first generation Algerian mother, and so it is not surprising that only two respondents decoded her character within the full preferred meaning, in other words, indicating an acceptance of her ethnic differences. Clearly, to decode Farida within the full intended meaning would have proved difficult for decoders, in view of the fact that Farida displayed little, or no differences. The problems created by the encoders' decision to de-ethnicize the characters and Farida in particular, are highlighted by many of the negotiated responses to Farida analysed in the next section.

Before moving on to the next section on negotiated decodings, it is worth briefly examining responses to the final question (question 39) that viewers were asked about the programme. Having been through the episode scene by scene, and character by character, the respondents were asked whether the Badaouis were typical of Maghrebi families in France24. Clearly the encoders of Fruits et Légumes were

24 The questioned asked was: "Trouvez-vous que les Badaoui sont une famille typiquement maghrébine vivant en France?"
aiming to reassure the French public about the Maghrebi population in France by persuading them that the Badaouis were relatively representative of Maghrebi families in France. However, out of the 48 responses to this question, only ten decodings were within the preferred meaning that the Badaouis were reasonably representative, and it is interesting to note that seven of these ten respondents were "native" French viewers. The significance of this will be examined in chapter 4. Two such responses are as follows:

Je sais pas, parce que je connais pas du tout de familles complètement maghrébines. [...] peut-être oui [c'est une famille typiquement maghrébine vivant en France], je sais pas. Oui, c'est sensiblement- oui, je pense. (8.A.F.L.41)

Là, je peux pas te dire, [pause] sûrement oui [c'est une famille typiquement maghrébine vivant en France]. (30.A.F.L.21)

As can be seen from these two decodings, the viewers emphasized the fact that they had no direct experience of Maghrebi people in France, and so their perceptions of the Badaouis were based on mediated impressions. A further nine respondents produced decodings that were close to the preferred meaning: they perceived the Badaouis as being representative of certain Maghrebi families in France but not of the majority. However, this still leaves a large number of viewers - 28- who decoded the Badaouis as unrepresentative of Maghrebis in France (these responses will be analysed in the section on negotiated responses). From the encoders' perspective, this is a disappointing result even though it does not necessarily imply that the overall message of the programme was completely lost. Clearly, it is possible to transmit an underlying theme via a programme that does not intend to directly portray reality, such as a science fiction series. Despite this, however, there is little doubt that the fact that most viewers perceived the Badaouis as bearing little resemblance to the average Algerian family in France was bound to diminish the overall strength of the textual
message. The programme was, after all, aiming to make a dent in certain widely-held stereotypes concerning France's Maghrebi population.

3.3 Negotiated cognitive decodings

As discussed in the introduction, nearly a third of all decodings differed significantly from the preferred readings, and as can be seen from the table, many of these negotiated decodings are actually in contradiction with the intended meanings of the episode. This section will systematically analyse these differential decodings, shedding light on the extent to which the media text is polysemic, and the audience is active. As Morley critically points out, there is a tendency in recent audience work to merely assume that the audience is always active and that the media content is open to interpretation, and he suggests that "to follow that path [...] is to underestimate the force of textual determinacy in the construction of meaning from media products, and [...] to romanticize the role of the reader improperly" (Morley 1992: 20). Similarly, Corner notes that if such assumptions are made, researchers are liable to fall into a "complacent relativism, by which the interpretive contribution of the audience is perceived to be of such a scale and range as to render the idea of media power naive" (Corner 1991: 29). Bearing in mind these criticisms of recent reception analyses, this section will attempt to assess the power relations between encoder and decoder in the specific case of La Composition Française.

3.3.1 Non-perception or lacunae decodings

Of the various scenes that viewers responded to, four - covered in questions 7, 8, 20 and 23 - produced non-perception decodings. One of the scenes discussed in the above section, where Amar fails to distinguish between ethnicity and religion (question 7) led to six such decodings. These respondents were unaware that Amar had confused two issues - being Muslim and being Arab - because they too appeared
to believe that they were one and the same thing. These viewers were, therefore, decoding the scene from the same, or from a similar, standpoint as Amar, rather than from within the encoders' framework of references. These are clearly non-perception decodings in which the respondents either did not have the specific knowledge needed to decode within the preferred meaning, or did not mobilize the necessary knowledge they had. Whilst some of these respondents displayed a complete non-perception of the point being made in the scene, and merely agreed with the idea that all Muslims are Arab, other viewers' decodings highlighted varying degrees of confusion with regard to concepts such as Islam, Arab, Maghrebi, Algerian, Berber, "race" and physical appearance. The following examples typify the various types of non-perception:

[...] C'est musulman, c'est arabe [sic] (42.B.F.L.42).

Ben oui, tous les musulmans sont maghrébins. Ah non non non [shouts] je vais me rattraper parce que [...] beaucoup de gens se convertissent. Il y a beaucoup de Français qui se convertissent dans la religion musulmane, même le champion de boxe là, des Etats Unis...

J.H: Tyson

Voilà, il s'est converti dans la religion musulmane, pourtant il est de couleur [...]. (5.B.F.L.22)

Ouais, quand il dit "on dirait pas une musulmane", ou un truc comme ça. Oui, "on dirait pas une Arabe", ouais, c'est vrai qu'on a le cliché traditionnel que l'Arabe est bronzé et frisé. Bon ben, c'est vrai que les Bosniaques... tu prends les Kabyles c'est pareil, les Kabyles ils sont blonds avec des yeux bleus. Ils sont de descendence allemande, hein. C'est complètement fou cette histoire physique. (29.A.M.L.44)
The first example is an unambiguous non-perception: the respondent clearly states that all Muslims are Arab. Although the second decoding is not as direct as the first one, it displays essentially the same non-perception as the first one, because the respondent believes that the only people to be born Muslim are Arab, and that all other Muslims have converted to the religion. It is also worth noting that this respondent uses the word "Maghrebi" rather than "Arab", because, as she puts it, "j'ai l'impression que c'est un insulte. Ce mot-là, en lui-même, je l'aime pas du tout" (5.B.F.L.22). Due to the word "Arab" being frequently used in a disparaging manner by "native" French people, this respondent who is of Algerian origin, refuses to use the word and chooses instead to replace it with the word "Maghrebi". In doing so, however, she reveals a further confusion in her decoding of the scene because she uses "Arab" and "Maghrebi" interchangeably, and this would seem to imply that she considers these two words to be synonymous. It is not clear, though, whether she believes that Arab people only come from the Maghreb, or whether she thinks that people from the Middle East are also referred to as Maghrebis. If the former is the case, this would mean that she is under the impression that only people from North Africa are born into the Muslim religion. Either way, her decoding of the scene reveals both a non-perception and a confusion of terminology. The third example is even more ambiguous: the respondent uses the terms Muslim, Arab, Bosnian, Kabyle, and German, as well as making reference to the widespread stereotypes of what both Arab and Kabyle people look like. Moreover, it would appear that he uses the words "Arab" and "Muslim" interchangeably, thus implying that he is confusing ethnicity and religion, a non-perception decoding, in other words. Beyond the issue of how he decoded the scene, his comment that Kabyle people are of German descent reveals yet another confusion, based on a frequently-voiced myth in France that the Berber population of Algeria is of European descent, and is, therefore, somehow closer to the French people, more "civilized" than Algeria's Arab population, and consequently, more easily integrated into French society (Zeghidour 1995: 30). This myth probably has its origins in France's policy during the colonial period when the French
encouraged a separation of the Arab and the Berber populations, the idea being to teach the Berbers French and to associate them more closely with the French colonial administration (Sluglett 1988: 85).

From the examples analysed above, it can be seen that not only were these respondents apparently unaware that Amar had confused ethnicity and religion, thus producing non-perception decodings of the scene, but also they did not have a clear understanding of certain terms, and consequently they used them in an inexact or incorrect manner. This in turn, led to further confusion in the decoding process.

As discussed above, question 8 refers to the scene where Yoyo asks his Uncle Aziz to name the leader of the Francs who stopped the Arabs at Poitiers, and the Uncle, not having had much schooling, gives an answer that has nothing to do with the question. Three respondents produced non-perception decodings of this scene: they were unconscious of the fact that Aziz's answer had nothing to do with the question that he was asked because they, like him, were unfamiliar with this historical event. As a result, the encoded meaning of the scene was completely lost on these viewers. The bafflement of these respondents can be seen in the following examples:

J'ai pas bien compris pourquoi il a... il a posé cette question. J'ai pas bien saisi là. (10.A.M.L.47)

Elle [the Uncle's answer] est nulle. Voilà, c'est tout. Parce qu'il n'a pas demandé le nom du contrôleur. Quand il dit que "j'ai pas demandé le nom du contrôleur", il l'a pas demandé. (41.B.F.L.38)

It is clear from these two decodings that the viewers have entirely missed the message of this scene.

When the Badaouis' eldest son, Reda, asks his father and uncle to point out the direction of Mecca, neither of them is capable of doing so. The respondents were asked what they thought of this (question 20), the preferred meaning being that Amar
and Aziz were unable to answer correctly because they are non-practicing Muslims, and therefore, do not pray. One "native" French respondent produced a non-perception decoding due to a complete gap in her knowledge concerning Islam and Muslim practices. This viewer was under the impression that "Mecca" was another term for the word "mosque", and consequently, she could not understand why Amar and Aziz did not know where the local mosque was to be found:

Ouais ben, là ça m'a fait un peu bizarre parce qu'eux qui sont musulmans, de pas savoir où est la Mecque, surtout à notre époque, parce qu'il y en a des Mecques qui sont fait pour des musulmans...

J.H: des quoi?

Des Mecques qu'ils ont fait, des mosquées comme ils les appellent. C'est ça hein, c'est la Mecque, quoi, on dit. [...]. (9.A.F.L.34)

This non-perception decoding is particularly revealing when viewed within the context in which this respondent lives, her home being in a high-rise block of flats in one of the suburbs of Montbéliard. Not only does this area have a high proportion of families of Maghrebi origin living there but she and her family are the only "native" French family dwelling in that particular block of flats. All the other families are of Maghrebi - mainly Algerian - origin. Thus, in spite of being in a situation that would appear to lend itself to discovering more about the Maghrebi way(s) of life, her decoding reveals a deep lack of knowledge of her neighbours' cultural practices. In other words, there would appear to be little or no communication between her family and her Maghrebi neighbours.

The final scene that led to non-perception decodings was the one in which the father makes a pun on "tapis", as in carpet, and "Tapie", as in the business magnate Bernard Tapie (question 23) when talking about his son's business ambitions. A total of six viewers did not understand Amar's joke, and were, indeed, unaware that it was a joke. It would seem likely that whilst some of these six respondents did not actually
have the necessary knowledge to decode this scene, others had the knowledge but did not mobilize it during their decoding process. The following responses typify the non-perception decodings of this scene:

Non, c'est une expression, à mon avis c'est une expression... [...] je trouve que c'est pas bien de dire tapis arabe [...] c'est comme par... je vous explique, c'est comme on dit "oh! c'est le travail arabe", vous comprenez ce que je veux dire? (43.B.F.L.37)

Moi je comprends pas très bien le... ce qu'il a voulu dire par cela. Non, mais je saisis pas... je comprends vraiment pas ce qu'il a voulu dire par cela. (10.A.M.L.47)

As will be discussed in chapter 4, it would seem likely that whilst the first respondent cited above, who was a first-generation Maghrebi woman, made the non-perception decoding in the absence of knowledge that was necessary for the decoding of the scene within the preferred meaning, the second respondent, who was a "native" French man in his 40s, did not mobilize the knowledge he had in order to read the scene as intended.

In conclusion it can be said that when non-perception decodings occur, the encoders have failed to "get the message" across to the audience. Hall loosely refers to these types of decodings as "misunderstandings of a literal kind" where "the viewer does not know the terms employed, cannot follow the complex logic of argument or exposition, is unfamiliar with the language, finds the concepts too alien or difficult or is foxed by the expository narrative" (Hall 1993: 99-100). He goes on to state that although these misunderstandings doubtless exist, broadcasters are generally more concerned when the audience "systematically distorts communication" (Hall 1993: 100), in other words, when the viewer negotiates (negotiation as defined by Hall) the meaning or reads it oppositionally. Hall does not, therefore, consider it necessary to
include these "misunderstandings of a literal kind" in his classification of decoding positions. However, from the above analysis of non-perception decodings of *La Composition Française*, it can be seen that programme-makers should be aware of the fact that certain sections of the audience will not decode the message as intended, often because they do not have the cultural competences, or tools, to do so. The creation of a category of response that accounts for these types of decodings is, therefore, a useful expansion of Hall's encoding/decoding model (1973).

3.3.2. "Wrong" focus decodings

A second form of negotiated viewer response is the "wrong" focus decoding, where the respondent concentrates on an aspect of the scene that the programme-makers did not intend the audience to focus on. In all, three scenes - referred to in questions 7, 10 and 24 -, and six general aspects of the episode - questions 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31 - produced this type of decoding, and a number of these will be analysed here. As examined earlier, the scene where Yoyo introduces his Bosnian classmate, Svetlana, to his father (question 7), had two preferred meanings, the first being that Amar had confused ethnicity and religion, and the second being that Yoyo told his father that Svetlana was Muslim so as to reassure him because he would not want his son to bring home a non-Muslim female friend. When asked about this scene, two respondents produced "wrong" focus decodings. Instead of focusing on the aspects of the scene referring to the two encoded meanings, these viewers concentrated on an entirely different angle. They perceived the scene as centering on the war in Bosnia, and decoded Amar's comment as an indication that he was uninformed about the situation in the former Yugoslavia. In their reading of the scene, the fact that the father was surprised that Svetlana was Muslim proved that he did not follow the news. As one of the two respondents stated:
C'est un petit manque... d'ignorance, parce que, bon, c'est avec les informations qu'on a avec la télé et la radio et tout ça, bon, on est quand même au courant que, bon, en Yougoslavie les Bosniqques, bon, ils sont musulmans, et bon, étant donné qu'ils [the Badaoui family] ont la télé c'est plutôt étonnant que lui ne le sache pas. [...]. (19.A.M.L.19)

Both these interviews took place in October 1994 when the war in Bosnia was still raging, and news coverage of the conflict was abundant, so it would seem likely that these respondents' decodings were at least partly influenced by this. The Bosnian issue was probably on their minds at the time, and so when Yoyo tells his father that Svetlana is a Bosnian Muslim, this led them to think of the events in Bosnia rather than of the fact that Amar was confusing the terms "Arab" and "Muslim". It could well be that if these interviews had taken place today, these viewers' decodings would have differed. In short, these "wrong" focus decodings highlight the fact that in the 1990s' world of global communications, audience decodings must be situated within the wider political context, which, for the public, is defined to a large extent by the media.

Question 10²⁵ refers to the scene where a pork meat salesman tries to sell his produce to Amar who, at first, is unwilling to buy it because being Muslim he does not eat pork. In the end, however, Amar decides to stock the pork sausages because business comes before belief. During the scene, the sales representative discusses his private life and tells Amar how he lost his previous job selling ladies' underwear. He goes on to complain about his new job as a pork meat salesman, and the fact that his employers are testing his salesmanship by sending him to shops with Maghrebi shopkeepers: "on m'a filé que des épiciers arabes"²⁶, he says. The encoders' preferred meaning of this scene was to point out to viewers that Muslims may well not eat pork.

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²⁵ The question asked was: "Que pensez-vous de la scène où un représentant de charcuteries essaie de vendre ses produits à Amar?"
²⁶ Quotation taken from the third version of the script for La Composition Française (Tadjer & Turenne, December 1993: 14)
but that this does not automatically mean that they will not sell pork products. In other words, Muslim people are multi-faceted and they are not necessarily inflexible. There were 14 "wrong" focus decodings of this scene, and these can be divided into three groups, each group focusing on a different aspect of the scene. Firstly, eight viewer decodings concentrated entirely on the sales representative's discussion of his private life. These respondents made no reference to the issue of Amar not eating pork but nevertheless stocking it for his clients. Consequently, the encoders' encoded message was completely lost on these respondents. When discussing this scene, one such viewer stated:

Ben lui c'était un comique, ouais avec ses... qui vendait avant des... qui était représentant pour les lingeries féminines, et puis qui s'est fait licencier parce que, euh, il regardait un petit peu trop de près, quoi. (32.A.F.L.22)

Secondly, five viewers focused purely on the commercial aspects of the scene, making no reference to the issue of Amar selling pork products in spite of pork being haram (forbidden) in Islam. Once again, therefore, the encoders' preferred meaning of the scene did not reach these respondents. Thus, one respondent commented:

Ouais ben, alors lui il essaie de vendre ses produits, puis, ben, en fait il y a l'épicier qui s'en sort bien, puis le démarcheur aussi là, parce que [laughs] l'épicier il arrive à se faire du fric sur le dos du... du, ouais, du voisin. Voilà, quoi. C'était marrant. Il essaie de lui vendre quelque chose et l'épicier il achète et le revend deux fois plus cher. Il y en a qu'un qui s'est fait avoir, quoi, c'est Baudoin [the Badaoui's neighbour]. (21.A.M.L.19)

Finally, one respondent's decoding concentrated on the sales representative's comment "on m'a filé que des épiciers arabes", which she found shocking. With
reference to this comment she said: "je l'ai pris mal, moi, qu'il dise ça devant le commerçant" (48.C.F.L.22).

It is clear from the above examples, that when "wrong" focus decodings occur, the encoded preferred meaning is "missed" by the viewers because they have focused on an entirely different aspect of the scene. Thus, although these viewers have not decoded in a manner that runs counter to the intended meaning, the preferred message is lost.

The case of question 24 is somewhat different from the two scenes analysed above. Viewers were asked what they thought of the scene where Amar is seen preparing the evening meal whilst his wife looks after the grocery shop. It will be remembered that the encoders were trying to get across to the audience the idea that although many first-generation Maghrebi men do not take part in the housework, some do help within the home. Quite a large number of respondents - 14 - decoded the scene in a manner that differs subtly but significantly from this preferred meaning. Whilst these viewers did not reject the idea, or deny the fact that some Maghrebi men, such as Amar in the programme, help within the home, they focused their responses to the scene on those Maghrebi men who never participate in the household chores. In other words, instead of focusing on the positive example within the episode, they remained preoccupied with the general stereotype of Maghrebi men as chauvinists that is to be found outside the episode. That these viewers focused on this "external" aspect rather than on the individual case of Amar, is a clear indication that the scene made no dent in their preconceived image of Maghrebi men. This type of response is typified by the following viewer's comment:

[...] c'est rare qu'un père arabe fasse de la cuisine. C'est vrai que c'est étonnant, parce qu'il y en a pas beaucoup, hein [pause] ouais, ouais, parce qu'il y en a pas beaucoup qui font la cuisine [laughs]. La plupart du temps c'est la femme qui fait la cuisine, la femme ou les filles. Ouais c'est étonnant de voir ça. (15.B.M.L.23)
From this comment it can be seen that although the viewer does not deny the fact that some Maghrebi men may do the cooking, he focuses his decoding on those men outside the programme who never cook. Categorizing this type of decoding is complex: it cannot be classified as being contradictory to the preferred meaning because the viewer does not suggest that Maghrebi men never cook. Nor, on the other hand, is this decoding within the preferred meaning because the respondent views the scene with great surprise and would appear to perceive Amar as being the exception that confirms the rule. The encoders, on the other hand, were hoping to portray Amar as relatively representative of certain more liberal first-generation Maghrebi men. As already discussed, "wrong" focus decodings occur when a viewer focuses on an aspect of a scene that the encoders did not intend the audience to concentrate on, and as a result of this, the intended encoded message is not received by the viewer. In this case, it is not that these 14 respondents focus on the "wrong" part of the scene but rather that they concentrated on something outside the episode. Thus, although these viewers actually saw Amar in the scene doing the cooking, they focused on those men not represented in the programme who never help within the home. Clearly, there are some people outside the programme who are implicitly in the episode because the Badaoui family are meant to represent them. However, these viewers focused on those people outside the programme who are not represented by the Badaouis. It would seem, therefore, that these responses can be categorized as "wrong" focus decodings, but in a different way from the "wrong" focus decodings related to questions 7 and 10 discussed above. To distinguish between these two types of "wrong" focus decodings, those concerning questions 7 and 10 could be termed internal "wrong" focus decodings, whilst responses to question 25 could be labeled external "wrong" focus decodings.

When viewers were asked whether they liked Amar or not, and for what reasons (question 26), four respondents produced "wrong" focus decodings of him. It will be recollected that the programme-makers not only wanted viewers to like the Badaoui family but that they wanted them to be liked for the "right" reasons. These
“right” reasons, it was seen, involved an acceptance of the few ethnic differences that the Badaouis were portrayed as having, or at the very least, no rejection of them. It was suggested, for example, that if a viewer stated that Amar has retained his cultural origins (cognitive decoding), and that s/he likes him for this reason (attitudinal decoding), this would be classified as a decoding within the full preferred meaning. A second example was given of a viewer who asserts that Amar was a kind father (cognitive decoding), and therefore s/he likes him (attitudinal decoding). In this case it is not possible to ascertain whether Amar’s ethnic differences have been accepted but on the other hand, they have certainly not been rejected, the response does not contradict the encoded message, and so it is also classified as being within the preferred meaning. The first example is, however, one step further in the direction of the FAS’s stated objectives than the second.

Concerning the four responses analysed here, these viewers did not like Amar. Clearly, this attitudinal decoding runs counter to the programme-makers’ preferred meaning that the Badaouis are a likeable family. However, these responses were based on cognitive decodings of Amar that made no reference to his ethnicity, concentrating entirely on non-ethnically marked aspects of his behaviour. Thus, three of these respondents disliked Amar because of the manner in which he treated his clients, whilst a fourth viewer disliked him because he tended to refer to Reda as his son when his business ventures were successful, and as his wife’s son when they failed. At a cognitive level, therefore, these decodings cannot be said to contradict the encoders’ message of encouraging a certain degree of acceptance of ethnic differences, and so they cannot be categorized as contradictory decodings. On the other hand, they cannot be classified as being within the preferred meaning either, because due to these perceptions of Amar, the viewers did not like him. These decodings have, therefore, been assigned to the “wrong” focus category, the rationale being that these respondents did not focus on the mainly positive aspects of Amar’s character that the encoders intended the audience to focus on but rather, they focused their attention, and based their impressions of Amar on those few moments in the
episode when he was portrayed in a less positive light. With regard to Amar, one of these respondents stated:

Non [je ne l'aime pas]. Le côté arnaqueur dans l'épicerie, ça, je veux dire, c'est un côté que... la première scène, franchement, je la trouve très désagréable, quoi. On a vraiment l'impression qu'il prend les gens pour des cons et c'est pas agréable. [...] Donc, le père [je ne l'aime] pas tellement en fait. (23.A.M.H.22)

It can be seen that this viewer's decoding focuses entirely on one aspect of the father's behaviour - his selling techniques - an aspect which the encoders did not intend to be the focal point of Amar's character, and which they had thought the audience would find amusing, rather than distasteful.

As is clear from table 3.1, a significant number of viewers (39) produced "wrong" focus decodings of all six members of the Badaoui family. However, as the process of decoding seemed to be fairly similar in all these cases, to avoid unnecessary repetition the remaining characters will not be discussed here.

In conclusion it can be said that responses to questions 24 and 26 highlight the problematic nature of classifying viewer decodings. Although Hall's three reading positions have been extended to seven for the purposes of this analysis, it is clear that the categorization of decodings is still not a straightforward task and that not all readings neatly fit into one of the decoding categories.

3.3.3 Alternative decodings

A significant number of respondents produced alternative decodings of scenes and of general aspects of the programme, these interpretations being substantially different from, although not in contradiction with, the programme-makers' intended meanings. A total of five scenes - referred to in questions 7, 15, 18, 20 and 21 -, and one general aspect of the programme - question 2 -, led to alternative decodings. Question 7, as
seen above, refers to the scene where Amar blurs the distinction between Muslim and Arab. Three viewers decoded this scene in an alternative manner, and within this group of three, there were two different alternatives. Firstly, one respondent perceived the scene in a manner which at first appears to be within Henri de Turenne's preferred meaning but which on closer analysis is significantly different. Concerning this scene, this viewer stated:

"... en France on a tellement classé, caricaturé, la situation de cette mixité culturelle dans la vie de tous les jours que aujourd'hui on confond, on fait un amalgame - à mon avis, hein - on fait un amalgame entre le fait d'être immigré, musulman, et arabe [...] comme ils ont vécu en France et que c'est effectivement le Maghreb et plus particulièrement l'Algérie qui a été pourvoyeur de main-d'œuvre subalterne [...] il y a un réflexe de penser comme ça, alors qu'en fait le problème il est beaucoup plus large. (24.A.M.H.42)"

Initially this decoding may appear to be within the preferred meaning because the respondent actually refers to a confusion between terms such as "immigrant", "Muslim" and "Arab". However, when placed in the overall context of his statement, it becomes clear that this viewer is not referring to the issue of Amar confusing ethnicity and religion but rather to the fact that "native" French people frequently use the term 'immigré" to designate a specific type of immigrant, namely, people originating from North Africa, or more specifically, from Algeria. His point, therefore, is that many "native" French people classify immigrants as "Arab", and in turn, the "immigrant problem" becomes an "Arab problem", when in actual fact it is a much wider issue than that. Clearly, this alternative account of the scene is very different from, and more complex than, the intended meaning. It cannot be said, however, to be contradictory to the encoders' preferred meaning.
Two other respondents decoded Amar's comment not as an indication that he had confused the terms "Arab" and "Muslim" but rather as a sign that he was unaware that Arab people could be fair-haired. Thus, one of these viewers commented:

Ah si, quand même, même les Arabes sont blonds [laughs]. Mais si elle a la mère française aussi... si elle a le père algérien et la mère française, elle peut être blonde aussi, et musulmane. (41.B.F.L.38)

To this respondent, Amar's comment reveals that he has too narrow a definition of an Arab person's physical appearance because, as she points out, Arab people can be blond. Clearly, this alternative interpretation of the scene, though very different from the intended meaning, is not contradictory to it. It is, after all, true that many Arab people are fair-haired. From this response, however, it is not clear whether the viewer was aware that Arab and Muslim are not synonymous. If not, this would mean that the decoding was both an alternative one, and a non-perception one.

As discussed in the previous section, when viewers were asked whether Zouzou was French or Algerian (question 15) a high proportion of them perceived her as French, in other words, their decodings were within the preferred meaning. A further two respondents produced alternative decodings which, from the encoders' point of view, are most certainly compatible with the preferred meaning:

Physiquement on voit tout de suite... on se dit tout de suite que c'est une beur, une beurette, parce qu'elle a les cheveux bouclés, elle est typée, et dans sa façon de parler elle est française. (3.B.F.H.22)

Elle est comme moi [...] Pour moi elle est née ici, parce que je l'imaginais beur, de moi-même, d'ailleurs de beaucoup de gens. Elle parle très bien le français. Voilà. Je ne sais pas... sa façon de se comporter. (6.B.F.H.24)
These viewers perceived Zouzou as *beur* or as a *beurette*, their explanation for this being that whilst her physical appearance is Maghrebi, she is clearly French because of the way she speaks and behaves. In defining Zouzou as *beur*, these respondents were accepting that she is French - as the encoders had hoped - without dismissing her Algerian origins. That the script writers referred to the Badaoui family as "une famille de beurs"[^27] in their initial "Bible" is an indication that although they wanted viewers to accept the Badaoui children as being to a significant degree French, this was not to the exclusion of also perceiving them as *beur*. The word "beur" means "Arab" in the back-slang called "verlan" which is spoken by many young people from the Parisian suburbs (Kepel 1991:14), and it is widely used to designate the sons and daughters of North African immigrants in France (Hargreaves 1989: 1). It should be noted, however, that the meaning of "beur" can be very different, depending on who is using the word: if it is employed by a person of Maghrebi origin, s/he will probably be referring to someone who is of French nationality but of Maghrebi origin. On the other hand, many "native" French people use the word in a pejorative manner, as an alternative to the frequently used term "arabe".

Question 18 is based on the scene where Amar discusses the issue of nationality with his French neighbour, Baudoin, who asks him why he does not want to have French nationality. It will be remembered from the previous section that Amar’s answer makes reference, in a somewhat elliptical manner, to the colonial period in Algeria: he states that during the 20 years that he was in Algeria he was told that he was French, and throughout the 30 years that he has spent in France he has been told that he is Algerian. As noted earlier, there are two aspects - one cognitive and one attitudinal - to the decoding of this scene within the preferred meaning: firstly, there is the fact that Amar is referring to the colonization of Algeria, this being the cognitive aspect, and secondly, the encoders wanted the viewer to sympathize with Amar and what he has lived through, this being the attitudinal aspect. The concern here, is with

[^27]: "Bible" September 1993.
the cognitive decodings of the scene. A total of eight respondents produced alternative cognitive decodings of the scene: they did not decode Amar's reply as making reference to the colonial period. Within these eight responses, two types of alternative readings have been identified, although they are both closely linked. Six viewers understood Amar's comment as meaning that Amar is labeled as immigrant wherever he goes, and is, therefore, rejected both in France and in Algeria. The following examples typify this alternative decoding:

Ça c'est un peu le problème des immigrés, hein. [...] On a toujours les gens qui sont là pour te dire "oui, toi t'es immigré", alors quand tu vas en Algérie on te dit que t'es immigré, puis quand t'arrives ici: immigré. [...] (18.B.M.L.26)

Moi je pense qu'il a raison, parce que moi aussi si je vais dans mon pays on va me dire que je suis française, et si je suis ici on va me dire que je suis congolaise [...] ici ils disent que je suis immigrée. (45.C.F.L.17)

Je sais pas, c'est assez chelou\textsuperscript{28} parce que j'ai l'impression que quand il [Amar] retourne dans son pays il est considéré comme un Français, et en France il est considéré comme un immigré. (30.A.F.L.21)

The above examples reveal the way in which these respondents, rather than perceiving Amar's comment in historical terms, transpose it to the present context in which people of immigrant origin living in France, are often treated as immigrants or outsiders when visiting their countries of origin. It is interesting to note from these examples, that viewers of all three ethnic origins - "native" French, those of Maghrebi origin, and those originating in sub-Saharan/Central Africa - produced this alternative decoding of the scene, the significance of which will be examined in chapter 4.

Two more respondents produced alternative decodings of Amar's statement

\textsuperscript{28} "Chelou" is verlan for "louche", meaning dodgy.
regarding the reasons for which he did not want French nationality. They did not perceive Amar's comment in terms of the colonization of Algeria but rather, as meaning that it would be pointless for him to acquire French nationality because even if he were to have it he would still be regarded as Maghrebi by "native" French people in France:

[...] En fait pour lui les Français n'acceptent pas... ne l'acceptent pas. Même si tu vis et tu essaies d'avoir une vie française, de toute manière on te voit toujours comme un Arabe [...] Même si on prend la nationalité on reste ce qu'on est. Oui, c'est pas la peine de prendre. (1.B.F.H.24)

C'est vrai que prendre la nationalité française ça ne sert pas à grande chose, même avec vos papiers français vous êtes considéré comme algérien, et c'est pour ça qu'il y a beaucoup qui veulent pas prendre la nationalité française. (40.B.F.L.50)

Although significantly different from the preferred meaning of the scene, these eight alternative readings are not contradictory to it. Indeed, the situations of rejection that these decodings describe, are, to a large extent, the legacy of the colonization of Algeria (as well as of other countries) that Amar refers to in his answer to Baudoin's question.

The scene in which Reda, the Badaouis' eldest son, asks his father and his uncle to point out the direction of Mecca and neither is capable of answering correctly (question 20), was decoded alternatively by six viewers. It was seen in the previous section that the encoded meaning of this scene was that Amar and Aziz do not pray because they are no more than nominally Muslim. Amongst these six respondents, there were four different alternative decodings. Firstly, three viewers perceived the direction of Mecca as being a spiritual direction within the mind as opposed to a material, geographical orientation, and they made no reference to the encoders' message that Aziz and Amar were non-practicing Muslims. Although this definition
of the direction of Mecca is technically incorrect, because Muslims do physically face Mecca when praying, these alternative accounts of the scene do not actually contradict the intended meaning of the scene. One such respondent asserted:

[...] en fait ce qui est important c'est la dimension spirituelle de l'Islam. C'est pas un problème de nord et de sud. C'est un problème d'attitude spirituel par rapport à ça. [...] On est une boussole par rapport à l'esprit, pas par rapport à la géographie [...]. (24.A.M.H.42)

The remaining three respondents each gave differing alternative accounts of this scene. Although two of these decodings will not be discussed here, it is worth examining the third response which, in spite of being alternative to the preferred meaning, would appear to be particularly compatible with the FAS's "integrationist" message. This viewer perceived the fact that the father and uncle did not know the direction of Mecca as being the result of having lived in France for many years, thus leading to a gradual loss of their cultural origins. Clearly, this decoding is significantly different from, although not contrary to, the script writers' message that Maghrebis in France are not necessarily very religious. It fits in well, however, with the FAS's wish to show the audience the actual process of "integration" of the Badaoui family through the portrayal of "situations réelles de la vie quotidienne"29. This viewer stated:

Ben, ça faisait tellement de temps qu'ils sont en France qu'en fait ils se rappelaient plus où était le lieu de prière, enfin, la direction. Et puis le fils il a démontré à son père et à son oncle, en fait que, bon, ils se prétendent vouloir garder les origines maghrébines, algériennes, mais en fait [...] à force de vivre dans un autre pays on finit un peu par perdre ses origines [...]. (19.A.M.L.19)

29 Letter from the FAS to Cinéfêtes (7.10.93).
Question 2\textsuperscript{30} refers to the same scene as discussed above. Having asked his father and uncle to point out the direction of Mecca, Reda proceeds to show them how they can overcome this problem of orientation by using his latest invention: a prayer mat with a compass attached to it. He goes on to explain that these carpets are his most recent business venture. Respondents were asked what they thought of this business idea, which according to the script writers was not an idea to be taken seriously: "c'était pour faire rire"\textsuperscript{31}. The preferred meaning of the scene, therefore, was that Reda's carpets with compasses attached to them were not an idea to be taken seriously. However, only 15 out of the 45 respondents read the scene in this manner. The remaining 30 viewers decoded the scene alternatively: they perceived Reda's business venture as a serious idea. The difference between these two decodings is highlighted by the two following examples:

Ben, c'est très drôle, c'est la chose la plus drôle du film. Je sais pas si c'est de très bon goût, mais c'est drôle. (7.A.F.H.51)

Moi je pense que ça marchera, uh-hu, oui, oui c'est une bonne idée, comme ça ils [Muslim people] savent vite... comme le musulman qui est pratiquant est très perfectioniste parce qu'il veut faire sa prière dans la bonne direction, donc il va se dire "bon ben, je vais acheter ce tapis pour savoir où elle est la direction". (16.B.M.H.29)

Clearly, whilst the first example is within the preferred meaning, the second is an alternative decoding of the scene.

Finally, when viewers were asked what the programme was about (question 2), one respondent produced an alternative decoding. As discussed above, the preferred meaning of the programme revolved around the issue of "integration" and

\textsuperscript{30}The question asked was: "Quelle est votre opinion sur l'affaire que Reda veut monter?"
\textsuperscript{31}Interview with Akli Tadjer 24.4.97
related themes such as inter-generational conflict, relations between the Badaoui family and French society, and so on. This particular respondent, on the other hand, perceived the programme as being specifically about parents who, above all else, want their children to succeed in life:

Ben, la réussite en soi des enfants, et le but de la ré... d'une famille. Les parents qui essaient d'avoir par tous les moyens la réussite de leurs enfants. (13.A.F.L.45+ or -)

Although very different from the overall preferred meaning of the programme, this viewer's decoding in no way conflicts with this meaning, and can even be said to be compatible with the FAS's "integrationist" message.

In conclusion, it can be said that as in the cases of non-perception and "wrong" focus decodings, alternative decodings result in the programme-makers' intended message not reaching the viewer. However, the alternative decodings analysed above would seem to suggest that whilst the signifying mechanisms of the text were unsuccessful in terms of promoting the preferred meaning, they did, on the other hand, succeed in "triggering" alternative accounts of scenes which were not contradictory to the intended meaning, and which in some cases were clearly compatible with it. This leads to the question of why these alternative accounts were activated among certain groups of respondents and not others, and this issue will be examined in chapter 4.

3.3.4 Contradictory decodings

Table 3.1 highlights the fact that there was a significant number of contradictory decodings of La Composition Française. A total of 101 out of the 825 decodings ran counter to the preferred meaning. For the purposes of this analysis, contradictory decodings will be divided into two groups, the first being those of specific scenes, and
the second being those of more general aspects of the episode, such as the perceptions of characters and of the relationships between these characters. In all, five scenes, and eight general aspects of the episode were decoded contradictorily by certain respondents. A number of examples of these contradictory decodings will be analysed in this section.

Contradictory decodings of specific scenes

As already mentioned, five scenes led to contradictory decodings: questions 8, 10, 18, 20 and 24. Question 8 is based on the scene where Yoyo asks his Uncle Aziz who the leader of the Francs was who stopped the Arab invasion at Poitier. Due to his lack of knowledge of French history, Aziz gives an answer that has nothing to do with the question asked. However, four respondents did not decode the scene in this manner: they were of the opinion that Aziz knew the answer to the question and was merely joking. This reading of the scene contradicts the preferred encoded meaning that because Aziz had had little education, he did not understand Yoyo's question. Moreover, these viewers appeared to be unaware of the fact that their interpretations were contradictory to the preferred meaning. One such respondent asserted:

Oui, il a voulu être original et plaisanter sur un problème qui doit peut-être l'embêter plus que ça, je pense. [...] C'est un truc dont on doit leur dire assez souvent "alors, Charles Martel vous a pas arrêtés?". [...] Oui, il a évacué la réponse parce que ça lui disait pas, quoi, enfin, je vois le problème comme ça, plaisanter sur un sujet un peu grave parce qu'on doit l'embêter avec ça, plutôt que de répondre alors qu'il savait. (23.A.M.H.22)

The above viewer clearly interpreted Aziz's response as being a conscious decision on his part not to answer the question correctly but rather to poke fun at one of the most important events in French history because it was an event that displeased him.
When respondents were asked what they thought of the reason Amar gave Baudoin for not wanting French nationality (question 18), one respondent produced a contradictory decoding. As discussed above, Amar explains to his neighbour that when he lived in Algeria he was told that he was French, and later when he moved to France he was told that he was Algerian. Amar does not, however, explicitly state that the reason for this change in his nationality was linked to Algeria's status, first as a French colony and later as an independent country. One respondent, therefore, interpreted Amar's comment as an indication that he was ignorant of the reasons why he had initially been told that he was French and subsequently, that he was Algerian. She went on to assert that Amar must be rather stupid not to understand that his country had been colonized, and had later acquired independence. Thus, although she linked Amar's comment to the issue of de/colonization in Algeria, as the programme-makers intended, her decoding of Amar as being unaware of this event, and therefore, stupid, is clearly contrary to the preferred meaning. The encoders certainly did not wish the audience to perceive Amar as lacking in intelligence. Regarding Amar's answer to Baudoin's question she states:

Il [Amar] est un peu bête. Je pense qu'il a pas dû avoir beaucoup d'éducation pour comprendre ce qui s'est passé en fait là-bas, parce que, bon, c'est vrai quand il y avait... avant l'Algérie était française, après quand il y a eu la guerre elle a eu son indépendence [...] il a pas dû comprendre qu'après la guerre, il était plus français mais algérien. (32.A.F.L.22)

Question 20 refers to the scene where Amar and Aziz are unable to point out the direction of Mecca when Reda asks them to. It was seen above that the preferred meaning of this scene was that neither the father nor the uncle are practising Muslims, hence the fact that they are incapable of pointing out the correct direction in which prays should be conducted. Seven viewers produced contradictory decodings of this scene, and within this group of seven, there were three types of contradictory
readings. Firstly, four respondents did not interpret the fact that Amar and Aziz pointed in the wrong direction as an indication that they were non-practicing Muslims but rather as meaning that the two men did their prayers in the wrong direction. Another viewer produced a slightly more complex decoding: as with the previous four respondents, he was of the opinion that both Amar and Aziz practised their religion but he went on to say that whilst Amar pointed in the correct direction because the incident took place in his own house, Aziz got it wrong because he was not in his own home, and he was, therefore, disorientated. Clearly, these readings of the scene run counter to the encoders’ preferred meaning that neither men is a practising Muslim. The inferred encoded message of the scene was that Muslims are not necessarily excessively devout but it would seem likely that this message was lost on those respondents who perceived Amar and Aziz as practising Muslims. For example, one such respondent commented that:

[... on dit que la Mecque c’est au nord [sic], mais personne ne sait quand on est assis dans un endroit où est vraiment le nord, donc eux ils étaient persuadés que c’était là, et ils ont donné une réponse [...]. Les musulmans essaient de faire de leur mieux. Moi je trouve ça déjà génial qu’ils font leurs prières.

J.H: Est-ce que Amar et Aziz font leurs prières?

A mon avis oui, parce que les Musulmans sont très respectueux de ce qu’il faut faire. (33.A.F.H.21)

That the father and uncle did not know the direction of Mecca, clearly did not make this respondent doubt that they were practising Muslims. She goes on to justify this by saying that Muslims are very observant of religious practises, thus suggesting that the encoders’ message that many Muslims are only nominally so, did not get across to this respondent.

Two further respondents perceived the scene as ridiculing Muslims. Moreover, two of the above viewers who were under the impression that Amar and
Aziz prayed facing the wrong direction, also interpreted the scene as mocking Muslim people. As one respondent commented "c'est vraiment se foutre la gueule des gens" (6.B.F.H.24). This decoding clearly contradicts both the preferred meaning of the scene - that the two men were non-practising Muslims -, and one of the FAS's underlying aims of the series, this being that the programme should not encourage viewers to laugh at (as against with) the Badaoui family. As seen in chapter 2, one of the FAS's prerequisites for the making of *Fruits et Légumes* was that "cette série ne doit pas faire rire, mais [...] sourire, [...] attendrir et [...] rendre familier et proche cette famille immigrée". In view of this, therefore, these four contradictory decodings are quite worrying interpretations of the scene for the FAS, and are certainly more intensely contradictory than the previous type discussed.

When respondents were asked what they thought of the scene where Amar is seen preparing the evening meal (question 24), four viewers produced contradictory decodings. Whilst the encoders' preferred meaning of the scene was that Amar's liberal behaviour is representative of at least a small proportion of the male Maghrebi population, four respondents asserted that Maghrebi men never help with the household chores. In other words, these viewers did not appear to concede that even a small number of Maghrebi men behave as Amar does in the programme. Clearly, therefore, this type of response contradicts the encoded preferred meaning, and the image of Amar cooking would appear to have made no dent in their preconceived perceptions of first-generation Maghrebi men. Thus, one respondent stated that "chez les Arabes c'est quand-même pas l'homme qui fait la cuisine" (29.A.M.L.44) whilst another commented that "[...] le fait qu'il fasse la cuisine, effectivement ça c'est pas du tout arabe. C'est toujours les femmes qui font la cuisine" (27.A.M.H.62).

A further respondent produced a very different contradictory decoding from those discussed above. He did not interpret the scene in terms of Amar doing the cooking but focused instead on his behaviour towards Aziz when it was decided that Aziz would join the Badaoui family for the evening meal. This viewer strongly

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32 Letter from the FAS to Cinétévé (7.10.93)
disapproved of the fact that Aziz, as a guest, was made to help prepare the meal. He went on to assert that this behaviour is typical of Maghrebi people and that the French would never let this happen because it is generally held that a guest should not be made to do anything:

Ah ben oui, chez eux c'est toujours comme ça, il y a toujours le chef, il y a toujours un dominant et un dominé, et l'autre [Amar] puisqu'il l'invite [Aziz] à bouffer chez lui, il le fait gratter, il le fait travailler. Mais c'est implicite, c'est pas... c'est pas volontaire, ça fait partie de leur façon de se comporter. Nous on sait pas... on sait pas ça. Chez nous ça serait une correction notoire: un invité il a tous les droits. (26.A.M.H.58)

This respondent's use of the words "dominant" and "dominé" would seem to indicate that he is attributing to Maghrebi people the sort of French colonial behaviour that he was a part of when he served in the French campaign to keep Algeria under French domination. This decoding, clearly contradicts the intended meaning of the scene. The programme-makers' portrayal of Aziz peeling the potatoes and setting the table for the evening meal was most certainly not intended to be perceived as an indication of lack of hospitality on the part of Maghrebi people. On the contrary, it is a well-known fact that Arab-Muslim society highly values hospitality. In short, therefore, it can be said that this reading of the scene can best be classified as a contradictory decoding.

Contradictory decodings of general aspects of the episode

33 During the interview, this respondent made frequent references to his experiences in Algeria: "à un moment donné j'avais à garder des félagas dans un camp de prisonniers, et ils se tournaient mal [they did not know the direction of Mecca], alors on leur foutait des coups de crosse sur la tête ou sur le dos, là, "tournes-toi vers la Mecque" [...]"
Viewers were asked whether or not they liked each character in the episode, and as can be seen from table 3.1, each member of the Badaoui family was decoded in a contradictory manner by a significant number of respondents. However, due to the similar nature of these contradictory readings of the various characters, to avoid repetition only decodings of Farida will be examined here. A total of 11 out of the 44 viewers who made processable responses produced contradictory decodings of Farida. As discussed above, the programme-makers wanted the audience not only to like the Badaouis but to like them for the "right" reasons. Five respondents produced attitudinal decodings of Farida that would appear to be within the preferred meaning: they liked her. However, these viewers liked Farida for the "wrong" reasons. They perceived her as being not too ethnically-marked, and liked her because of this. In other words, these viewers liked Farida because they found her not too "Algerian", very "French", and therefore, not too culturally different from them. Despite the FAS's implicit presumption in favour of assimilation, it would seem probable that the FAS did not want viewers to specifically like members of the Badaoui family because they perceived them as being not too ethnically marked. Thus, although these respondents' attitudinal decodings are within the preferred meaning, their cognitive decodings of Farida can be said to contradict, at least to a certain extent, the FAS's encoded message. One such respondent stated:

Ouais, j'aime bien son rôle. [...] Elle est pas comme toutes les Algériennes. Elle est différente. [...] On voit que c'est une femme qui s'occupe d'elle-même. Elle est bien habillée, elle est maquillée comme nous quand on sort, et on voit que c'est une femme qui s'occupe d'elle, pas comme certaines Arabes [...]. On voit qu'elle se laisse pas aller, disons. (9.A.F.L.34)

This respondent clearly emphasizes the fact that she perceives Farida's way of behaving and dressing as typically French rather than Maghrebi, and that she likes her for this reason. This decoding is, therefore, a plain indication that the encoders'
message has not been successfully transmitted to this particular viewer. This type of response also highlights the fact that even if an audience likes a programme and the characters in it, it does not necessarily follow that the encoders' preferred meanings have been successfully decoded by that audience.

Another respondent produced a different contradictory decoding of Farida, although in some ways it is quite similar to those discussed above. This viewer did not like Farida because he perceived her as being too ethnically-marked and not "European" enough. In crude terms, it can be seen that the underlying principle in both these contradictory decodings is that the more "French" a character is, the "better" that person is, whilst the more "Maghrebi" a person is, the less likeable s/he is. Commenting on Farida, this viewer said:

Elle est moins sympathique quand même que son mari.

J.H: pourquoi?
Peut-être parce que justement c'est une femme, et peut-être que justement elle... comment on pourrait dire? Parce que les femmes algériennes sont peut-être plus brimées que les femmes européennes, qu'elles peuvent moins s'exprimer aussi [...] Elle est en France maintenant donc elle doit jeter toute sa culture algérienne ou arabe ou musulmane plutôt, elle doit la jeter aux orties [...] elle doit se comporter comme une française [...] (26.A.M.H.58)

Five respondents decoded Farida in yet another contradictory manner. Whilst on the one hand, their attitudinal decodings were within the preferred meaning and they liked Farida, on the other hand, their cognitive decodings contradicted the preferred encoded message. They stated that although Farida was a very pleasant character, she was completely unrepresentative of first-generation Maghrebi women, and that she gave the impression of being French rather than Algerian. For example, one such respondent said:
C'est elle que j'ai trouvée qui joue bien, mais que j'ai trouvée la moins homogène, enfin la moins dans son rôle, la moins dans son origine, c'est la mère. Je vous ai demandé si elle était algérienne parce que je pensais qu'éventuellement elle pouvait être française. (25.A.M.H.65)

A second viewer asserted that:

Alors la mère, je vous ai dit, je la trouve pas très représentative des femmes immigrées que je connais. Elle est jeune et charmante, elle est... [pause] mais elle paraît déjà très décalée. (27.A.M.H.62)

Thus, although these respondents liked Farida, the far more important encoded message of accepting her ethnic specificities was lost because these viewers perceived Farida as having little or no ethnic differences to be accepted. This brings one to the issue broached earlier, of the encoders' decision to de-ethnicize characters in an attempt to encourage viewer identification with them. Although it has been argued that de-ethnicizing will, to a certain extent, help "native" French viewers to identify with the Maghrebi characters in *Fruits et Légumes* (Hargreaves and Helcké 1994: 56), these decodings of Farida suggest that if the de-ethnicization is too heavy-handed and is taken too far, the initial message will be lost. This clearly seems to be the case with Farida, where five viewers liked her specifically because they perceived her as being very "French" and not too "Algerian", and another five respondents liked Farida in spite of finding her completely unrepresentative of first-generation Maghrebi women. These decodings are, therefore, a plain warning to the encoders that de-ethnicizing characters as a means of encouraging viewer identification is a technique that if used too liberally, may backfire.

With regard to the respondent who accused Farida of clinging too strongly to her cultural origins, and not embracing "westernization", this decoding is surprising in view of the high degree of de-ethnicization of this character. If, as has been
suggested, the Badaouis are "des presque-Français moyens qui vont devenir tout à fait français" (Humblot 1994), it can be said that of the first-generation Algerians portrayed in the series, Farida is certainly the furthest down the road to "integration", which in this context means, assimilation. Why, therefore, did this viewer perceive Farida in this manner? As will be seen in chapter 4, all viewers will, to varying degrees, watch programmes within the framework of their ideas, opinions, cultural background, and so on. When the respondents discussed above stated that Farida was unrepresentative of Maghrebi women, they were measuring her up against their already formulated ideas of what a first-generation Maghrebi woman is like. Similarly, those viewers who asserted that they liked Farida because they found her to be very "French", were implicitly setting their notion of "French-ness" against their construction of "Algerian-ness". The respondent who complained that Farida was too ethnically-marked, described her as "brimée", "étouffée", and "soumise", in line with opinions that he certainly already had about women in Arab-Muslim society before watching the episode. However, rather than using them as a sort of benchmark from which to measure the supposed representativity of the character, he superimposed his preconceived definition of the Arab-Muslim woman onto Farida, thus completely reconstructing her character. It would seem, therefore, that no matter how much the encoders may wish to privilege one meaning over others, certain viewers will see in a programme precisely what they want to see, especially if their opinions on the issue dealt with are already well-established and deeply embedded in their framework of references.

As discussed in the section on decodings within the preferred meaning, respondents were asked towards the end of the interview whether the Badaouis were typical of Maghrebi families in France (question 39). Clearly, the successful transmission of the FAS's "integrationist" message to the audience depended heavily on viewers perceiving the Badaouis as being representative of at least some Maghrebi families in France. If, for example, all respondents believed the Badaouis to be absolutely typical of Algerian families in France, this would give the programme-
makers' encoded message greater potential to have an impact on these viewers. On the other hand, if the audience were of the opinion that the Badaouis bore no resemblance whatsoever to Maghrebis in France, this would doubtless diminish the overall strength of the message. Therefore, the programme-makers' preferred decoding of the Badaoui family was that they were at least relatively representative of Maghrebis in France.

However, over half of the decodings were contradictory to this intended meaning. A total of 25 out of the 48 respondents who answered this question perceived the Badaouis as being completely untypical of Maghrebi families in France and they went on to cite the many reasons for which they were of this opinion. It could be argued that these responses are very similar to, if not the same as those classified as being close to the preferred meaning, because both types of decodings accept that whilst the Badaouis are not representative of the majority of Maghrebi families in France, they are typical of some. There is, however, a subtle but important difference between these two apparently similar decoding types: whilst those classified as being close to the preferred meaning perceived the Badaouis as typical of a certain number of Maghrebis in France, and therefore, not highly unrepresentative, those categorized as contradictory, were of the opinion that the Badaouis were extremely unusual and represented only a tiny minority of Maghrebis in France. Moreover, whilst the former decodings tended to concentrate on the similarities between the Badaouis and at least some Maghrebi families in France, the latter decodings focused on differences between the Badaouis and other Maghrebis. The contrasts between these two types of decodings are highlighted by the following examples:

Ah ouais [ils sont typiques], chez les commerçants, oui. Oui, mais attention, pas dans des familles comme ça, parce que si tu veux aller comme ça, t'as des familles, ils peuvent pas dire qu'ils vont donner FF1000 à leur enfant pour... pour magouiller, c'est pas vrai. Chez les commerçants oui, on voit bien ça chez les
commerçants arabes, parce qu'ils s'aident. Chez eux, ils s'aident beaucoup, hein. 

[...] Mais pas côté ouvrier, non, pas côté ouvrier. (28.A.M.L.56)

Non [they are not representative], de ce que je vois, non, [...] parce qu'il y a beaucoup qui sont au chômage et que quand le père est au chômage et que c'est les enfants qui viennent lui filer du fric, alors là, l'autorité s'effondre complètement, et que quand le père est au RMI et les enfants au RMI et qu'ils vont tous ensemble à l'ANPE... [...] Ils vivent déjà dans un espace assez grand, or je pense que la population maghrébine dans une grande part, elle est plutôt dans les HLM [...] Il y a les problèmes d'entassement: il y a un qui fait les devoirs et il y a un qui regarde la télévision. [...] Donc, c'est pas représentatif, je pense. (23.A.M.H.22)

It can be seen that whilst the first respondent perceives the Badaouis as being typical of some Maghrebi families, namely those who run shops, the second viewer focuses on the reasons for which he perceives the Badaoui family as being completely unrepresentative of Maghrebis in France. Thus, whilst the first decoding is close to the preferred meaning, the second contradicts it.

In conclusion, it can be said that although the viewer who produces a non-perception, "wrong" focus, or alternative decoding of a scene will not have received the encoders' intended message, this decoding will not actually be in conflict with this message. These decodings are, therefore, significantly less "harmful", from the encoders' point of view, than contradictory decodings, where the viewer's reading of the scene is the near antithesis of the preferred encoded meaning.

3.3.5 Oppositional decodings

The final type of response to be analysed is the oppositional decoding. A total of five scenes - referred to in questions 8, 10, 15, 18 and 24 - and five general aspects of the
episode - questions 2, 27, 29, 30 and 39 - were decoded oppositionally by certain viewers. In all, 28 decodings were oppositional. As with the contradictory decodings, it is useful for the purposes of analysis to divide the decodings into two groups: those of specific scenes, and those of the more general aspects of the programme.

Oppositional decodings of specific scenes

Regarding the scene where Zouzou, the Badaoui's daughter, has difficulty writing an essay on "les raisons d'aimer son pays" because she is unable to decide which country - France or Algeria - to make reference to, respondents were asked whether Zouzou was French or Algerian (question 15). It will be recalled that if left to her own devices, Zouzou would have chosen to refer to France but that out of respect for her parents she felt that she must choose Algeria. In the end, she compromises by making reference to no country whatsoever. The encoders wished to get the important message across to the audience that although second-generation Maghrebis are torn between two countries, they are essentially French, and they should be accepted as such. The programme-makers wanted viewers, therefore, to recognize Zouzou as being French.

However, when asked whether she was French or Algerian, ten respondents produced oppositional decodings. Five of these viewers - all of them of Maghrebi origin - stated that Zouzou was too French, at the expense of her Algerian origins. They felt that she was rejecting her parents' culture in the name of "integration", and that this was wrong. These respondents, therefore, were consciously registering the fact that Zouzou was being portrayed as French, only to strenuously reject this definition of herself. Clearly, this type of response goes wholly against an important part of the FAS's "integrationist" message, whereby it is expected that people of immigrant origin should gradually let go of their culture of origin and replace it with the French culture, the ultimate aim being "assimilation" rather than "integration"
(seen as a process of mutual acceptance by majority and minority groups). The following example typifies this sort of response:

[...] la fille, pour elle, elle est française parce qu'elle habite en France, elle étudie en français, elle connaît des français de son âge [...] Elle oublie que les parents ils étaient d'origine algérienne, qu'ils ont peut-être grandi là-bas et puis la famille c'est du père au fils, on vient toujours en arrière pour construire la famille, puis elle, elle veut changer ces trucs-là par rapport à son père. [...] Elle veut même faire oublier qui ils sont, d'où ils viennent. [...] (18.B.M.L.26)

Five other respondents that produced oppositional decodings asserted that whilst they accepted that in legal terms Zouzou was French, to them she would always be Algerian. Once again, therefore, these viewers acknowledge the fact that Zouzou is being depicted as French but then go on to reject this, and replace it with their own definition of Zouzou. Thus, whilst the previous responses discussed ran counter to the implicitly "assimilationalist" variant of the PAS's message of "integration", these decodings conflicted with the PAS's explicit aim of encouraging greater acceptance of ethnic minorities in France. In other words, two different encoded messages are being opposed by these two groups of viewers. Once again, this highlights the ambiguities present in the encoded meanings of the programme. One such viewer stated:

Ah ben, pour moi elle est née de parents algériens, elle est née en France donc un ministre a décidé que étant donné les circonstances à naissance elle pouvait réclamer d'être française. Ben, c'est tout... mais elle est algérienne... elle est algérienne de naissance. Elle a pas affirmé suffisamment sa personnalité pour savoir si elle a adopté notre système. Elle a l'air de le subir plutôt que de le... plutôt que de le vivre. [...] A mon avis elle faisait pas beaucoup d'effort pour s'imprégner de notre culture" (25.A.M.H.65)
When respondents were asked what they thought of the scene where Amar is seen cooking (question 24), three viewers decoded it oppositionally. It will be remembered that the encoders were aiming to make a dent in the widespread belief that Maghrebi men never help within the home, by suggesting to the audience that not all Maghrebi men fit into this stereotype. However, these three viewers asserted that the programme-makers were consciously aiming to send the audience a distorted image. In other words, they had spotted the encoders' underlying intentions in the portrayal of Amar preparing the evening meal, and they refused to "play ball". Thus, one respondent said: "Je pense que ça se passe pas comme ça dans toutes les familles. L'image qu'ils ont voulu nous donner était fausse" (35.A.F.L.20).

Oppositional decodings of general aspects of the episode

At the beginning of the interview, respondents were asked the open-ended question of what the programme was about (question 2). As seen above, the underlying theme of the series was "integration", and the FAS's ultimate aim was to encourage "integration" through the depiction on television of an already well-"integrated" Algerian family. It will be remembered that a high proportion of viewers did perceive the programme as being about "integration" and related issues such as inter-generational conflict, relations between ethnic minorities and mainstream French society, and so on. Only one respondent decoded the encoded meaning of the programme in an oppositional manner. This viewer was clearly aware that the programme was about the "integration" process of a Maghrebi family in France. However, he chose to read the theme "integration" as "the abandon or loss of cultural origins". This is very similar to the hypothetical oppositional decoding that Hall proposes, where a viewer "listens to a debate on the need to limit wages but 'reads' every mention of the 'national interest' as 'class interest'" (Hall 1993: 103). Thus, when asked what La Composition Française was about this respondent stated:
Ben pour moi [...] ce que je comprends, là il y a des gens d'une communauté différente qui vivent dans une terre différente, euh, on a remarqué qu'ils ont abandonné quand même certains... beaucoup de certains coutumes, dans le domaine d'habillement, dans le domaine de l'alimentation [...]. Donc, il y a une certaine... je dirais pas l'abandon, je dirais pas l'oubli [...]. Cette famille est une famille qui est équipée pour affronter les problèmes de ce pays sur lequel il est installé, tout en délaissant certaines valeurs morales [...]. (36.B.M.L.50)

Clearly, this viewer redefined those aspects of the Badaouis' behaviour that the programme-makers intended to be decoded as signs of successful "integration", as the abandon of Maghrebi, Muslim cultural and moral values. It could be argued that because the FAS's definition of "integration" is essentially "assimilation", and because "assimilation" involves the abandoning of ancestral cultural traits, this decoding does not conflict with the preferred meaning. On the other hand, the FAS does not want viewers to actually perceive this process of "integration"/"assimilation" as a desertion of Maghrebi cultural origins. In other words, this decoding can be said to contradict the FAS's explicit preferred meaning, whilst corresponding with its implicit encoded message.

Three characters - Farida, Zouzou and Reda - were decoded by certain respondents in an oppositional manner. Due to the similarity of these oppositional responses, only decodings of Farida will be analysed here. In the case of Farida, when viewers were asked whether they liked her or not, three of them produced oppositional decodings. It will be recollected that the encoders wanted the audience to like the characters for the "right" reasons, and that many respondents who produced contradictory decodings of Farida, liked her but for the "wrong" reasons. Some, for example, liked her because they perceived her as being very "French", whilst others liked her in spite of finding her completely unrepresentative of a first-generation Algerian woman. The three viewers who decoded her oppositionally, on the other
hand, disliked her because they perceived her as being unrepresentative of first-generation Maghrebi women. These respondents appeared to be conscious that the programme-makers had intentionally portrayed Farida in this de-ethnicized manner, and because they found this depiction unrealistic, they refused to like the character. In other words, they refused to endorse this representation of her. Regarding the mother, one such viewer stated: "non [je ne l'aime pas], alors là, je la trouve vraiment... son personnage sonne faux, je la trouve... je trouve qu'elle sonne faux." (7.A.F.H.51), whilst another commented: "la mère, complètement surfaite" (13.A.F.L.45+ or -).

Finally, when viewers were asked whether the Badaouis were a typical Maghrebi family living in France (question 39), three decodings were oppositional: not only did these three respondents perceive the Badaouis as unrepresentative of Maghrebi families in France but they were also of the opinion that the programme-makers were deliberately trying to mislead the audience. Thus, one of these respondents asserted:

Ça ne représente pas forcément une famille maghrébine, non, non. Non, je ne crois pas, parce qu'il y a apparemment une volonté d'asceptiser... pas d'asceptiser, presque ça, presque d'asceptiser, ben, de contrôler l'image qu'on projette. (22.A.M.H.31)

To conclude it can be said that in some ways oppositional decodings are more worrying responses for the programme-makers than contradictory ones, because although the latter type of response conflicts with the intended message, this does not appear to have been done consciously. In other words, the viewer would seem to be unaware that the encoders actually wanted the audience to perceive something quite different. On the other hand, the viewer who decodes a scene oppositionally, understands perfectly what the programme-makers were attempting to transmit to the audience but rejects this message and replaces it with his or her counter-interpretation.
3.4. Attitudinal decodings

It was seen in chapter 1 that the questions viewers were asked regarding the programme were open-ended, so as to allow viewer responses to be as spontaneous and undirected as possible, whilst at the same time ensuring that all aspects of the programme were covered. As a result of this decision not to compress decodings into narrow, predefined categories, it was necessary to engage in a process of trial and error during the analysis of the interviews, in order to find the most appropriate decoding classifications. It will be recollected that the starting point in this process was Morley's employment of Hall's three reading positions but that these were found to be too restrictive, and so a further set of decoding categories was devised for the cognitive responses to the programme. Similarly, new classifications for the attitudinal decodings were also developed. A certain number of questions were specifically aimed at eliciting attitudinal responses, such as when viewers were asked whether or not they liked the various characters in the programme. In all, there were nine such questions: questions 3, 18, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, and 34. However, during the analysis of responses to other questions, it was found that some had led to unsolicited attitudinal responses on the part of certain viewers. Clearly, these responses occurred precisely because of the open-ended nature of the questions.

In view of the differences between cognitive and attitudinal decodings - the former being understandings of the episode, and the latter being reactions to the programme - it does not seem possible to categorize these two types of responses in the same manner. For example, the notions of non-perception or "wrong" focus decodings clearly cannot be applied to the classification of attitudinal responses, although these types of cognitive decodings may well feed into viewers' attitudinal responses to the programme. Instead, a tripartite classification has been devised for the attitudinal responses. Firstly, those attitudinal decodings that correspond with the encoders' intentions are categorized as positive (+). Secondly, those responses that
clearly run counter to the programme-makers’ preferred attitudinal readings, are labeled as negative (−), whilst those attitudinal responses that display indifference, are classified as neutral (0). Clearly, no response is ever absolutely neutral but within the context of the positive and negative attitudinal decodings mentioned above, these indifferent reactions neither contradict nor affirm the programme-makers’ preferred attitudinal decodings, and so they can in the present context be usefully termed neutral.

The results of the nine questions that were specifically aimed at producing attitudinal responses, are summarized in statistical form in the table below. As with table 3.1, the left hand column indicates the question that the viewers were asked, and the second column from the left, the number of processable responses obtained for that question. The upper row specifies the three attitudinal decoding positions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question asked</th>
<th>Total number of usable responses</th>
<th>+</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>−</th>
<th>Non-responses and questions not asked</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q18</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q26</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q27</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q28</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q29</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q30</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q31</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q34</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This section will begin by, firstly, evaluating the extent to which the decodings shown in the table above correspond with the encoders’ preferred attitudinal responses, and secondly, examining which respondents were grouped together in terms of producing similar decodings. Explanations of this clustering of respondents will be undertaken in chapter 4, which looks at the influences of four variables - ethnicity, gender, generation and educational level - on the decoding process. The present section will then go on to analyse a number of the unsolicited attitudinal decodings mentioned
earlier. These responses have not been tabulated because in most cases less than half of the viewers produced such decodings, and so these results are not necessarily representative. Moreover, due to the unexpected nature of these decodings, it is not always possible to ascertain whether these are positive, negative or neutral results from the point of view of the encoders' objectives.

3.4.1 Tabulated attitudinal decodings

In all, there were 377 responses to the nine questions that were specifically aimed at eliciting attitudinal decodings. Of these 377 responses, over two thirds - 271 - are positive decodings, 69 are negative responses, and a further 36 are neutral. It can be seen that the proportion of positive attitudinal decodings is relatively similar to that of cognitive responses within, or close to, the preferred meaning. A total of 507 out of the 825 cognitive decodings - nearly two thirds - are within, or close to the intended meaning. However, as will be seen in this section, it does not necessarily follow that those respondents who produce cognitive decodings within the preferred meaning, also give positive attitudinal responses.

Only one of the nine attitudinal questions - question 18 - refers to a specific scene, whilst all the other questions are based on general aspects of the episode. Question 18, examined in the previous section, refers to the scene where Amar is discussing issues of nationality with his French neighbour, who asks him why he does not want to acquire French nationality. Amar states that when he lived in Algeria he was told that he was French and that now that he is resident in France he is told that he is Algerian. This rather allusive statement is making reference to the colonial period in Algeria, and Amar's change of status after independence. The preferred cognitive decoding of this scene, therefore, was that Amar was talking about his situations during colonial, and post-colonial Algeria. It will be remembered, that as well as this cognitive encoded meaning, there was an intent on the part of the programme-makers to encourage viewer sympathy for Amar amid the political
changes through which he has had to live. In other words, there was also an attitudinal level to the intended decoding of this scene. Clearly, in this particular case (although not in all others), for a viewer to produce the intended attitudinal decoding, s/he must first decode the cognitive aspects of the scene within the preferred meaning. In view of this, it will be noted that whilst there were 48 cognitive decodings of the scene (table 3.1), there were only 34 attitudinal readings (table 3.2). Thus, 14 viewers who produced cognitive decodings of the scene, did not give attitudinal responses. Eight of these 14, produced alternative cognitive readings that were at variance with the preferred meaning and they, therefore, lacked the cognitive springboard from which to arrive at the preferred attitudinal decoding. The remaining six did share the preferred cognitive reading but failed to adopt an attitudinal position, the reasons for which will be discussed in the next chapter. This explains, therefore, the discrepancy between the total number of cognitive decodings, and the total number of processable attitudinal readings of the scene.

A large majority - 32 out of 34 - of the viewers who responded to this question produced positive attitudinal decodings of the scene. In other words, these viewers agreed with Amar's comment regarding his status in Algeria during the colonial period, and in France after the independence of Algeria. For example, one such respondent stated:

Oh ben je trouve que ça pointe bien une certaine [pause] une hypocrisie du comportement français. C'est vrai que pour garder l'Algérie française on disait aux Arabes qu'ils étaient français, l'Algérie c'était la France, etc. Maintenant même quand ils le sont officiellement, ce sont des étrangers, alors qu'ils vivent en France [...]. (27.A.M.H.62)

This respondent's decoding can be classified as being within the full preferred meaning, because his cognitive decoding is within the preferred meaning, and his attitudinal response is positive. This response differs, therefore, from the example
given in the previous section on cognitive decodings within the preferred meaning, where the viewer stated that Amar was referring to the colonization of Algeria but did not go on to give an attitudinal decoding because he asserted that he knew too little about the event to have an opinion on it.

Two respondents produced negative attitudinal decodings of Amar's comment. Although both these viewers decoded within the preferred cognitive meaning, their attitudinal decodings conflicted with the encoders' wish to encourage audience sympathy for Amar. These respondents strongly disagreed with Amar's characterization of his position in colonial Algeria, and of his status in France once Algeria had become independent. They asserted that it is wrong of Amar and of other Algerians living in France to complain of being perceived as Algerian rather than French because, after all, Algerians fought for their independence. Thus, one of these respondents commented:

Ça c'est tout le problème de la guerre de l'indépendance. Ils ont voulu quelque chose que maintenant ils rejettent [...] quand ils viennent en France ils aimeraient bien être traités comme des français alors qu'ils se sont battus pour être algériens.

(33.A.F.F.21)

Clearly, this respondent does not agree with Amar's depiction of his status in France since the independence of Algeria, and she is, therefore, unsympathetic towards Amar, a stance that runs counter to the encoders' intended attitudinal decoding of the scene. It is interesting to note that the two viewers who produced these negative attitudinal decodings were both "native" French people. However, that only two out of the 34 respondents who gave processable responses produced negative readings is a very successful result for the programme-makers.

On the other hand, this result must be seen within the context of the 48 cognitive decodings of the scene, and the fact that 14 respondents did not produce any attitudinal readings at all, and so it is not possible to ascertain with certainty whether
these viewers would have agreed or not with Amar's characterization of post-/colonial Algeria. As seen above, eight of these 14 respondents produced alternative cognitive decodings, and it will be recalled that these viewers perceived Amar's comment as meaning that Amar is labeled as immigrant wherever he goes and is rejected both in France and in Algeria. Although this reading is cognitive, it would seem to contain an implicit sympathy for Amar's situation, an attitude that is clearly compatible with the programme-makers' intended attitudinal decoding. Moreover, that five out of these eight respondents were of Maghrebi origin, and one originated from sub-Saharan Africa, would seem to support the view that these interviewees were favourably disposed towards Amar's comments. On the other hand, it is not possible to establish whether the remaining six viewers who did not give attitudinal responses, agreed or felt otherwise in relation to Amar's comment.

At the start of each interview, respondents were asked whether or not they liked the episode (question 334). Naturally, the programme-makers hoped that viewers would both like the series, and want to watch it. Of the 49 interviewees, 29 - a clear majority - stated that they liked the programme, and so these responses can be classified as positive attitudinal decodings. A further 14 viewers - almost a third of the total - produced negative attitudinal decodings: they said they disliked the episode. A large majority of the respondents who were unfavourably disposed towards the programme - 11 out of the 14 - were "native" French. Moreover, six respondents stated that although they liked the programme they would not watch it, and four out of these six viewers were "native" French. Thus, a majority of "native" French viewers - 15 out of a total of 24 - said that Fruits et Légumes was a programme that they would not choose to watch. By contrast, only a minority of the respondents of Maghrebi origin - 4 out of 20 - declared that they would not watch the series. From the encoders' point of view, therefore, these results are very disappointing as the programme was primarily intended for a "native" French audience, although it was also hoped and expected that France's Maghrebi population

34 The question asked was: "Est-ce-que dans l'ensemble le programme vous a plu?"
would watch the series. Moreover, this is a key question regarding the overall success of the programme because, ultimately, if people choose not to watch the series, they will neither be able to like the Badaoui family, nor identify with it. On the other hand, the ratings figures for the series showed that *Fruits et Légumes* was not unsuccessful. In view of the fact that the sitcom was broadcast during the summer period (when many French people are on holiday) and in the middle of the day (when television is less widely watched), ratings figures of between 600 000 and 900 000 viewers were relatively encouraging. These statistics do not, however, reveal the ethnic breakdown of the audience.

It was seen above that there were fewer attitudinal decodings than cognitive ones of the scene where Amar discusses the reasons for which he does not want French nationality (question 18). It will be recalled that in many cases this was due to the fact that viewers produced alternative cognitive decodings, and so it was not possible for them to go on to give an attitudinal response based on the preferred meaning (although, as seen earlier, these alternative readings may well have contained implicit attitudes). Likewise, in the cases of questions 26 to 31, when viewers were asked whether or not they liked the various members of the Badaoui family, there were also discrepancies between the number of cognitive decodings of the characters and the number of attitudinal responses. However, in these instances the latter type of decoding sometimes outnumbered the former because certain viewers did not explain their reasons for being favourably disposed or not towards each character. For example, whilst there were 47 attitudinal decodings of Amar, there were only 40 cognitive decodings of him. In other words, seven viewers who commented on whether or not they liked the father, did not also explain how they perceived him. With regard to Amar, it can be seen from table 3.2 that a large majority of viewers - 36 out of 47 - produced positive attitudinal decodings, that is, they liked him. Although this result is very successful, it will be recalled that in terms of the programme-makers' objectives it was important that viewers liked the Badaouis for the "right" reasons. Table 3.1 highlights the fact that 6 cognitive decodings of the
father were contradictory, five of them because Amar was liked for the "wrong" reasons. Thus, although 36 respondents produced positive attitudinal decodings, 5 of these 36 also produced contradictory cognitive decodings, the latter being of greater importance in relation to the encoders' message than the former. However, in spite of these five cognitive decodings that conflict with the programme-makers' objectives, it can still be said that a high proportion of attitudinal decodings of Amar were positive. On the other hand, the programme-makers particularly hoped to encourage "native" French viewers to like, and identify with the Badaoui family but most of those respondents who either disliked Amar or were indifferent towards him, were "native" French: five out of the six viewers who disliked the father, and three out of the five respondents who were indifferent towards him were "native" French. Thus, whilst 16 out of a total of 19 viewers of Maghrebi origin produced positive attitudinal decodings of Amar, a significantly smaller proportion of "native" French respondents - 16 out of 23 - liked the father.

In the case of Zouzou (question 29), on the other hand, more "native" French respondents than Maghrebi viewers gave positive attitudinal decodings. A large majority of the "native" French interviewees who answered this question - 16 out of 19 - stated that they liked Zouzou, whereas less than half of the Maghrebi viewers who produced usable responses - 6 out of 15 - were favourably disposed towards her. Moreover, it is of interest to note that most of those respondents of Maghrebi origin who produced neutral or negative attitudinal decodings of Zouzou were second-generation. Thus, whilst only 3 out of the 11 second-generation respondents of Maghrebi origin made positive attitudinal decodings, 8 out of the 10 "native" French viewers of a similar age group liked Zouzou. Possible reasons for this marked difference between "native" French and first- and second-generation Maghrebi responses to Zouzou will be explored in chapter 4.

Reda (question 30), the Badaouis' eldest son, was the only character of Algerian origin in the episode to induce a majority of negative attitudinal responses: among those answering this question, 19 respondents disliked him and a further 5
were indifferent towards him. Of the 17 respondents who liked Reda, a substantial majority - 12 - were younger respondents. Only five of the older generation of viewers produced positive attitudinal decodings. It was also noticeable that, on the one hand, most of the second-generation men of Maghrebi origin liked Reda, whilst on the other hand, none of the second-generation women of Maghrebi origin gave positive attitudinal responses. These clusters within the viewer decodings of Reda will be analysed in greater detail in the following chapter.

As discussed above, the programme-makers hoped that viewers, and in particular "native" French viewers, would like the various members of the Badaoui family. To assess the extent to which the encoders attained this objective, it is useful to analyse the accumulated attitudinal decodings of all the characters. In other words, if all attitudinal responses to the various characters are combined, it is possible to ascertain whether there was a greater tendency for one ethnic group or the other to like or dislike the Badaoui family. In all, there were 226 attitudinal decodings of the six members of the Badaoui family, 126 of which were made by "native" French respondents, and 100 by viewers of Maghrebi origin. A total of 87 (or 68%) of the "native" French decodings, and 63 (or 63%) of the Maghrebi decodings were positive. Thus, in spite of the relatively small sample of viewers used in this study, these overall results are very successful in terms of the programme-makers' aims, as not only did a majority of viewers like the Badaoui family but in broad terms, the encoders were no less successful at encouraging "native" French viewers to like the Badaouis, than they were in prompting positive responses among Maghrebi viewers. On the other hand, this result must be seen within the context of responses to question 3, when viewers were asked whether or not they liked the programme: a majority of "native" French viewers stated that they disliked the programme and would not choose to watch it.
3.4.2 Unsolicited attitudinal decodings

Many questions that were not intended to produce attitudinal responses led to some viewers making both cognitive and attitudinal decodings. However, only in two instances did a significant number of viewers produce unsolicited attitudinal responses to a particular scene. Question 24 refers to the scene where Amar is preparing the evening meal. As discussed in the previous section, the programme-makers were attempting to encourage French viewers to perceive Amar's liberal behaviour as representative of at least some Maghrebi men. As is shown in table 3.1, there were 46 cognitive decodings of this scene. As well as these decodings, 19 respondents also produced attitudinal responses to the scene: they all asserted that it was very good to see Amar, a man, doing the cooking. Thus, one such viewer commented: "ah, c'est très bien, je trouve ça très bien" (5.B.F.L.22) whilst another stated: "c'est bien de faire la cuisine, quand sa femme est occupée" (41.B.F.L.38). A large majority of these respondents - 13 out of 19 - were women. Only six men made attitudinal decodings of the scene, saying that it was positive to see a man cooking, and all the remaining male respondents produced purely cognitive decodings, and did not express any opinions regarding men helping within the home.

Question 11\textsuperscript{35} refers to the scene where a pork meats sales representative attempts to sell his products to Amar. The salesman, who has only recently started the job, nostalgically tells Amar about his previous work selling womens' lingerie. He goes on to say that he lost his former job and his wife left him because: "y avait les essayages [...] et j'ai perdu la tête"\textsuperscript{36}. Viewers were asked what they thought of the reasons that the sales representative gave for having lost his previous job and his wife. This question was specifically designed to ascertain whether there were any differences in responses between first-generation Maghrebi viewers and the other interviewees. It was expected that the former respondents, due to the discretion

\textsuperscript{35} Question 11 asked: "Que pensez-vous de la raison avancée par le représentant pour avoir perdu son ancien travail et sa femme?"

\textsuperscript{36} Quotation taken from the broadcast version of \textit{La Composition Française}. 

generally observed concerning sexual matters in Maghrebi society, would be embarrassed by the question because of the sexual undertones of the scene. In fact, relatively few first-generation Maghrebi respondents appeared embarrassed, and those who showed embarrassment were mainly from other groups (see chapter 1 and 4). On the other hand, a number of respondents - although none of them first-generation Maghrebis - produced attitudinal decodings of the scene. Eleven viewers expressed disapproval of the salesman's behaviour and were critical of him. For example, one respondent commented: "moi je me suis dit que c'était de sa faute, c'est de sa faute s'il a tout perdu" (13.A.F.L.45+ or -), whilst a second viewer asserted: "qu'il a bien fait de tout perdre" (30.A.F.L.21). Most of the viewers who produced these critical attitudinal decodings of the sales representative's behaviour were women. Only three men gave their opinions, whilst all the other male respondents discussed the scene without passing judgement on the salesman's actions.

In conclusion, it can be said that these unsolicited attitudinal decodings seemed to occur when a scene or issue in the programme was of personal interest to a viewer. In these two cases, women were those respondents that appeared to feel strongly about the subject matter of these scenes.

3.5 Conclusions

This chapter's systematic analysis of viewer decodings of *La Composition Française* emphasizes the fact that the audience was active in the decoding process. Nearly a third of all cognitive decodings of the episode differed significantly from the preferred meaning, and many of these responses actually contradicted the message that the encoders wished to send viewers. The programme was, therefore, open to a certain degree of interpretation, in spite of the encoders' attempts to privilege certain meanings over others. On the other hand, the polysemy of the message was structured by the very presence of these privileged, or preferred meanings, and so the media text was not equally open to any interpretation. It cannot be said, therefore, that the
audience was autonomous, or that the viewers' differential decodings were proof of a "semiotic democracy" (Fiske, 1994: 95) within the media text.

That the various production partners had competing aims when making the series, clearly had an impact on viewer decodings of the programme. Whilst the FAS hoped to send the French public a very specific social message concerning the "integration" of France's Maghrebi population, the other programme-makers were primarily interested in producing a series that would be a ratings success. Partly as a result of these differing objectives, encoded messages within the programme were not always consistent, and some of the central meanings of *Fruits et Légumes* were deeply ambiguous. Probably the most nebulous concept encoded in the series was that of "integration", not only because of the various production partners with their own distinct agendas but more importantly because of the FAS's contradictory notions of what "integration" entails. That, on the one hand, the FAS's implicit definition of "integration" tended towards assimilation, whilst on the other hand, the FAS stated that it expected the series to "favoriser l'évolution des mentalités du public français pour une meilleure acceptation de la différence"37, suggests that conflicting messages were being sent out to the audience. As a result of these vacillating definitions of "integration", the preferred meanings within the media text were frequently debatable, and it is not surprising, therefore, that a significant proportion of decodings were differential. In turn, this further complicated the process of categorizing viewer responses to the open-ended questions.

In spite of the difficulties caused by ambiguities in the encoded meanings within the programme, the results of the attitudinal decodings - with well over two thirds of the responses being positive - were, on the whole, a success in terms of the encoders' objectives, although responses to the key question of whether viewers liked the episode and would watch the series, were far from favourable. That the programme-makers managed to persuade a majority of the "native" French viewers to like an Algerian family living in France is a considerable achievement. This leads one

37 Letter from the FAS to Cinéfèvé (17.3.94)
to the issue of the means by which the encoders tried to win over the audience to a positive attitudinal decoding. The programme-makers, as seen in this chapter, chose to de-ethnicize the Maghrebi characters in the series, in an attempt to encourage "native" French viewers to identify with the Badaoui family. The extremely good results of the attitudinal decodings, suggest that this method was successful. As seen earlier, however, this process of de-ethnicization was not only at the expense of promoting greater acceptance of ethno-cultural differences but also at the expense of the credibility of the characters, and ultimately of the entire series. That only a small proportion of respondents believed the Badaouis to be representative of Maghrebi families in France reveals that this means of winning over the audience was far from being entirely successful. It cannot be denied, however, that the fact that most "native" French viewers were favourably disposed towards an immigrant Maghrebi family, is a very positive first step in the right direction, and that in these terms, therefore, the programme was successful.

Having analysed both the extent to which the audience interpreted La Composition Française as the programme-makers intended, and the types of decodings that viewers produced, in the following chapter I explore the influences of four variables - ethnicity, gender, generation and educational level - on the decoding process.
CHAPTER 4
Interpreting La Composition Française: decoding clusters

4.1 Introduction

Notwithstanding the programme-makers' efforts to privilege certain interpretations over others, viewer decodings of La Composition Française did not always coincide with the intended message. Chapter 3 emphasized not only that a significant proportion of the cognitive decodings differed from the preferred meaning but also that these negotiated responses diverged from the intended meaning(s) in a variety of manners, and to varying degrees. Thus, whilst some decodings were close to the preferred meaning, others were outright contradictions of this message. Having established the extent to which the encoded meanings of the programme were successfully communicated to the audience, this chapter examines clusters or groupings in the viewer decodings of the episode, and considers whether there is a correlation between these distributions of decodings and the respondents' ethnicity, gender, generation (age) or educational level. In other words, is it possible to identify interpretive communities amongst these viewers? If so, which of the four variables would seem to have had the greatest influence in shaping these interpretive communities, and why? These issues will be discussed through a detailed analysis of these clusters of viewer responses, focusing, firstly, on those clusters of decodings that would appear to be clearly linked to ethnic origin, and then moving on to the relative influences of the three other variables.

The clusters of decodings examined here are based on responses to 29 open-ended questions - many of which have already been discussed in chapter 3 - that viewers were asked about the episode. For the purposes of the present exposition, those clusters of responses that appear to be linked to either ethnicity, gender, generation or educational level, have been summarized in the table below. The left-hand column indicates the question that respondents were asked, whilst the upper row
specifies the variables that appear to have shaped viewer decodings of the programme. Each cluster which is identified as relating to one or more of these variables, is indicated in the table by a tick (✓). For example, analysis of responses to question 5 detected the presence of three clusters of decodings linked to ethnicity (indicated by three ticks), and one to generation within an ethnic group (one tick).

In all, there were 31 clusters where ethnicity would seem to have defined particular decodings of a specific scene or of a more general aspect of the programme. These clusters were classified as having been shaped by ethnicity on the basis of how many viewers of one ethnic origin perceived the programme in a particular manner. It was only after this process of categorization that explanations for these groupings were sought. A further 11 groupings appear to have been shaped by generation within an ethnic group, as well as 12 by both gender and generation within an ethnic group, one by gender within and ethnic group, and two by education within an ethnic group. There were also two clusters of responses moulded by sub-groups of ethnicity. As will be seen in the following sections, this latter variable highlights the fact that the ethnic categorizations used in this study ("native" French, of Maghrebi origin and originating from sub-Saharan/Central Africa) are very broad and ideally, would need refining. Clearly, all five of these combinations of influencing variables are inextricably linked to ethnicity: those decodings that are defined by gender within an ethnic group, for example, are clearly associated with the ethnicity of that particular group because no similar clusters of decodings were found in the other ethnic groups. In other words, gender has, to a certain extent, been moulded by ethnicity. On the other hand, six clusters of decodings were shaped by gender across the ethnic divide, two by generation, and two by educational level. Thus, the vast majority of clusters - 60 out of 70 - are, in various ways, conditioned by ethnicity. However, as will be seen in the following sections, whilst the links between certain clusters and ethnicity can be readily explained, the reasons for many other groupings are less clear-cut.

Before moving on to the following sections examining the influences of the four variables, it is necessary to define the concept of a "cluster" or "grouping". These
two terms are used synonymously within the context of the present study to indicate those decodings of a scene or of a general aspect of the programme that are of a similar nature. Thus, if a scene was about "X" and, when asked, most viewers stated that the scene was about "X" but five respondents said that it was about "Y", the latter five decodings would be termed a cluster or grouping. A cluster may contain as few as two viewer decodings, although usually, there will be more responses in a cluster.

Table 4.1 The influences of ethnicity, gender, generation and educational level on the decoding of *La Composition Française*

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Using the results summarized in the above table, the following sections examine the relative influences of the four variables - ethnicity, gender, generation and educational level - on the decoding process.

4.2 Ethnicity

A majority of the questions that viewers were asked about the episode - 20 out of 29 - led to clusters of responses that appear to be linked to the ethnicity of these viewers. As is shown in table 4.1, certain questions produced several clusters of decodings associated in different ways with ethnicity (see question 26, for example), whilst other questions (such as question 39) led to only one grouping related to ethnic origin. In all, twelve questions - numbers 1, 2, 3, 13, 15, 20, 21, 22, 31, 33, 38 and 39 - produced a single cluster of decodings defined by ethnicity, and eight - numbers 5, 7, 10, 26, 27, 29, 32 and 35 - led to several groupings shaped by ethnic origin. A total of seven of these questions referred to specific scenes in the programme, and the remaining thirteen to general aspects of the episode, such as the interpretation of characters, relationships between these characters, and so on. As in chapter 3, analysis of decodings can be usefully divided into those pertaining to specific scenes, and those concerning more general aspects of the programme.

4.2.1 Decodings of specific scenes

Seven scenes in the episode led to clusters of decodings that on analysis would seem to be linked to ethnicity. Although in many cases these clusters of interpretations can with reasonable certainty be linked to ethnic origin, in other instances, patterns are less well-defined and in the absence of further research it is not possible to state with certitude that these groups of decodings are linked to ethnicity. Nevertheless, tentative
explanations of these patterns will be provided, although these are suggestions rather than conclusively proved.

Question 7, discussed in the previous chapter, refers to the scene where Yoyo, the youngest son in the Badaoui family introduces his Bosnian classmate, Svetlana, to his father. His father is surprised to learn that she is Muslim because she does not look "Arab". It will be recalled that there were two preferred readings of this scene: firstly, that Amar had confused ethnic origin and religion and was under the impression that to be Muslim one also has to be Arab, and secondly, that Yoyo had told his father that Svetlana was Muslim because his parents would considered it unacceptable for him to bring home a non-Muslim female friend. As is shown in table 4.1, two groupings related to ethnicity were identified in the viewer responses to this scene.

The first of these clusters is linked to the presence of the two intended meanings within the scene. In chapter 3 it was seen that the reason for the co-existence of two preferred readings was that the series had two script writers, one of Algerian origin (Akli Tadjer) and one of French origin (Henri de Turenne), and they had divergent views on this point. Analysis of responses to question 7 highlighted the fact that whilst a majority of respondents - 32 - decoded the scene within Turenne's preferred meaning, a number of other viewers - 6 - interpreted it as Tadjer had intended. Of the six viewers who perceived the scene within Tadjer's preferred meaning, it is significant that five were of Maghrebi origin and only one was "native" French. These Maghrebi respondents made no reference to the father having blurred the distinction between ethnicity and religion but focused entirely on the fact that Yoyo had brought home a female friend: they either expressed surprise at Yoyo's behaviour and pointed out that it was very unusual for a Maghrebi boy to invite a female friend to his home, or else they perceived Amar's comment as critical of his son bringing home a female classmate who he thought was non-Muslim. The following examples are typical of this group of decodings:
Moi, je pense c'est peut-être, à mon avis, que lui, si son fils lui a dit que c'était pas une musulmane, il peut-être réagit d'une autre façon. Voilà, d'après ce que j'ai compris, tant qu'il a dit que c'est une musulmane, donc il a rien dit. (43.B.F.L.37)

Premièrement, ça m'a choqué... enfin, pas choqué mais moi je sais que j'aurais jamais fait ça avec mes parents quand j'étais jeune, j'aurais jamais ramené une copine comme ça, une blonde, quoi [...] jamais un enfant, un maghrébin ramènera une fille chez lui si c'est pas une fille qu'il veut se marier avec [...]. (14.B.M.H.24)

That five out of six of the viewers who perceived the scene in this manner were of Maghrebi origin, is clearly linked to the fact that in Maghrebi Muslim society it would be considered unacceptable for a young boy to invite a female friend to his home, and therefore, this aspect of the scene had an impact on these five respondents. On the other hand, in French society it is commonplace for children to invite friends of both sexes to their homes, and so the image of Yoyo bringing home a female schoolfriend was in no way surprising. Consequently, this part of the scene passed unnoticed, and all but one of the "native" French viewers focused on the fact that Amar had confused ethnic origin and religion. It is surprising, however, that so few of the respondents of Maghrebi origin decoded this scene within Tadjer's preferred meaning. As pointed out in the previous chapter, it might have been expected that a majority of Maghrebi viewers would perceive the scene as Tadjer intended because it would seem probable that their frameworks of reference are closer to those of Tadjer, who is of Algerian origin, than to those of Turenne, who is of French origin. It was suggested in chapter 3 that the reason for this may lie, at least partly, in the fact that most of the respondents of Maghrebi origin who decoded within Turenne's preferred meaning have either grown up in France or lived in France for many years. Their responses may indicate, therefore, a certain degree of acculturation.

A second ethnicity-related cluster of decodings in the responses to this question was detected amongst respondents originating from sub-Saharan/Central
Africa. Four out of these five viewers decoded the scene as Turenne intended, pointing out that Amar was under the false impression that all Muslims are Arab. However, three out of these four respondents formulated their decodings in a manner that was unique to them, and which was clearly linked to their ethnicity. All three of these viewers focused on the fact that not only are there Arab Muslims but there are also black Muslims, and one of these respondents went on to cite those African countries where Islam is the predominant religion. Although none of these three respondents originated from countries where Islam is the main religion - one was from Congo, one from the Central African Republic and one from Benin - they were clearly aware of the fact that certain neighbouring countries have a high proportion of Muslims within the population. In other words, their experiences of originating from sub-Saharan/Central African states gave them the knowledge that Muslims are not necessarily Arab. On the other hand, it is interesting that one of these respondents (and possibly a second viewer too, although further data would have been needed to confirm this) was under the impression that all Muslims are either Arab or black. Her reactions are, therefore, very similar to Amar's, although broadened by her experience of being black. Thus, it could be argued that this decoding is not entirely within Turenne's preferred meaning because this viewer does not seem to be aware that religion and ethnicity are two separate "conditions". This respondent stated:

Non, les Musulmans sont des Arabes. [suddenly in an enlightened voice] Non, c'est pas seulement les Arabes, les Sénégalais aussi, les Maliens c'est des musulmans. Ah, mais je me dis qu'il [Amar] a dû dire que c'est une Arabe [Svetlana] parce que les autres [musulmans] ils sont noirs à part les Arabes. (45.C.F.L.17)

The second viewer who may well also have been under the impression that all Muslims are either Arab or black commented:
Il y a bien des noirs aussi qui sont musulmans, mais c'est pas tout le monde qui le sait, ça. (48.C.F.L.22)

It can be seen that these respondents' decodings of the scene were clearly shaped by the particularities of their knowledge through being of Central African origin.

With regard to the scene discussed in chapter 3 where a pork meat salesman attempts to sell his products to Amar, respondents were asked the very open-ended question of what they thought of this particular scene (question 10). Analysis of viewer responses to this question detected a polarization in the decodings that was clearly related to ethnic origin. Table 4.1 shows that two clusters of decodings linked to ethnicity were identified, and as will be seen, there would appear to be a third, although less well-defined, ethnicity-related grouping in the responses.

It will be recalled that there were several dimensions to this scene. First and foremost, there was the fact that Amar, as a (nominal) Muslim, refused to taste the salesman's pork products but in spite of this, he decided to stock the sausages for his mainly French, non-Muslim clientele: this was the preferred reading of the scene. Secondly, part of this scene also revolved around the sales representative discussing his private life and telling Amar of how he lost his previous job selling women's lingerie. The salesman went on to complain about his new job as a pork meat sales representative and the fact that his employers were testing his salesmanship by sending him to grocery shops run by Maghrebis. Concerning this he says "on m'a filé que des épiciers arabes".

Respondents of different ethnic origins tended to focus on different aspects of the scene. The first cluster of decodings identified was amongst viewers of Maghrebi origin. When asked about this scene, a large majority of the Maghrebi respondents - 14 out of 17 - spoke solely about the issue of pork being forbidden to Muslims, some

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1 The question asked was: "Que pensez-vous de la scène où un représentant de charcuteries essaie de vendre ses produits à Amar?"

2 Quotation taken from the broadcast version of *La Composition Française*. 
also adding that in spite of this, Muslims often do sell pork products. The following examples typify this decoding of the scene:

C'était encore un... soulever encore une question très chaude en France, qu'on mange pas de porc. Euh, de faire en sorte que cet épicier pourrait vendre du porc sans en manger [...] Oui, c'est jeter une petite touche sur le sujet du porc en France. (17.B.M.H.24)

Oui, alors c'est très amusant parce que c'est aussi très vrai qu'on est tout le temps confronté à ce problème, la charcuterie, il y en a partout. [...] Le porc, on nous enseigne que c'est absolument interdit [...] C'est une réalité à laquelle je pense que tout le monde est confronté, tous les musulmans sont confrontés. (44.B.F.H.48)

That such a high proportion of the respondents of Maghrebi origin concentrated entirely on this part of the scene, making no reference whatsoever to the salesman's lengthy discussion of his private life, is clearly associated with their ethnic origin: these viewers focused on the aspect of the scene that related most closely to their own lives and experiences, as people of Muslim heritage.

It is of interest, however, that whilst all the second-generation respondents of Maghrebi origin decoded the scene in this manner, not all of the first-generation did. It might have been expected that because a higher percentage of first- than second-generation Maghrebis are practicing Muslims (Hargreaves and Stenhouse 1991), more of the first- than the second-generation respondents of Maghrebi origin would have focused on this part of the scene. However, surveys indicate that whilst very few second-generation Maghrebis are practicing Muslims, a high percentage - over two thirds - do not eat pork (Tribalat 1995: 104). In other words, not eating pork is often one of the few aspects of their parents' culture that second-generation Maghrebis observe, and as Tribalat suggests, this would seem to have less to do with an interest
in religion than a need to affirm their cultural origins (Tribalat 1995: 104). In view of this, it would seem likely that the second-generation respondents of Maghrebi origin concentrated on this aspect of the scene because of the great importance they attach, in terms of their identity, to the practice of not eating pork. On the other hand, in the case of the first-generation Maghrebi viewers, the refusal to eat pork is only one aspect of their religious and cultural practices, and this element of the scene may, therefore, have struck them less forcefully. Moreover, unlike their children, they are not torn between two cultures.

A second cluster of decodings was detected amongst the "native" French viewers. Firstly, far fewer of these respondents concentrated on the issue of pork being *haram* (forbidden) in Islam: only 10 out of the 23 "native" French viewers who gave responses to this question, as opposed to 14 out of the 17 of Maghrebi origin who replied to this question. At the same time, a significant number of respondents - nine - focused on the sales representative's discussion of his previous job and private life. It will be remembered, on the other hand, that none of the Maghrebi viewers spoke of this aspect of the scene. Thus, two "native" French viewers stated:

Ben lui [the salesman] c'était un comique, ouais, avec ses... qui vendait avant des... qui était représentant pour les lingeries féminines, et puis qui s'est fait licencié parce que, euh, il regardait un petit peu trop près, quoi. (32.A.F.L.22)

[...] c'est un personnage [the salesman] qui crée un peu le comique. Je le verrais uniquement comme ça [...] je pense que... que les deux professions qu'il a n'ont pas grand intérêt, c'est certain. Il faudrait peut-être dire que de vendre de la lingerie c'est plus glorifiant que de vendre des... enfin, je crois que ce personnage est fait pour amener une situation un peu comique, c'est tout. (11.A.F.H.48)

It would seem probable that these nine "native" French respondents who referred to the private life of the salesman, did so because it was this part of the scene that they
could most identify with. Whilst the issue of Muslims not eating pork is something that is not of personal interest to them, the salesmans' stories of losing his previous job, and his wife leaving him, are commonplace features of life in France, and so these viewers related to this particular aspect of the scene. In other words, whilst a majority of the Maghrebi respondents focused on the part of the scene that was Maghrebi-ethnically marked, a significant proportion of the "native" French viewers concentrated on those aspects of the scene which were non-Maghrebi-ethnically marked, and therefore, closer to their own lives.

Whilst the above two clusters of responses can be relatively easily attributed to ethnic origin, the pattern of decodings produced by the respondents originating from sub-Saharan/Central Africa is less straightforwardly explained. When asked about this scene, all five of these viewers spoke of the fact that Maghrebis do not eat pork, and one also focused on the salesman's comment: "on m'a filé que des épiciers arabes", which she perceived as rude. Typical comments included:

Ça c'était un petit clin d'oeil par rapport au fait que les Arabes ne mangent pas de porc, déjà, sinon business business [...] (49.C.F.H.18)

Si j'étais charcutier, surtout de porc, je m'hasarderais pas dans une épicerie arabe. Bon, d'après ce qu'il a dit... après il s'est expliqué, il a dit qu'on lui a refilé tous les épiceries arabes [...] je trouve qu'il [the salesman] a été assez dur avec le commerçant [Amar] [...] je l'ai pris mal moi, qu'il dise ça devant le commerçant. (48.C.F.L.22)

Although none of the respondents of sub-Saharan/Central African origin was Muslim, it is noticeable that all five focused on the part of the scene that makes reference to the Muslim dietary requirement not to eat pork, that is, the ethnically-marked element of the scene. It could be that these viewers related in particular to this aspect of the scene because it is the part that highlights differences between the "native" French
population and one of France's minority ethnic groups. Being different from the majority population is something that those of sub-Saharan/Central Africa origin can identify with as it is something that they too experience.

In conclusion, it would seem to be that at this moment in the programme, the two groups of ethnic minority respondents - Maghrebis and those of sub-Saharan/Central African origin - were united in the decoding process by their respective experiences of being different from the majority population.

Question 13 also refers to the scene where the pork meat salesman attempts to sell his produce to Amar. Having discussed this scene with viewers in relation to three other questions, respondents were asked whether in that particular scene they could identify to a greater extent with Amar or with the sales representative. Responses to this question were positive in terms of the FAS's objectives, these being that the "native" French audience should identify with the Badaouis. A significant proportion of the "native" French respondents - 9 out of 24 - stated that they could identify more with Amar than they could with the salesman, and a further six said that they could identify with both characters equally. Thus, 15 out of the 24 "native" French viewers could identify wholly or partially with the father. That some "native" French viewers asserted that they could identify more with a Maghrebi character than they could with a character of their own ethnic origin, is clearly a success from the FAS's point of view. On the other hand, this must be seen within the context of responses to question 35, when viewers were asked which character they could most identify with in the episode. In this case, only 2 out of the 17 "native" French respondents who answered this question stated that they could identify with Amar. It would seem, therefore, that identification was aided by the intra-textual context of this particular scene. In other words, the effect of pitting the pleasant Maghrebi character, Amar, against the disagreeable "native" French salesman, was to encourage identification with the former.

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3 The question asked was: "Dans cette scène est-ce que vous vous identifiez/ vous vous sentez plus proche avec Amar ou avec le représentant?"
Apart from those viewers who could identify either with Amar or with both him and the sales representative, a further four respondents stated that they could identify most with the salesman, and it is noteworthy that all four of these viewers were of French origin. No Maghrebi respondents said that they could identify to a greater extent with the sales representative than with Amar, although a substantial number - 7 out of 18 - stated that they could identify equally with both. It would seem likely that the fact that the only respondents who could identify most with the salesman were "native" French is linked to their ethnic origin. Although none of these four viewers explicitly stated that they particularly identified with the sales representative because, like them, he was of French origin, it would seem probable that ethnicity, at least partly, influenced their feelings regarding which character they could most relate to in the scene. The response given by one of these viewers would certainly appear to suggest that Amar's ethnic origin was a barrier against identifying with him:

Je me suis trouvé en situation de disponibilité, d'avoir perdu mon emploi, donc je sais ce que c'est de chercher un nouvel emploi et d'être disposé à prendre n'importe quoi [...] J.H. Donc, vous vous identifiez plus avec...

avec le type [the salesman] qui a accepté de faire ça parce que vraiment il avait pas moyen de faire autre chose. Quant à l'épicier qui refuse de manger du cochon, et bien c'est évident, ça confirme bien qu'ils [Maghrebis] sont pas assimilés ni assimilables, donc il faut pas déplacer les populations. Ben, oui. (25.A.M.H.65)

Although this respondent initially explains his identification with the sales representative in terms of having, like him, experienced unemployment, he then goes on to discuss Amar's refusal to taste the pork sausages. He strongly disapproves of this because he perceives it as proof that Maghrebis in France cannot be "assimilated"
and, therefore, should not be in France. Clearly, this response is an indication that ethnicity was, for this viewer, a hindrance in terms of identification.

Question 15 is based on the scene where Zouzou, the Badaoui's adolescent daughter, is trying to write an essay on "les raisons d'aimer son pays", and is torn between writing about France because she feels French, and writing about Algeria so as to please her parents. Having already discussed this scene in relation to a previous question, respondents were asked whether, in their opinion, Zouzou was French or Algerian. It will be recollected from the previous chapter that the encoders wanted the audience to perceive Zouzou as French, and that a majority of the respondents did, indeed, state that Zouzou was French. However, six viewers asserted that Zouzou was Algerian, and it is significant that five out of these six respondents were "native" French. These viewers were aware of the fact that in legal terms Zouzou was French but they rejected this and insisted that she was Algerian because of her origins, or "blood", as some of them put it. Clearly, this cluster of responses is linked to the origins of these viewers, and the fact that they have been French for a number of generations and do not, therefore, accept those who have recently acquired French nationality as being entirely French. The following examples are typical of this type of response:

Disons qu'elle est pas... elle est pas 100% française, parce que le sang il parle quand-même. Bon ben, elle est algérienne [...] Disons qu'elle vit... elle veut vivre comme les Français, quoi, mais elle est... bon ben, elle est arabe avant tout. (10.A.M.L.47)

[...] Ben, c'est à dire qu'elle est forcément... elle est d'origine arabe puisque sa mère et son père sont arabes, son sang - *jus sanguinis* - est arabe, euh, mais elle est de cult... elle commence à être de culture européenne [...] Elle est née en France, mais c'est ce qu'on dit en France, *jus soli* c'est pas suffisant. Il y a *jus sanguinis* aussi, il y a le problème du sang. (26.A.M.H.58)
That these five respondents are of the opinion that Zouzou cannot be French because of her "blood", points to the fact that even though the law of *jus soli* has been in force in France since 1889 when it was voted in by the National Assembly (Noiriel 1988: 83), some "native" French people still cling to the mythical concept of being "ethnically French" by one’s biological origins. Ironically, the first respondent cited above has a surname that is plainly of Spanish origin.

Question 20, discussed in the previous chapter, refers to the scene where Reda, the Badaoui’s eldest son, asks his father to help him finance his new business idea. This latest undertaking consists of prayer mats that have a compass attached to them so that Muslims can be sure that they are praying in the correct direction. In order to convince his father of the worth of this product, Reda asks both his father and his uncle to point out the direction of Mecca but as will be remembered, neither of them is capable of doing so. Respondents were asked what they thought of this, the programme-maker’s preferred reading being that neither Amar nor Aziz was a practicing Muslim. However, four viewers produced contradictory decodings: they perceived the scene as intentionally ridiculing Muslims. Significantly, three out of these four respondents were of Maghrebi origin. One such viewer stated:

Ben, qu'est-ce-que je pense, c'est que c'est un message de moqueur, quoi. Il se moquait de nous, quoi, qu'en fait on sait qu'on est pas sûr de... ça peut mettre des doutes sur la religion. C'est assez fort, quand-même... c'est... ouais, c'est moqueur. (14.B.M.H.24)

Being of Muslim heritage, this respondent clearly felt personally targeted by the scene: "il se moquait de nous [my emphasis]". In other words, that three out of the four viewers who perceived the scene in this manner were of Maghrebi origin is almost certainly linked to the fact that they are culturally Muslim, and they felt, therefore, that the scene made them look foolish.
With reference to Reda's idea of producing Muslim prayer mats with compasses attached to them, respondents were also asked whether or not they thought that this was a good idea (question 21). A very clear pattern of responses differing along the ethnic divide was detected: whilst a large majority - 16 out of 19 - of the viewers of Maghrebi origin considered Reda's idea earnestly (some deciding that it was a good idea, others not), slightly over half - 12 out of 23 - of the "native" French respondents who answered the question perceived the idea as a joke and not to be taken seriously. For example, the following two Maghrebi respondents both considered the idea seriously, one coming to the conclusion that it would work as a business venture, the other, that it would not:

Pas mal, pas mal du tout parce que je t'assure qu'il y en a plein, même ceux qui prient, en fonction de l'endroit où ils se trouvent, eh ben, ils savent pas où est la Mecque. (4.B.F.L.25+ or -)

C'est une bonne idée? Non, puisque c'est le soleil. On a qu'à regarder le lever du soleil, et on sait de quel côté est la Mecque. (40.B.F.L.50)

That such a large proportion of the Maghrebi respondents evaluated Reda's idea earnestly, is plainly related to the fact that they are either Muslim or of Muslim heritage, and so they are aware of the fact that it is important in Islam to face Mecca when praying. It can be seen, for example, that although the second respondent cited above is of the opinion that Reda's idea is not a good one, this judgement is based on her knowledge of Islam: she states that a compass is unnecessary because Muslims can orient themselves for prayer using the sun. Moreover, six of the respondents of Maghrebi origin also pointed out that prayer mats with compasses attached to them have existed for many years:

4 The question asked was: "Quelle est votre opinion sur l'affaire que Reda veut monter?"
Ben, je sais que mon père il en a un de tapis comme ça. Ça fait longtemps que ça existe ces tapis, huit, neuf ans, et c'est quelque chose de très bien. (17.B.M.H.24)

On the other hand, that a large number of the "native" French respondents found the idea of a compass on a prayer mat ridiculous, is clearly linked to the fact that they are not Muslim and it is, therefore, hard for them to relate to the idea of praying in a certain direction. Indeed, some of these viewers appeared to be unaware of this Muslim precept or of the fact that Muslims use prayer mats, hence their opinion that Reda's idea was pointless. One such respondent commented:

C'est pas une affaire qui va marcher, c'est pas un bon plan, c'est pas quelque chose de sérieux, parce qu'il va pas le vendre à des gens pour... les gens vont pas acheter des tapis pour prier, non, je crois pas. (8.A.F.L.41)

In addition, it was found that within the group of 11 "native" French viewers who did consider the idea seriously, none of them knew that these carpets actually exist and can be bought in France. This contrasts with the Maghrebi respondents, six of whom commented on the fact that Reda's idea is not a new one. Once again this emphasizes the fact that ethnicity (and the experiences and knowledge that accompany it), was the main variable shaping this cluster of decodings.

Question 225 was also based on this scene: respondents were asked what they thought of the fact that Reda told his father that the only thing that he needed to set up his new business was money. In other words, Reda was indirectly asking his father to help him out financially. In broad terms, there were two main types of reaction to Reda's comment, and these were, to a certain extent, split along ethnic divisions. Firstly, there were those who were critical of the fact that Reda asked his father to assist him financially, and secondly, there were those respondents who considered it

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5 The question asked was: "Qu'avez-vous pensé quand Reda a dit que la seule chose qui lui manquait c'était l'argent?"
to be only natural for a son to ask his father for money. It was found that there was a far greater tendency for "native" French viewers to be critical of Reda's behaviour than for the respondents of Maghrebi origin to perceive his conduct in a negative light. Whilst 9 out of the 20 "native" French viewers who produced processable responses expressed disapproval, only 3 out of the 17 respondents of Maghrebi origin who gave answers were critical. Moreover, Maghrebi viewers of both generations were inclined to emphasize the fact that they considered it to be absolutely normal for Reda to ask his father for help, and some of them asserted that this was typical of Maghrebi families. Thus, two Maghrebi respondents stated:

C'est normal, moi je trouve que c'est normal, même malgré que, apparemment le jeune homme n'habite pas chez eux, il vient de temps en temps, mais je veux dire, un fils c'est un fils, quoi, et quand un fils a besoin de son père... (5.B.F.L.22)

Chez nous on demande toujours. Les premières personnes qu'on va plumer c'est les parents [laughs], c'est les plus proches et c'est tout à fait normal chez nous. Moi je vois le Français, pour demander un petit truc à son père il réfléchit pendant dix jours. [...] (39.B.M.H.39)

By contrast, as mentioned above, nearly half of the "native" French viewers were of the opinion that Reda should not have asked his father for financial assistance, many suggesting that if he wanted to set up a business he should have earned the money to do so himself. It would seem probable that this pattern of reactions, with a much larger proportion of the respondents of Maghrebi origin approving of Reda's behaviour, reflects the particularly strong family ties that exist within Maghrebi families (Todd 1994).
4.2.2 Decodings of general aspects of the episode

Having examined ethnicity-related clusters of responses to specific scenes, this section analyses groupings in the decodings of more general aspects of the episode, such as interpretations of the various characters and relationships between these characters. A total of 13 of the questions covering general aspects of the programme seem to have produced clusters shaped by ethnic origin in the decodings.

Once respondents had viewed *La Composition Française*, the first question that they were asked was whether they had ever seen the programme before (question 16). Although this question is not related to the decoding of the particular episode that viewers had watched, it is interesting to note that a significantly higher proportion of the Maghrebi viewers - 9 out of 19 - than of the "native" French respondents - 6 out of 23 - were already acquainted with the series. Moreover, whilst only one of the six "native" French viewers had watched more than one episode, seven out of the nine respondents of Maghrebi origin had seen several, with two of these viewers stating that they had watched many episodes of the series. That a larger number of Maghrebi viewers had seen *Fruits et Légumes* would seem to suggest that when these respondents first came across the programme, their interest was aroused, given the rarity of seeing Maghrebi people represented on French television, and so they were more inclined to watch the episode. Of particular significance, however, is the fact that whilst most of these respondents of Maghrebi origin went on to watch other episodes of the series, only one of the "native" French viewers did. This would seem to link up with the responses given by viewers to a subsequent question. As will be seen below, when respondents were asked whether or not they liked the programme, a high proportion - 15 out of 24 - of the "native" French viewers either said that they disliked the programme and, therefore, would not watch it, or that they liked it but would not choose to watch it. By contrast, only 4 out of the 20 Maghrebi respondents.

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6 The question asked was: "Avez-vous vu cette émission quand elle est passée à l'antenne il y a quelques mois?"
stated that they would not watch *Fruits et Légumes*. This would seem to support the argument that because the Maghrebi respondents found themselves represented on television (and for once in relatively positive roles), the programme was of particular interest to them.

After being asked whether they had seen the series before, respondents were asked the very general question of what they thought the episode was about (question 2). A pattern shaped by ethnic origin and, as will be seen later, generations within an ethnic group, was identified among the responses to this question. Whilst the majority of viewers stated that the programme was about immigration in France or about the Algerian population in France, a group of eight viewers perceived the episode as being specifically about people of immigrant origin not knowing whether they are French or Algerian. That six out of the eight respondents who interpreted the programme in this manner were of Maghrebi origin would seem to indicate that ethnicity was the defining variable. Moreover, the remaining two viewers who were "native" French, did not focus entirely on the issue of identity: they also stated that in general terms the episode was about "les Algériens en France" (11.A.F.H.48) and "les Arabes" (10.A.M.L.47). The six respondents of Maghrebi origin, on the other hand, commented solely on the former aspect. Thus, two such viewers stated:

> En fait c'est de ce qu'on parlait tout à l'heure, quoi: l'origine... comment on se considère de quelle patrie, de quel pays on est. On voit un peu le... la confrontation du père avec les enfants, les enfants qui vivent le jour quotidien en contact profond avec... avec... [interruption]. (16.B.M.H.29)

> Ça parlait un peu du problème qu'il y a, euh, enfin, du problème qu'il y a chez les immigrés qui savent pas bien se situer, s'ils sont bien français ou algériens. Enfin, moi je l'ai vu comme ça. (2.B.F.L.20)
Although the issue of identity amongst second-generation Algerians was one of the main themes of the episode, and it is not, therefore, surprising that certain viewers focused on it, it would seem likely that the six respondents of Maghrebi origin who perceived the episode in this manner did so because it is a situation that they can strongly identify with. In other words, because this part of the programme related to their own lives, it was, to them, the overriding aspect of the episode.

As discussed in the section on attitudinal decodings in chapter 3, when respondents were asked whether or not they liked the episode (question 3), many more of the Maghrebi viewers - 16 out of 20 - than of the "native" French respondents - 9 out of 24 - stated that they liked the programme. That such a large proportion of the Maghrebi viewers were favourably disposed towards the episode may seem surprising, particularly in view of the fact that the Badaoui family was far from being representative of the average Maghrebi family living in France. It might have been expected that many of the viewers of Maghrebi origin would dislike the series for this reason. Indeed, when respondents were asked whether or not the Badaouis were typical of Maghrebi families in France, the vast majority of Maghrebi viewers stated that the Badaouis were unrepresentative. This leads one to ask why, therefore, it was that respondents of Maghrebi origin liked a programme which portrayed an Algerian family living in France in an unrealistic manner. It would seem probable that the answer lies in the fact that Maghrebis are, on the whole, seldom seen in light entertainment programmes on French television. Usually, if a Maghrebi person is seen on television this will be in connection with news and current affairs which focus on problematic rather than convivial events (Hargreaves and Perotti: 1993). Consequently, it is relatively rare for people of Maghrebi origin living in France to see themselves represented in a positive light on French television, and it is even rarer for them to see Maghrebi people as the focus of an entire television series. In view of this, it is likely that the Maghrebi respondents' favourable disposition towards the episode was rooted in a sense of relief at being, for once, portrayed in (supposedly) positive, non-marginal roles.
This argument is supported by Bobo's research on black women's responses to the film *The Color Purple*. She found that whilst it was generally expected that black people would not have positive responses to the film because of the negative stereotyping of black people in the film, large numbers of black women, including her respondents, liked *The Color Purple*, and strongly defended this position. She partially explains their positive reactions towards the film in terms of "the way in which black women were presented in the film. For the first time black women were seen in dominant media as a major focus of the work. [...] Black women were [...] constantly on the screen and were seen in ways not displayed before." (Bobo 1995: 94). In other words, that these black women liked *The Color Purple*, and the Maghrebi respondents were favourably disposed towards *La Composition Française*, is, to a large extent, linked to the novelty value of seeing themselves portrayed in important roles on screen.

Having asked viewers whether or not they liked the programme, it was then enquired if there was one scene that they particularly enjoyed (question 57). A total of three clusters related to ethnicity were detected in the responses to this question, one being well defined, and the other two less so. The scene that was most frequently cited, both by "native" French and Maghrebi respondents, was the one where Zouzou asks her father and the French neighbour, Baudoin, to help her with her essay on "les raisons d'aimer son pays". This sparks off a lively debate between Amar and Baudoin on issues related to nationality and identity. That this was the most well-liked scene amongst respondents is not necessarily surprising as it revolves around the central theme of the episode, hence the title, *La Composition Française*. It is, however, interesting to note that a much larger proportion of the viewers of Maghrebi origin than of the "native" French respondents focused on this particular scene. Whilst nearly two thirds - 11 out of 18 - of the former viewers who answered the question liked this scene most, less than a third - 7 out of 23 - of the latter respondents who produced processable responses did. That the majority of viewers of Maghrebi origin

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7 The question asked was: "Y-a-t-il eu une scène qui vous a particulièrement plu?"
particularly liked this scene is probably linked to their ethnic origin: this is a scene that deals with issues that doubtless relate closely to their own lives, issues that they can identify with. As one such respondent stated:

C'est vrai que, on se pose cette question. Quand on te dit "ton pays", je saurais pas quoi dire. C'est [the scene] tout à fait vrai. (4.B.F.L.25+ or -)

On the other hand, the "native" French respondents had no personal interest in this scene, hence the fact that fewer of them chose it as their favourite. It would seem likely that those "native" French respondents who did prefer this scene to others, did so because it was the most extensively developed scene of the episode.

As seen above, a much higher proportion of the viewers of Maghrebi origin, than of the "native" French respondents especially liked the scene dealing with issues of identity and nationality. Initial analysis seemed to suggest that this was the only cluster present in responses to this question. However, further analysis appeared to indicate that a second ethnicity-related pattern lay in the very fact that there was no grouping of the responses. Whilst a total of 7 out of the 23 "native" French respondents preferred the scene referred to above, the remaining 16 viewers - over two thirds - chose a wide range of scenes as their favourites. In all, they cited a further nine different scenes (this does not include respondents who stated that there was no scene that they particularly liked). This variety in the choice of scenes that they preferred, could well be an indication that, as "native" French people, they were unable to identify strongly with any of the scenes. It would seem probable that because none of the scenes was of personal interest to them, they all enjoyed different aspects of the programme. On the other hand, as already seen, most of the respondents of Maghrebi origin particularly liked the scene where Zouzou attempts to write an essay on "les raisons d'aimer son pays" because this was the main ethnically-marked scene of the episode, and so they could relate to it. As a result of this, the range of favourite scenes cited amongst Maghrebi respondents was more restricted
than amongst the "native" French viewers. They only cited a further six scenes, and none of them stated that there was no scene that they especially enjoyed.

Of the seven respondents of Maghrebi origin who did not choose the scene where Amar and Baudoin talk about their respective nationalities as their favourite, two stated that the part of the episode that they most liked, was where a pork meat sales representative tries to sell his products to Amar. It will be remembered that initially, Amar does not want to buy the sausages because, being Muslim, he does not eat pork. In the end, however, his sense of business prevails and he decides to stock the products for his French clientele, in spite of refusing to taste them. Clearly, this scene is ethnically marked, and it is significant that whilst two of the Maghrebi respondents stated that this was the scene they preferred, none of the "native" French viewers did. Again, it would seem probable that these two viewers particularly liked this scene because it related to their everyday lives. When asked which scene she liked most, one of these two respondents, who was of the first-generation and had difficulty speaking French, stated: "le machin de cochon, qu'on a pas le droit de manger [laughs]" (42.B.F.L.42). The fact that she refers to the scene in personal terms - "on [my emphasis] a pas le droit de manger" - would seem to support the argument that she particularly enjoyed this scene because she could identify with the subject matter. It is of interest to note that both she and the other viewer who named this as their favourite scene were practicing Muslims, rather than being merely nominally Muslim. In all, therefore, 13 out of the 18 Maghrebi respondents particularly liked scenes that were associated with their ethnicity.

As seen in chapter 3, some of the most important questions viewers were asked in terms of assessing the extent to which the FAS succeeded in getting its message across to the audience concerned whether or not respondents liked the various members of the Badaoui family, and for what reasons. These questions also produced a number of ethnicity-related clusters, and three such groupings appear to be present amongst viewer decodings of Amar.
Firstly, when viewers were asked whether or not they were favourably disposed towards the father (question 26), there was a clear ethnic split between those who focused specifically on Amar's relationship with his family, and those who concentrated on other aspects of his behaviour, such as how he ran his business, treated his clients, and the extent to which he had retained his cultural origins. Whilst 10 out of the 19 respondents of Maghrebi origin who answered this question predominantly spoke of Amar's behaviour towards his wife and children, only 2 out of the 23 "native" French respondents who produced processable responses did. It would seem likely that this is because the two ethnic groups used their own experiences of first-generation Maghrebi men as a point of reference from which to formulate an opinion of Amar. Thus, whilst the respondents of Maghrebi origin all have knowledge of Maghrebi men as husbands or fathers, the "native" French viewers know Maghrebi men as shopkeepers and, in general terms, as people of a different ethnic origin from themselves living in France. The two following examples indicate the contrast between certain Maghrebi and "native" French perceptions of Amar:

C'est bien, parce que déjà c'est pas évident d'être père comme ça, d'une famille comme ça, parce que, attention, il faut pas croire que père c'est quelque chose... [...] il faut que les enfants aillent à l'école, qu'ils sont [sic] bien habillés, puis qu'ils ont de l'argent, qu'ils s'amusent, qu'ils sont en bonne santé. C'est ce que souhaitent tous les pères de famille, hein. (18.B.M.L.26)

Non [je n'aime pas Amar]. Le côté arnaqueur dans l'épicier, ça, je veux dire, c'est un côté que... la première scène, franchement, je la trouve très désagréable, quoi. (23.A.M.H.22)

Other than those respondents, like the two quoted above, who focused on aspects such as Amar as a family man and as a businessman, many viewers across all three ethnic groups based their opinions of him on his ethnicity. It will be recalled
from the previous chapter that the FAS explicitly stated that it wanted the audience not only to like the Badaouis but to accept their (minimal) ethnic differences. However, amongst the 25 viewers who evaluated the father's character in terms of his ethnicity, a small, although not insignificant number - seven - either disliked Amar because they perceived him as too ethnically marked, or liked him because they found him not too "Algerian" and, therefore, not too culturally different. In other words, these respondents revealed a lack of acceptance of Amar's ethnicity. Of these seven respondents, four were "native" French, two were of sub-Saharan/Central African origin, and the remaining viewer was of Maghrebi origin. That the majority of these viewers were non-Maghrebi is not surprising as it is unlikely that Maghrebis would be intolerant towards someone sharing their own cultural and ethnic origins. Clearly, the fact that six viewers of French, and sub-Saharan/Central African origin perceived Amar in a manner indicating a rejection of his ethnic specificities, is linked to the ethnicity of these two groups of viewers: as non-Maghrebis they were less likely to spontaneously sympathize with a culture other than their own.

It is interesting that in spite of the fact that people originating from sub-Saharan/Central Africa are (like those of Maghrebi origin) frequently the victims of discrimination in France, these two respondents perceived Amar from the same standpoint as the four "native" French viewers, rather than, as might be expected, from a position closer to that of the Maghrebi respondents. This leads one to ask what encouraged these six respondents from two ethnic groups to be united in their disapproval of a third. Although answers to this question can only be based on conjecture, this cross-ethnic disapproval could be due to a combination of two factors. Firstly, the respondents originating from sub-Saharan/Central Africa were, like the "native" French viewers, of Christian faith, and it could be, therefore, that their lack of acceptance of Amar's ethnicity was a reflection of their rejection of Muslim cultural practices. Secondly, it may well be that these viewers have interiorised the

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8 Tribalat states that whilst Maghrebi people are generally the principal victims of discrimination, "L'autre catégorie désignée en deuxième rang comme victimes de la discrimination est celle des Africains noirs" (Tribalat 1995: 181).
frequently negative media coverage in France of Maghrebis and their cultural practices. As discussed earlier, Maghrebis rarely appear on television in light entertainment programmes but on the other hand, they are often visible in negative news coverage. Similarly, press analyses have highlighted the fact that when the issue of immigration is broached, one of the most common themes is "l'intégrisme et la constitution d'un islam de France" (Battegay 1992: 175), thus confirming the already widespread belief that Islam is, by its very nature, an extremist and intolerant religion.

The third cluster detected can be seen amongst those who either stated that they disliked the father or that they were indifferent towards him. Of the six respondents who said that they found Amar disagreeable, five were "native" French and only one was of Maghrebi origin, and of the five who were indifferent towards the father, three were "native" French and two were Maghrebi. Thus, whilst 8 out of the 23 "native" French viewers who replied to the question - slightly over a third - did not express a liking for Amar, only 3 out of the 19 Maghrebi viewers who gave processable responses did not have positive responses towards him. It could well be that a larger proportion of Maghrebi viewers were favourably disposed towards the father for reasons similar to those discussed with regard to question 3, when respondents were asked whether or not they liked the programme. It will be recalled that significantly more of the viewers of Maghrebi origin than French origin liked the episode and it was suggested that this was because of the rarity of seeing Maghrebis represented in a positive light on French television. Thus, it would seem probable that more of the respondents of Maghrebi origin liked Amar partly because of the novelty of seeing a Maghrebi person in a sitcom.

Decodings of Farida showed the same number of ethnicity-related groupings to those encountered in connection with Amar. Granted the similarity of these perceptions, they will not be discussed in further detail here. On the other hand, clusters in the responses to question 29, on whether or not respondents liked Zouzou, were very different and will, therefore, be analysed here. Only 15 Maghrebi, and 19 "native" French respondents gave useable replies here, out of a possible total of 20
and 24 respectively. In spite of these gaps in the data, there would appear to be two clusters in the decodings shaped by ethnicity. Firstly, the results reveal that, in contrast with decodings of Amar, the majority of those viewers who either disliked Zouzou or were indifferent towards her, were of Maghrebi origin. Of the six respondents who disliked Zouzou, five were of Maghrebi origin and only one was "native" French. Similarly, of the six viewers who were indifferent towards her, four originated from the Maghreb and two were of French origin. Thus, whilst 16 out of 19 "native" French respondents liked Zouzou, only 6 out of 15 viewers of Maghrebi origin were favourably disposed towards her.

This leads one to the question of why there was this apparent ethnic division between the "native" French respondents who mainly liked Zouzou, and the Maghrebi viewers who were less favourably disposed towards her. Clues to the answer to this question would seem to lie in some of the reasons that respondents gave for dis/liking Zouzou. Although seven viewers did not explain what their opinions of Zouzou were based on, and most explanations were very varied and did not appear to contain any groupings, two well-defined clusters can be seen in the explanations given by some of the respondents. These two groupings in the responses would seem to provide an answer as to why, unlike the "native" French viewers, so few Maghrebi respondents liked Zouzou. The first cluster is ethnicity-related and will be discussed in this section, whilst the second grouping would appear to be shaped to a large extent by generation within an ethnic group and will, therefore, be examined more fully in section 4.5 below.

A cluster of six viewers, all of them "native" French, stated that they liked Zouzou because they found her very "French", some adding that they felt that she was trying hard to live like a French person rather than like a Maghrebi person. Typical comments included:

Ah, la fille j'ai bien aimé, ah ouais, son style, puis elle avait l'air gentille, quoi.
Elle voulait s'intégrer vraiment à la française, quoi, hein, c'est le cas de le dire.
Elle voulait... elle voulait qu'elle soit comme les autres, pas qu'on la considère comme une maghrébine, quoi. (9.A.F.L.34)

Elle joue bien son personnage, et puis c'est vrai qu'elle cherche aussi... elle cherche une forme d'intégration. Elle a pas envie d'amener sa culture avec elle ou la culture de ses parents, du pays de ses parents. [...] dans quelques années elle sera bien, elle sera de type européen [...] Nous avons notre propre culture, on a pas envie d'avoir la culture des autres [...]. (26.A.M.H.58)

These two respondents reveal a complete rejection of Zouzou's ethnic origins, and their liking for her is based on the perception that she is attempting to efface her ethnicity in favour of "Frenchness". Interestingly, they refer to this process of assimilation as "integration", thus highlighting the ambiguities and confusion in the usage of these two terms.

As will be seen in the section on generation within an ethnic group (section 4.5), a second cluster of respondents - all of Maghrebi origin - stated that they specifically disliked Zouzou because she was too "French". Thus, whilst certain "native" French viewers liked Zouzou because they perceived her as having acquired "French" behaviour, some Maghrebi respondents disliked her because they were of the opinion that she had discarded her cultural origins. It would seem probable that the split between those who liked Zouzou and those who did not, is, to a large extent, shaped by these two conflicting views of Zouzou's ethnicity.

When respondents were asked whether or not they liked Yoyo (question 31), nine viewers made reference to the fact that during the episode Yoyo had brought home two different girls, one Bosnian and one Portuguese. That seven of these nine respondents were of Maghrebi origin, and only two were "native" French would seem to indicate that ethnicity shaped these viewers' responses. It would seem probable that more Maghrebi than "native" French respondents focused on this aspect of Yoyo's behaviour because in Maghrebi society it is generally considered unacceptable for
children to invite friends of the opposite sex to their homes. These images of Yoyo bringing home female classmates would, therefore, have struck Maghrebi viewers as somewhat surprising, or even shocking. For example, one Maghrebi viewer commented:

Ouais, le petit fils il est marrant, quoi. Il est marrant, mais bon, c'est le petit... c'est vraiment le petit fils chouchouté, quoi. Il a tout pour lui, quoi, on lui dit rien, il ramène sa copine, on lui dit rien. [...] (14.B.M.H.24)

In spite of the fact that these seven respondents of Maghrebi origin remarked on Yoyo bringing home female friends, most of them - five - stated that they liked Yoyo. In other words, Yoyo's behaviour did not stop them from being favourably disposed towards him. However, the two remaining Maghrebi viewers asserted that they did not like Yoyo because bringing home female friends is unacceptable. As will be seen later, this type of reaction would appear to be shaped by generation within an ethnic group.

On the other hand, in French society Yoyo's behaviour would not be considered unusual, hence the fact that his actions passed unnoticed amongst the great majority of "native" French viewers, and only two of these respondents commented on the issue. One of the viewers who made reference to Yoyo inviting female classmates home was a practising Catholic who went to mass every Sunday, prayed every day and read religious newspapers such as Famille Crétienne, La Croix, and Missionnaire which may well explain, at least in part, why she found Yoyo's behaviour rather odd. Concerning Yoyo she stated:

Ben, je trouvais bizarre que chaque soir il ramenait une... une copine différente, en plus à chaque fois une étrangère, mais [pause] sinon, non, je trouve qu'il a l'air assez vif d'esprit, quoi. [...] (31.A.F.H.21)
The second "native" French viewer who referred to Yoyo bringing home girls, appeared to find it amusing, rather than surprising, strange or shocking. His response, therefore, differed from that of the Maghrebi viewers and the other "native" French respondent who commented on Yoyo's actions.

Having asked respondents whether or not they liked the various members of the Badaoui family, it was then enquired whether they liked the two main "native" French characters in the programme: the neighbour, Baudoin (question 32), and the pork meats sales representative (question 33). With regard to Baudoin, it might have been expected that "native" French viewers would be more favourably disposed towards him than towards the Badaouis because, like them, he was of French origin. However, the results show quite the opposite: only 10 out of the 22 "native" French respondents who answered this question liked Baudoin, 3 were indifferent, and 9 disliked him. On the other hand, there was a greater tendency for Maghrebi viewers to be favourably disposed towards him: 9 out of the 16 interviewees of Maghrebi origin who produced responses liked Baudoin, 5 were indifferent and only 2 stated that they disliked him. This leads to the question of why Baudoin was rather unpopular with the "native" French interviewees. It could well be - and the two ethnicity-related clusters that will be examined shortly, appear to support this argument - that because Baudoin is one of only two characters of French origin in the programme, the "native" French viewers were more acutely aware of the fact that the image of French people in the episode, relied on him. They were, therefore, conscious that he was, in some ways, a representation of themselves. It would seem that many of the "native" French respondents felt that Baudoin was a distortion of French people. On the other hand, the viewers of Maghrebi origin may well have been less critical of Baudoin because he was not a depiction of themselves.

As is shown in table 4.1, there would appear to be two ethnicity-related groupings in the decodings of Baudoin, and as already mentioned, these two clusters would seem to lend weight to the argument that "native" French viewers tended to dislike Baudoin because he was intended to be a representation of themselves. Firstly,
it was found that 7 out of the 22 "native" French respondents who replied to this question focused on the representativity of Baudoin, many accusing him of being a caricature, a parody, of the average French person. Typical comments included:

[pause] Ben, il... je sais pas, il a l'image du bon Français, du bon Français moyen, franchouillard, avec une baguette et un béret. [...] (22.A.M.H.31)

Oui, parce qu'il est exactement, je pense, il est exactement ce qu'on trouve tous les jours, et c'est peut-être là où le film pêche, c'est que c'est trop caricatural et trop juste pour être vrai.

Interestingly, none of the respondents of Maghrebi origin commented on whether or not Baudoin was representative of French people. Instead, they tended to formulate their opinions of Baudoin in a very different manner from the "native" French viewers: most of those who responded to this question - 10 out of 16 - made reference to the way he behaved towards the Badaoui family. Whilst some of the Maghrebi viewers commented positively on Baudoin's relationship with the Badaouis, others made reference to some of the more negative remarks Baudoin had made regarding Maghrebi people in France. The latter respondents did not, however, necessarily dislike Baudoin because of the comments that they perceived as negative. The following examples highlight the emphasis that Maghrebi viewers tended to put on Baudoin's relationship with the Badaoui family, and his attitude towards France's Maghrebi population:

Ben, il a quand-même un esprit assez ouvert. Il fréquente des gens d'origine maghrébine, il rentre chez eux, pas tout à fait... il est pas xenophobe, il aime apprendre des choses. On a l'impression qu'il aime le contact et qu'il met tout ça... tout ça le dépasse, la xénophobie et tous les problèmes. (16.B.M.H.29)
Euh, le voisin il a un peu la nostalgie [laughs] "vous êtes algériens", enfin, il a un peu la nostalgie des anciens, quoi, donc pour lui, même si on a la carte d'identité française, on est algérien. Voilà, il généralise. Même si on a... même si on a la nationalité française, pour lui c'est "arabe". [...] (37.B.M.L.43)

The two clusters of decodings discussed above, highlight what the two ethnic groups - "native" French and Maghrebi - perceived as significant when judging Baudoin. On the one hand, the "native" French placed little importance on Baudoin's relations with the Badaouis, whilst on the other hand, for most Maghrebi viewers, Baudoin's attitude towards Maghrebi people was the defining aspect of his character.

The last character that viewers were asked to comment on was the sales representative. That a majority of respondents across all three ethnic groups either disliked, or were indifferent towards him is not particularly surprising as he was not intended to be a pleasant character. However, seven viewers stated that they liked him, and it is noteworthy that five of these seven were of Maghrebi origin, and only one was "native" French. It is unclear why a significantly larger proportion of Maghrebi than "native" French respondents liked the salesman but (as in the case of Baudoin) it may be connected to the fact that he is of a different ethnic origin, and so these Maghrebi viewers did not feel personally affected by the fact that he was not a very likeable character.

Once viewers had given their opinions of each character they were asked a further two related questions: firstly, which character they most liked in the episode (question 34) and secondly, which character they could most identify with in the programme (question 35). It can be seen from table 4.1 that no ethnicity-related clusters were detected in the responses to question 34 but that three groupings shaped by ethnicity were identified in the responses to question 35. This contrast is significant. Regarding question 34, it was found that "native" French respondents chose their favourite character regardless of that character's ethnic origin. In other words, the Badaouis' ethnicity was not a barrier to the "native" French viewers liking
them, hence the fact that no ethnicity-related clusters were detected in the responses to this question. Gender and generation, on the other hand, did appear to influence which characters respondents liked most, and this will be discussed in the section below on gender and generation across ethnic groups. However, when viewers were asked which character they could most identify with, responses revealed a very different pattern, and it is the ethnicity-related clusters and patterns detected amongst these responses that will be examined here.

In all, one grouping, and one pattern shaped by ethnicity were identified in the responses to the question of which character viewers could most identify with (question 35). Before examining this cluster and pattern, it should be noted that the data for this question is incomplete with responses from only 17 out of a possible total of 24 "native" French viewers, and 14 out of a possible total of 20 respondents of Maghrebi origin. However, in spite of these gaps, the groupings detected are reasonably clear-cut and would appear to be significant. Firstly, while only two of the interviewees said they had no favourite character, a much higher number - eleven - stated that there was no character in the programme that they could identify with. It is noteworthy that eight out of these eleven respondents who could identify with no character were "native" French, and only two were of Maghrebi origin. That nearly half of the "native" French viewers who gave processable responses - 8 out of 17 - stated that there was no character in the programme that they could identify with, would seem to suggest that whilst ethnicity was not an obstacle to liking characters of a different origin, it was a barrier when it came to identification. Clearly, from the programme-makers' point of view, and the FAS's in particular, this result would seem to be disappointing because one of their key aims was that "les téléspectateurs se familiarisent avec eux [the Badaouis], les adoptent et finissent par s'identifier à eux"9. However, it would seem likely that even though the FAS stated that it wanted "native" French viewers to identify with the Badaouis, ultimately, the most important outcome they hoped to achieve through the series was to encourage "native" French

people to *like* the Badaoui family. It is, for example, possible to identify with a character without particularly liking that character, a result which the FAS would most certainly not have wished for.

Clearly, within the context of this study, many of the "native" French viewers were unable to identify with the Badaouis because of their ethnicity. This problem of cross-ethnic identification is emphasized by the response given by one "native" French viewer who stated that he could identify most closely with the French neighbour, Baudoin:

Le... si le voisin là, monsieur Baudoin... ben, il y a que lui que je puisse m'identifier avec parce que, je suis désolé, mais même en étant raciste le moins possible [laughs]... Ben oui, c'est le seul Français. On traite d'un sujet de relations d'ethnies différentes, je m'identifie à celui à l'ethnie à laquelle j'appartiens.

(25.A.M.H.65)

It is of interest that this viewer also stated that there was no character in the programme that he particularly liked. It would seem, therefore, that he not only had difficulty identifying with, but also liking, people of another ethnic origin.

An ethnicity-related pattern would appear to be visible in the choice of characters that the respondents said they could identify with. As will be discussed in the section on gender and generation within an ethnic group, it was found that most respondents of Maghrebi origin identified with characters that, in broad terms, were representations of themselves. Thus, whilst first-generation Maghrebi women tended to identify with Farida, the mother in the family, second-generation Maghrebi men would identify with Reda, the Badaouis' eldest son. On the other hand, amongst those "native" French viewers who could identify with members of the Badaoui family (as opposed to those who said that they could identify with no-one), this pattern of identification was not found. For example, three of the older generation of "native" French women stated that they could identify with Zouzou, the Badaouis' teenage
daughter, and one of the younger "native" French women identified with Farida. It could be that because of the ethnic "interference" of the Badaouis being Maghrebi, these "native" French viewers did not feel that they had representations of themselves in the programme. As a result, there was a greater tendency for them to cross over generational barriers and identify with different characters for a variety of reasons unrelated to ethnicity. In other words, whilst the respondents of Maghrebi origin were identifying with characters for reasons linked to ethnicity, the "native" French viewers were identifying with non-ethnically marked aspects of the Badaouis.

One of the final questions that respondents were asked was what they thought of Zouzou's behaviour towards her father (question 3810). This question was asked because during the scene where Zouzou is discussing her essay on "les raisons d'aimer son pays" a conflict arises between her and her father. When Zouzou comments on the fact that she does not know which country to refer to in her essay - France or Algeria - Amar asserts that she is Algerian, at which point Zouzou answers back, saying that she was born in France, has French nationality and has never been to Algeria. Although not all the responses to this question were usable, there would appear to be a grouping linked to ethnicity in those responses available. On the one hand, the "native" French viewers saw nothing unusual about her behaviour, and tended to say that Zouzou was "comme toute adolescente" (33.A.F.H.21), she had "un bon comportement" (13.A.F.L.45+or-) and she was, on the whole, "très polie, très gentille avec lui [her father]" (7.A.F.H.51). In other words, these respondents were in no way critical of Zouzou's behaviour towards her father. On the other hand, however, a cluster of six viewers of Maghrebi origin, out of the nine who gave processable responses, were of the opinion that Zouzou's conduct had been inappropriate. Typical comments included:

10 The question asked was: "Comment avez-vous trouvé le comportement de Zouzou envers son père?"
Ben que... que c'est toujours la même chose, hein, elle est née ici, elle a un comportement, elle a des idées qu'elle étale, et puis il y a pas le respect du père à la fille, quoi, elle lui a répondu un peu fortement. (16.B.M.H.29)

Elle est sympa, seulement son comportement, seulement quand elle a répondu à son père. Enfin, elle a pas respecté son père [...] il faut pas qu'il lui réponde comme ça [...] (41.B.F.L.38)

It can be seen from these two examples that both viewers were of the opinion that Zouzou's behaviour revealed a lack of respect for her father. These comments reflect the great importance that is attached in Maghrebi society to respecting the father in the family. Although all members of the family are expected to respect the father, the pressure is particularly great on daughters to comply with this social norm. As one second-generation Maghrebi respondent stated:

Chez nous une fille ça reprend pas comme ça [making reference to Zouzou's behaviour]. Un garçon, chez nous un garçon c'est plus... un garçon il respecte ses parents mais les parents ils respectent le garçon, parce que c'est un garçon. Mais la fille est... elle est plus... elle a moins de possibilités d'ouvrir sa bouche, quoi. [...] Une fille qui reprend à son père, chez nous, si c'est dans une famille traditionnelle, elle se prend une baffe. Bon, c'est vrai même chez les Français, même chez les Occidentaux, mais chez nous c'est encore plus accentué. [...] (14.B.M.H.24)

This viewer's final comment is central to explaining why, on the one hand, "native" French respondents noticed nothing unusual about Zouzou's behaviour towards her father, whilst on the other hand, a significant number of Maghrebi viewers were critical of her conduct. Although he is probably wrong to say that in "Western" society a girl would be slapped for speaking to her father as did Zouzou, he is right to point out that in the "Western" family the concept of respecting the father exists but
less strongly than in the Maghrebi family. A society like France has its roots in Christian, patriarchal values, just as Maghrebi society is broadly structured around Muslim, patriarchal values, the difference being that these practises have tended to dwindle to a greater extent in Europe than in the Maghreb. This would explain, therefore, the fact that none of the “native” French viewers was surprised or shocked by Zouzou’s behaviour towards her father.

One of the most important questions that respondents were asked was whether they considered the Badaouis to be typical of Maghrebi families living in France (question 39). It was seen in chapter 3 that whilst the great majority of viewers were of the opinion that the Badaouis were unrepresentative of the average Maghrebi family in France, a cluster of ten respondents stated that they thought the Badaouis were typical of Maghrebis in France. It may be recalled that most of these ten viewers - seven - were "native" French, one originated from sub-Saharan/Central Africa, and only two were of Maghrebi origin. That "native" French respondents were more ready to perceive the Badaoui family as realistic, than were the Maghrebi viewers would seem to link up with Liebes and Katz’s findings in their study of cross-cultural interpretations of the American television soap opera *Dallas* (1990). Their research revealed that there was a greater tendency amongst non-Americans than Americans to consider *Dallas* to be representative of America. In the case of *Fruits et Légumes*, therefore, the "native" French respondents as "outsiders" were more likely to accept that the Badaouis were typical, than were the Maghrebi viewers as "insiders" who have first-hand knowledge of Maghrebi families. This argument is supported by the fact that five of the non-Maghrebi viewers who stated that the Badaouis were realistic, also pointed out that they had no experience of Maghrebi people in France. Thus, one such viewer started off by saying: "je sais pas, parce que je connais pas du tout de familles complètement maghrébines [...]" (8.A.F.L.41) whilst another stated: "je connais pas très bien la loi typiquement maghrébine [...]" (33.A.F.H.21). In other words, due to a lack of direct contact with Maghrebi people, these respondents were more easily convinced that the Badaouis were representative. On the other hand, this
must be seen within the context of the remaining 13 "native" French viewers who considered the Badaouis to be completely unrealistic. Many of these "native" French respondents also pointed out that they had no direct experience of Maghrebi people in France but this did not stop them from stating unequivocally that the Badaouis were unrepresentative.

In conclusion, it can be said that ethnicity influenced viewer decodings of *La Composition Française* in a great variety of manners without any apparent inflections of gender, generation or educational level. At specific moments throughout the viewing process, different respondents would be united by ethnicity in their understandings of the programme, forming distinct, ethnicity-related clusters. There were few instances where ethnicity did not play a significant role in the decoding process, and as will be seen in the following sections ethnicity also combined with other variables, particularly gender and generation, to shape additional viewer interpretations.

4.3 Ethnic Sub-groups

In two instances, analysis of viewer responses seemed to suggest that more localized sub-categories of Maghrebi ethnicity were shaping decodings. Clearly, the category "Maghrebi" used in this study is very broad and incorporates a number of smaller ethnic and national sub-groups. Thus, Algerians, Moroccans and Tunisians are all Maghrebis, and within these national groups can be distinguished two main ethnic groups: Arabs and Berbers. The panel of Maghrebi respondents who took part in this audience reception analysis included most of these national and ethnic sub-categories. Firstly, there were both Algerian and Moroccan viewers, although the majority of the Maghrebi panelists were of Algerian origin, and secondly, there were both Arab and Berber respondents within these two national groups. Tunisians, on the other hand, were not represented in this study, partly because the panel of respondents was relatively small, and partly because in France, there are far fewer people of Tunisian
origin than of Algerian or Moroccan origin (INSEE 1997). It was, therefore, harder to find people originating from Tunisia who were willing to take part in the research. Clearly, the sample used in this research does not attempt to be systematically representative of France's Maghrebi ethnic make-up, although the aim was to include as many of these ethnic sub-categories in the panel of Maghrebi respondents as was possible.

As is shown in table 4.1, question 7 produced two clusters of decodings that would appear to relate to ethnic sub-groups. It will be recalled that question 7 refers to the scene where Yoyo introduces his Bosnian classmate, Svetlana, to his father. Amar is surprised to discover that this blond-haired, blue-eyed girl is Muslim, and he comments "musulmane? Mais elle n'a pas l'air d'une arabe"\(^{11}\). In other words, the father is confusing ethnicity and religion. When respondents were asked what they thought of the father's comment regarding Svetlana's appearance, three viewers of Maghrebi origin used themselves as examples to point out Amar's mistake. All three of these respondents were Algerian Berbers from the Kabyle area near Algiers, and they emphasized the fact that they, like Svetlana, were non-Arab Muslims. Indeed, one of these viewers had blue eyes and would certainly not have fitted into Amar's definition of what a Muslim, and therefore, "Arab" person looks like. With regard to Amar's comment this respondent eloquently stated:

Quand le fils présente à son père l'enfant bosniaque, il dit que c'est une musulmane et il lui répond "mais elle n'a pas une tête arabe", alors que arabe et musulman sont deux chose différentes. [...] Musulman c'est une religion, arabe c'est la race et ça c'est une grande confusion et on le remarque partout, par exemple, quand on dit, moi je dis, "je suis algérien, je suis d'origine berbère", on me dit "tient, c'est un arabe". C'est faux, c'est complètement faux. Je suis musulman, je suis algérien, je suis d'origine berbère, je ne suis pas arabe. [...] (38.B.M.L.65)

\(^{11}\) Quotation taken from the broadcast version of the script *La Composition française.*
Using his own ethnicity as an example, this respondent exposes the inaccuracy of Amar's assumption that Muslim and Arab are synonymous.

A second cluster linked to an ethnic sub-group would also seem to be present amongst the responses to question 7. As discussed in the previous section, when viewers were asked what they thought about Amar's reaction to discovering that Svetlana was Muslim, six respondents focused on the fact that Yoyo had invited home a female classmate. It was seen that five out of these six viewers were of Maghrebi origin, and this was explained in terms of the fact that in Maghrebi society it would be considered unacceptable for a child to bring home a friend of the opposite sex. It is also noteworthy that within the group of five respondents of Maghrebi origin, three were of Moroccan origin, and there were only four Moroccans on the entire panel of Maghrebi viewers. In other words, most of the respondents of Moroccan origin commented on the fact that Yoyo had invited classmates of the opposite sex to his home. Moroccan immigration is a more recent phenomenon than Algerian immigration and, clearly, the longer a minority ethnic group has been settled in a country, the greater the degree of acculturation is likely to be. It is probably, therefore, that viewers of Moroccan origin were particularly surprised and even shocked by Yoyo's behaviour because their families are more traditional than many Algerian families in France. Thus, one of these respondents commented:

Premièrement, ça m'a choqué... enfin, pas choqué mais moi je sais que j'aurais jamais fait ça avec mes parents quand j'étais jeune [...] Ça se fait pas du tout chez nous, chez des familles qui sont assez traditions, quoi. [...] (14.B.M.H.24)

To conclude, it can be said that although only two clusters associated with ethnic sub-groups were identified in the decodings of the episode, they highlight the fact that the term "Maghrebi" is very broad and consists of a number of ethnic and national groups that have their own particularities.
4.4 Gender within an ethnic group

Analysis of viewer responses to *La Composition Française* appeared to indicate that gender within one particular ethnic group frequently shaped decodings of the programme. However, through a process of re-analysing and re-structuring the data, it became clear that in the great majority of instances where gender alone seemed to be influencing responses in one ethnic group, generation was also a factor. In other words, the clusters identified appeared to be moulded by gender within one generation, and in one particular ethnic group. Thus, three variables - ethnicity, gender and generation - rather than two - ethnicity and gender - were shaping the decodings. As a result of this re-examination of the data it was revealed that in the case of only one cluster of responses was gender within an ethnic group, apparently regardless of generation, the influencing variable.

Question 24 is based on the scene where Amar is seen cooking whilst Aziz hovers around in the hope of being invited to join the Badaouis for the evening meal. Viewers were asked the open-ended question of what they thought of the scene. A gendered cluster was identified amongst "native" French decodings of the scene. Whilst the majority of "native" French viewers of both genders expressed astonishment at seeing a Maghrebi man cooking, six stated that they were not surprised to see Amar preparing the evening meal. Significantly, five out of these six respondents were men, across both generations. The one woman in this cluster of viewers had already seen a number of other episodes of *Fruits et Légumes*, and she pointed out that in one of these other episodes, Amar had said that before opening his grocery shop he had worked in a restaurant. It was, therefore, on account of this piece of information that she was not unduly surprised by the scene. The five "native" French men who saw nothing unusual about Amar cooking, however, gave very different reasons for not being surprised. They explained their lack of surprise in terms of the fact that they too, as men, do the cooking at home. In other words, these five "native" French men perceived the scene as a gender issue, rather than as an
ethno-cultural issue. This is in marked contrast with all the female respondents, as well as the other male viewers: it was not that they were surprised to see a man in the kitchen, it was the fact that it was a Maghrebi man that was to them, the astonishing aspect of this scene. The following examples typify the difference between these two decodings of the scene:

Ah, moi ça me choque pas [laughs], qu'il fasse la cuisine. Non, ben, non, ici il y a pas que ma mère qui fait la cuisine, non. (21.A.M.L.19)

Oui, euh, c'est... ça paraît un peu trop beau pour être vrai, ça, l'homme qui fait tout, un homme arabe qui fait tout. [...] Ben, je sais pas, j'en pense pas grand-chose parce que ça m'a paru extraordinaire que c'est vraiment l'homme qui fait la cuisine chez les Arabes. Ça m'a paru très... bon, étonnant, quoi. (7.A.F.H.51)

It would seem, therefore, that in the case of the five "native" French respondents, their gender, rather than their ethnicity, was the overriding variable shaping their responses. Thus, they interpreted the scene from their standpoint as men rather than as "native" French people. On the contrary, not a single "native" French woman made reference to men in their own families. They focused purely on the fact that Amar was a Maghrebi man.

It is noteworthy that the case just discussed - the one instance where gender appeared to shape responses across two generations - occurred within the "native" French sample of respondents. Thus, gender never seemed to mould decodings across two generations within the panel of Maghrebi viewers. The significance of this will be discussed in section 4.6 on the influences of gender and generation within an ethnic group.
4.5 Generation within an ethnic group

A total of seven questions - four based on specific scenes and three referring to general aspects of the episode - led to clusters in the decodings that would appear to be shaped by generation within an ethnic group. As is shown in table 4.1, some of these questions produced a single cluster of responses defined by generation within an ethnic group, whilst other questions led to two or even three such clusters. Analysis of the influences of generation within an ethnic group on viewer decodings will be divided into those concerning specific scenes, and those related to more general aspects of the episode.

4.5.1 Decodings of specific scenes

Four questions based on scenes in the programme - numbers 11, 15, 18 and 24 - led to clusters in the responses that would appear to be moulded by generation within an ethnic group. Question 11 covers the scene where a pork meat sales representative arrives at the Badaoui's grocery shop. During this scene the sales representative discusses his private life regarding his previous job selling ladies' lingerie, a job which he lost because, as he says, "avec les essayages, j'ai perdu la tête"\textsuperscript{12}. He goes on to state that his wife left him for the same reason. Viewers were asked what they thought of the reason the salesman gave for having lost his previous job and his wife\textsuperscript{13}. As discussed in the previous chapter, the aim of this question was to see whether there would be any differences in responses between first-generation Maghrebi viewers and other interviewees. It was expected that a large proportion of the former respondents would be embarrassed by the scene because of the sexual references in the scene. However, the majority of viewers who appeared disconcerted by the question were 18 to 25 year old men, both "native" French and of Maghrebi

\textsuperscript{12} Quotation taken from the broadcast version of \textit{La composition Française}.

\textsuperscript{13} Question 11 asked: "Que pensez-vous de la raison avancée par le représentant pour avoir perdu son ancien travail et sa femme?"
origin. As mentioned in chapter 1, these young male respondents were probably embarrassed because the interviewer was female and of approximately the same age as them. In other words, this particular pattern of responses was caused by the inadvertent influence of the interviewer, rather than the effect of one or more of the variables on their perceptions of the scene. On the other hand, a further three respondents were disconcerted by the question, and all three of these viewers were first-generation Maghrebis with lower levels of education - two men and one woman - as had been expected when the question was initially devised. It would seem likely that these first-generation Maghrebis expressed embarrassment at the question because of the taboo in Maghrebi society surrounding the open discussion of sexual matters. It might have been expected, however, that more of the first-generation Maghrebi women with lower levels of education would be shocked by the scene. Whilst two out of the three first-generation Maghrebi men with lower levels of education appeared to be embarrassed, only one out of the four women did. Moreover, the remaining three first-generation Maghrebi women appeared to be amused by the scene. One such viewer commented:

Parce que c'était un coureur de jupons [laughs]. Quand il voit une femme il sait plus se contrôler, et c'est à cause de ça qu'il a perdu sa place et sa femme, c'est sûr. [...] (40.B.F.L.50)

That most of the first-generation Maghrebi women commented in such an uninhibited manner on the scene, could well be caused by the inadvertent influence of the interviewer, rather than being a question of the men and women perceiving the scene in different ways. It would seem likely that because the interviewer was female and the interviews took place in the absence of any men, the first-generation Maghrebi women did not feel embarrassed by talking about the subject matter of the scene. This, in turn, would explain why more of the first-generation Maghrebi men with lower levels of education seemed disconcerted and side stepped the question:
Ça fait partie du... ça fait partie du, comment dirais-je... d'un certain language que le représentant utilise pour accrocher le commerçant, pour arriver à vendre son produit. On dit en français "il est menteur comme un arracheur de dents!". Vous avez déjà entendu ça? Si, si, les français ils le disent [...]. Son passé [the salesman's past] il est pas obligé de le raconter, le passé c'est un passé, et le présent c'est le présent. Regardons l'avenir. Donc, non, je... cette séance elle est un peu... elle est un peu passée à côté, un peu à mettre à côté. (36.B.M.L.50)

It is noticeable that this first-generation Maghrébi man takes great care not to mention what exactly the salesman had disclosed about his private life. His final comment that the scene is "à mettre à côté" would seem to indicate that he does not wish to dwell on the issue but would rather move on to another, less embarrassing, aspect of the programme. His response contrasts strongly with that of the first-generation Maghrébi woman's cited above.

In conclusion, therefore, generational differences within an ethnic group would seem to have shaped this cluster of first-generation Maghrébi responses to question 11. The differences detected between the men's and the women's responses, on the other hand, would appear to be caused by the influence of the interviewer on the respondents, rather than the influence of gender on the viewers' interpretations of the scene.

Concerning the scene where Zouzou has difficulty writing an essay on "les raisons d'aimer son pays" because she cannot decide whether to refer to France or Algeria, respondents were asked whether Zouzou was French or Algerian (question 15). Two clusters detected in the responses to this question were clearly shaped by generation within an ethnic group. Firstly, a group of five second-generation Maghrébi viewers criticized Zouzou for being too "French" and for disregarding her cultural origins. Their accusation that Zouzou had sold out in terms of her cultural roots could well be a reflection of their own feelings of being "too French" to the
detriment of their parents' ethno-cultural origins. In other words, their reactions may have been a sort of defense mechanism against their own sense of guilt at having somehow betrayed their parents by becoming more French than Maghrebi. In short, therefore, seeing Zouzou may well have been, to them, like looking into a mirror and not liking what they saw. Thus, one such respondent commented:

Pour elle, elle est française parce qu'elle habite en France, elle étudie en français, elle connaît des Français de son âge, ils vivent comme des Français, du moins ils vivent en France. Elle oublie que les parents, ils étaient d'origine algérienne, qu'ils ont grandi là-bas [...] Elle veut, je pense, s'intégrer par rapport aux autres, même plus que la famille, mais ils sont déjà bien intégrés, la famille. Elle veut que ça soit plus, elle veut même faire oublier qui ils sont, d'où ils viennent [...]. (18.B.M.L.26)

Moreover, it is noteworthy that two of these second-generation respondents asserted that although they have French nationality they do not define themselves as French. Thus, one of these viewers stated: "moi j'ai la nationalité française mais je suis algérienne, je ne suis pas française" (5.B.F.L.22), whilst the other said: "moi je suis marocain, je suis fier de l'être. Je vis en France mais je suis marocain" (14.B.M.H.24). These strong statements regarding their identity could well be, at least in part, an attempt to reassure themselves that they have not become "too French". However, other comments that the first respondent cited above made during the interview, reveal a degree of acculturation that does not seem to correspond with her affirmation that she is Algerian and not French. With reference to another question, she comments: "mes parents sont très européens, ils vivent vraiment à la française. Ils sont très, très bien" (5.B.F.L.22). This statement would seem to suggest that she is of the opinion that it is a positive factor that her parents are rather "Westernized" and by inference, therefore, not too "Algerian". These contradictory comments are telling in terms of the mixed feelings second-generation Maghrebis such as Zouzou and these
respondents, have about their identity. It would seem, therefore, that these viewers' reactions towards Zouzou were the result of their ambivalence regarding their own identity.

A second, although much smaller cluster detected in the responses to question 15 would also appear to be shaped by generation within an ethnic group. When asked whether Zouzou was French or Algerian, two second-generation Maghrebi viewers stated that she was *beur* or *beurette*. As seen in the previous chapter, *beur* means "Arab" in the backslang *verlan*, and it is commonly used to designate the sons and daughters of first-generation Maghrebis in France. The term *beurette* is more recent and would seem to be used mainly by the media when referring to the daughters of Maghrebi immigrants in France (Hargreaves 1995). Clearly, when these two second-generation respondents defined Zouzou as *beur/beurette*, they were thinking of Zouzou from their own, second-generation perspective. It would seem likely that these viewers perceive themselves as being neither completely French nor entirely Maghrebi, and the definition *beur* is, therefore, a useful term that encapsulates their, and Zouzou's, hybrid status. This argument is supported by the fact that one of these respondents stated: "elle est comme moi, beur" (6.B.F.H.24).

As is shown in table 4.1, a number of clusters were found in the responses to the scene covered in question 18. This question, it will be remembered, is based on the scene where Amar is discussing issues related to nationality and identity with his French neighbour, Baudoin. The latter asks Amar why he does not wish to acquire French nationality, and he states that when he living in Algeria he was told that he was French, whilst now that he lives in France he is told that he is Algerian. Amar was, in other words, alluding to his changing situations prior to, and after the independence of Algeria. Decodings of, and reactions to this scene were very varied, and it would seem probable that this is related to the fact that Amar's reply was somewhat elliptical. As will be seen in this, and the following sections, it could be that because Amar's answer was rather indirect and, therefore, not entirely clear,
viewers needed to use their own experiences to make sense of the scene to a greater extent than they did to decode other instances in the episode.

Although there were only five people originating from sub-Saharan/Central Africa on the panel of respondents - one first- and four second-generation - a cluster in the decodings among second-generation members of this group would seem to indicate that generation played a role in shaping their responses to question 18. Two of the second-generation respondents originating from sub-Saharan/Central Africa did not interpret Amar's comment as referring to post-/colonial Algeria but decoded it as meaning that when he is in France he is labeled as Algerian and when he goes to Algeria he is treated as French. They went on to relate this to their own experiences of being rejected both in French society and in their countries of origin. Thus, one of these viewers stated:

Moi je pense qu'il [Amar] a raison, parce que moi aussi si je vais dans mon pays on va me dire que je suis française et si je suis ici on va me dire que je suis congolaise. (45.C.F.L.17)

These second-generation respondents' decodings of Amar's comment contrast strongly with the response produced by the first-generation viewer originating from sub-Saharan/Central Africa. The latter respondent focused on the issue of colonization, as was intended by the programme-makers. Moreover, it is of interest that she links Amar's comment to her own experiences of colonization in her country of origin, Cameroon. In reaction to Amar's comment she states:

Quand je pense maintenant, tous les jours je chantais "mes ancêtres gaulois aux yeux bleus et cheveux roux", mais je suis pas tellement fière de moi [...] depuis ma naissance je vivais dans le faux, quoi. (47.C.F.H.43)
It is clear that both the first-generation viewer and the two second-generation respondents draw on their respective experiences to decode the scene. In the case of the latter viewers, they have not lived through colonization, and so they associate Amar's comment with the kind of discrimination that they are the targets of, both in France and in their countries of origin. On the other hand, the first-generation respondent from Cameroon immediately relates Amar's remark to her own knowledge of life under colonial rule in Cameroon. Thus, generation shaped these decodings among the respondents originating from sub-Saharan/Central Africa.

When viewers were asked what they thought of the scene where Amar is seen preparing the evening meal whilst his wife looks after the grocery shop (question 24), two distinct clusters were detected among the Maghrebi responses, and these groupings appeared to be generation-related. On the one hand, all but two of the second-generation viewers of Maghrebi origin expressed surprise at seeing a first-generation Maghrebi man doing the cooking, whilst on the other hand, all of the first-generation Maghrebi respondents, across both genders, affirmed that it was neither surprising nor particularly unusual to see a man cooking, and they often supported this opinion with examples of Maghrebi men they know who cook. The following examples highlight the contrast between first- and second-generation reactions to the scene:

Non, il y a des hommes aussi qui font la cuisine. Oui, ils font aussi la cuisine, ils font le ménage [...] Comme moi, j'ai trois frères, ben, il y a un qui fait à manger, qui fait la cuisine, qui fait tout depuis qu'il est petit. [...] (42.B.F.L.42)

C'est un petit peu étonnant ça aussi, c'est rare qu'un père arabe fasse de la cuisine. C'est vrai que c'est étonnant, parce qu'il y en a pas beaucoup, hein [...] (15.B.M.L.23)
It would seem likely that second-generation viewers of Maghrebi origin tended to be surprised by the sight of Amar cooking because they were basing their judgement of the scene on their personal knowledge of first-generation men, in other words, their fathers. That a number of the second-generation respondents referred to the fact that their fathers never, or rarely cook, lends weight to this argument. Thus, one such viewer stated: "mon père il a déjà fait quelques plats, quoi, mais bon, c'est très rare" (17.B.M.H.24), whilst another respondent said "j'ai vu mon père qu'une fois faire la cuisine" (3.B.F.H.22). The second-generation respondents' reactions were, therefore, linked to their very specific experience of first-generation Maghrebi men within the family unit. On the other hand, it could well be that in the case of the first-generation Maghrebi viewers, they were not surprised to see Amar cooking because they are more aware than the second-generation of other aspects of first-generation Maghrebi men's lives, prior to family unification. For example, most first-generation Maghrebi men living in France, initially immigrated to France without their families, and it was only at a later date that they were joined by their wives and children. In the interim period, therefore, these first-generation Maghrebi men had no choice other than to cook for themselves. It could well be for this reason that the first-generation Maghrebi respondents were not surprised to see Amar cooking. Although none of the first-generation viewers specifically cited this reason, it is interesting that the only two second-generation respondents of Maghrebi origin who were not surprised to see a Maghrebi man cook, both stated that this was because they were aware of the fact that when their fathers were in France without their families, they had to cook for themselves. Thus, one of these viewers commented:

Ben, moi ça m'a pas choqué parce que mon père il faisait souvent la cuisine et euh, c'est vrai que dans certaines familles le père il est bien calé dans la cuisine parce qu'au paravant, bon, quand il y avait la guerre d'Algérie, la guerre elle s'est terminée et tout... je veux dire les familles sont restées en Algérie, mais le père
It would seem to be, therefore, that the different personal experiences that the two generations of Maghrebi viewers have of first-generation Maghrebi men, shaped their reactions to the scene.

4.5.2 Decodings of general aspects of the episode

Three questions concerning general aspects of the programme - questions 2, 5 and 31 - led to clusters of decodings that appeared to be moulded by generation within an ethnic group. It was seen in the section on the influences of ethnicity on viewer interpretations of the episode, that when respondents were asked what they thought the programme was about (question 2), the majority stated that it was about the issue of immigration in France, or Algerians in France. However, a cluster of six viewers of Maghrebi origin produced very different decodings: they were of the opinion that the episode was specifically about the uncertainty second-generation Maghrebis face over their identity, and the fact that they often have difficulty deciding whether they are French or Maghrebi. It was suggested that these respondents who interpreted the programme in this manner did so because, being of Maghrebi origin, this was an aspect of the episode that they could particularly relate to. It is of interest to note, moreover, that within this group of six Maghrebi respondents, two were first-, and four were second-generation. That a majority were second-generation Maghrebis, is probably a reflection of their particularly close identification with this theme in the programme. Clearly, the feelings that Zouzou faces when having to decide whether to write about France or Algeria in her essay, are feelings that most second-generation Maghrebis live through. It is not surprising, therefore, that it was this aspect of the episode that they focused on and, consequently, saw as being the main theme of the programme.
When viewers were asked which scene they liked most in the episode (question 5), responses produced by the majority of second-generation Maghrabis once again revealed their identification with Zouzou's uncertainty over whether to define herself as French or Algerian. Whilst many respondents, both "native" French and of Maghrabi origin, cited the scene where Zouzou has difficulty writing an essay on "les raisons d'aimer son pays" as the one they most liked in the programme, it is noteworthy that nine out of the 10 viewers of Maghrabi origin who stated that this was their favourite scene, were second-generation. Clearly, therefore, this clustering in the responses is shaped by generation in an ethnic group. It would seem likely that the second-generation viewers of Maghrabi origin liked this scene because it dealt with an issue that they could identify with. On the other hand, in the case of the first-generation Maghrabis, the question of identity is not of such personal interest to them because there is probably little doubt in their minds that they are Maghrabi, and not French. This would explain why, therefore, they tended to choose other scenes as their favourites.

When respondents were asked whether or not they liked the Badaouis' youngest son, Yoyo, a number of viewers commented on the fact that Yoyo had invited female classmates to his home. It was seen in the section on the influences of ethnicity on decodings of the programme, that out of the nine respondents who referred to this aspect of Yoyo's conduct, seven were of Maghrabi origin. It was suggested that the reason why most people who focused on this incident were of Maghrabi origin is that in Maghrabi society Yoyo's behaviour would be considered unacceptable. Further analysis of the responses produced by the seven Maghrabi viewers who commented on Yoyo bringing home friends of the opposite gender, revealed a split between the first- and the second-generation. Whilst all the second-generation viewers of Maghrabi origin who made reference to Yoyo's behaviour went on to state that they liked him, the two first-generation Maghrabi respondents who commented on Yoyo inviting home female friends both implied that they disliked him for this reason. Thus, one of these first-generation Maghrabi viewers stated: "il
ramène tous les soirs une fille. Et ben, bien sûr c'est pas bien." (42.B.F.L.42). The second-generation respondents, on the other hand, tended to comment on the fact that his behaviour was unrepresentative of children in Maghrebi families but they were not critical of his conduct. It would seem likely, that having grown up in France where such behaviour would be considered as normal, these second-generation respondents did not disapprove of Yoyo's actions and, therefore, this aspect of his character was irrelevant in terms of whether or not they liked him. The first-generation Maghrebi respondents, on the other hand, spent their formative years in Algeria, hence the fact that they were shocked by Yoyo's behaviour, and disliked him as a result.

Summing up, seven aspects of the episode led to groupings in the decodings that appeared to be shaped by generation within one specific ethnic group. It is significant that in all seven cases these generational splits in the viewer interpretations of the programme occurred among the minority ethnic viewers: six times within the panel of Maghrebi respondents and once within the group of viewers originating from sub-Saharan/Central African origin. That no generation-related clusters were detected purely within the "native" French sample (although as will be seen in the section on generation across ethnic groups, generation did, on a number of occasions, seem to shape decodings) could well be due to the fact that the differences between 18 to 30 year old "native" French people and those over 40, are far less pronounced than among the minority ethnic groups. Clearly, a second-generation Maghrebi who has always lived in France will be far more different from his or her parents who grew up, in, say, Algeria, than a young "native" French person will be from parents who also grew up in France. Although attitudes change over time, the differences in outlook between two countries with very distinct cultures will be far greater. This would seem to explain, therefore, why all clusters that appeared to be shaped by generation within an ethnic group, occurred among the minority ethnic groups.
4.6 Gender and generation within an ethnic group

A total of nine questions regarding *La Composition française* - six based on scenes and three referring to general aspects of the episode - led to clusters in the decodings that appeared to be moulded by both gender and generation within an ethnic group. It will be seen that, as in the case of the decodings shaped by generation within an ethnic group, most clusters that would seem to be influenced by both gender and generation in an ethnic group occurred among the ethnic minority respondents.

Question 7 refers to the scene where Amar blurs the distinction between being Arab and being Muslim. As will be recalled, a grouping of five respondents of Maghrebi origin did not focus on this aspect but concentrated instead on the fact that Yoyo had invited a female classmate home. It was suggested that ethnicity was the variable shaping these five decodings. It is interesting to note, however, that three of the five Maghrebi viewers who decoded the scene in this manner were first-generation Maghrebi women with lower levels of education (the remaining two were second-generation respondents of Moroccan origin), in other words, respondents who came to France as adults and who have, therefore, retained many of their cultural practices and beliefs. Indeed, only one of the first-generation Maghrebi women with lower levels of education did not focus on Yoyo bringing home a female friend. This leads one to ask why, on the other hand, first-generation Maghrebi men with similar levels of education did not interpret the scene in this manner. This gender-cum-generational pattern of decodings would appear to lend weight to the widespread belief that it is first-generation Maghrebi women, rather than men, who are the guardians of Maghrebi cultural practices, hence the fact that the former, rather than the latter, respondents displayed greater conservatism regarding Yoyo's behaviour. Although the available data on this need to be treated with care (see below, pages 201-3), certain studies seem to indicate that Maghrebi women are more observant of religious practices than their male counterparts. For example, in Tribalat's survey (1995), whilst 69% of first-generation Algerian men declare that they fast during
Ramadan, 80% of the women state that they fast. A similar disparity is found regarding the practice of not eating pork, whilst the gap is even wider concerning the non-consumption of alcohol: 54% of Algerian men say that they do not drink alcohol, as opposed to 76% of Algerian women (Tribalat 1995).

On the other hand, this gendered pattern of decodings amongst first-generation Maghrebi respondents may be explained in a different, although related, manner. As discussed above, first-generation Maghrebi men with lower levels of education did not refer to the fact that Yoyo had invited a female classmate home. Instead, they all focused on the issue of Amar blurring the distinction between ethnicity and religion. The first-generation Maghrebi women concentrated mainly on Yoyo's behaviour but when asked specifically about Amar's comment regarding Svetlana's appearance, their responses were noticeably different from those of the men. Whereas the men explained clearly that being non-Arab does not preclude being Muslim, the women revealed a general confusion regarding the distinction between Arab and Muslim. The following two examples highlight these differences, the first being a response by a man, and the second by a woman:

[...] On peut être arabe et chrétien, on peut être arabe et musulman, donc musulman ne veut pas dire forcément arabe. [...] (37.B.M.L.43)

Ah si, quand-même, même les Arabes ils sont blonds. Mais si elle [Svetlana] a la mère française aussi... si elle a le père algérien et la mère française, elle peut être blonde aussi, et musulmane. (41.B.F.L.38)

It can be seen that the first-generation Maghrebi woman with lower levels of education gave a muddled answer, confusing religion, ethnicity, physical appearance and nationality. On the one hand, therefore, the men were plainly conscious of the fact that ethnicity and religion are not synonymous, whilst on the other hand, the women seemed unsure about the difference between being Muslim and being Arab.
This leads one to the question of why this male-female difference was present amongst the first-generation responses. The answer may well have its roots in the fact that first-generation Maghrebi women tend to have far less contact with the outside world than do their male counterparts. In Maghrebi society the home is generally considered to be the woman's domain, and the public sphere the man's, hence the fact that fewer first-generation women than men are in paid employment, and women are, on the whole, far less exposed to the outside world. It follows, therefore, that first-generation Maghrebi women have a narrower range of social contacts, and fewer opportunities to discover certain things (although they do have access to television which is, in many ways, their window onto the world), such as the fact that Muslims do not only come from the Middle East and the Maghreb. This way well explain, at least in part, why these first-generation Maghrebi women with lower levels of education were confused about the distinction between religion and ethnicity, and why, on the other hand, the first-generation men and the majority of second-generation viewers (who have more external contact than first-generation women) appeared to be conscious of this distinction.

In turn, this might also shed light on the reason why they focused on Yoyo bringing home a female friend rather than on Amar's comment regarding Svetlana's appearance. Instead of being apparently a question of greater conservatism amongst women than men, it could also be that because these first-generation Maghrebi women were not entirely sure about the differences between being Arab, being Muslim, being Bosnian Muslim but not Arab, and so on, they concentrated on an alternative aspect of the scene that they understood very clearly: Yoyo had invited a female friend home, this being unacceptable behaviour in most Maghrebi families. This leaves one with the question of why first-generation Algerian women are apparently more observant of religious practices than first-generation Algerian men. Again, the answer may have less to do with a greater conservatism on the part of the women, than with the fact that women tend to spend more time within the home than do the men. It is, therefore, easier for them to follow dietary requirements and fast
during Ramadan. A man who goes out to work, on the other hand, may well eat in the
canteen where pork is frequently served, and during Ramadan he will find himself
surrounded by non-Muslims who are not fasting.

During the scene where Yoyo introduces his Bosnian classmate to his father,
Uncle Aziz arrives, and Yoyo asks him to name the leader of the Francs who stopped
the Arabs at Poitiers. The Uncle, not having had much schooling, does not understand
the question and gives an answer that has nothing to do with the question. He states
that he does not know who this person was because when he came to France he was
not stopped by anyone other than the ticket collector, and he did not ask the latter his
name. Respondents were asked what they thought of Aziz’s answer (question 8), and
whilst the great majority of viewers pointed out that he was obviously unaware of this
historical event, three respondents were clearly in the same position as Aziz, that is,
they too did not understand Yoyo’s question. Two of these three viewers were first­
generation Maghrebi women with lower levels of education (the third was a “native”
French man with lower levels of education and over the age of 40). Thus, on the one
hand, two out of the four first-generation Maghrebi women with lower levels of
education were unaware that Yoyo was referring to a historical event, whilst on the
other hand, the first-generation Maghrebi men with lower levels of education and all
the second-generation respondents of Maghrebi origin, understood Yoyo’s question
and realised that Aziz’s answer was completely beside the point.

That these two first-generation Maghrebi women with lower levels of
education did not understand Yoyo’s reference to the Arab invasion of France, is
almost certainly linked to the fact that as first-generation Algerians they have had
little opportunity to go to school and so their knowledge of (French) history is
minimal. One of these two respondents, for example, had only had three years of
schooling. Clearly, even those second-generation respondents with lower levels of
education have had a minimum of ten years of schooling, and three years of nursery
school in France. Regarding the fact that all the first-generation Maghrebi men with
lower levels of education were aware of this historical event, it would seem likely that
this is because there is a tendency for the men to have been in education for a longer period than the women. Indeed, all three of the first-generation Maghrebi men on the panel had had at least six years of schooling. This argument is supported by statistics showing that whilst 75% of Algerian women who arrived in France over the age of 15 before 1965 have had no schooling whatsoever, 54% of their male counterparts have had no official education (Tribalat 1995). This is confirmed by other statistics showing that, on the one hand, 38% of first-generation Algerian men who arrived in France in 1964 have difficulty reading in French, whilst on the other hand, 56% of first-generation Algerian women who came to France in 1972 have difficulty reading the French language, and this percentage increases among Moroccan women, although not among the men (INSEE 1997). It would seem probable, therefore, that this educational disparity between first-generation Maghrebi men and women, led to the differences in their decodings of this scene.

Respondents were asked a number of questions regarding the scene where a pork meat sales representative attempts to sell his products to Amar, the first question being what they thought in general terms of the scene (question 10). As discussed in the section on the influences of ethnicity on decodings, respondents tended to focus on different aspects of the scene, depending on their ethnic origin. Thus, whilst a large majority of Maghrebi viewers spoke solely about the issue of pork being forbidden in Islam, far fewer of the "native" French respondents focused on this aspect of the scene, many making reference instead to the salesman's discussion of his private life. In other words, respondents tended to concentrate on those parts of the scene that related most closely to their own lives, and which they could, therefore, identify with. It was also found, however, that first-generation Maghrebi respondents with lower levels of education produced gendered decodings of the scene: on the one hand, all the women discussed the fact that Amar, as a Muslim, did not wish to taste the salesman's pork products, whilst on the other hand, all the men focused on the commercial aspects of the scene, such as the sales representative's selling techniques.
The following examples highlight these gendered decodings of the scene among first-generation Maghrebis:

On peut manger du jambon de notre religion [beef or lamb sausages], le jambon musulman, comme on dit, la viande musulmane, mais si c'était du porc, non. Bon, je pense, à mon avis, s'il [Amar] pratique sa religion musulmane, il a pas le droit de manger le porc, parce que dans la religion musulmane c'est interdit de manger le porc [...]. (43.B.F.L.37)

La scène où il y avait le représentant, il y a... il y a un paradoxe, il y a un paradoxe parce que... enfin, mais lui il est venu vendre... il est venu vendre le saucisson à une épicerie. Bon, pour lui la phrase "oui, on m'a confié cette tâche pour vendre le cochon aux Arabes, va vendre le cochon aux Arabes", mais ça c'est un dialogue de représentant pour attirer la petite mouche pour ouvrir le dialogue. Ça, ça fait partie du dialogue commercial. (36.B.M.L.50)

It would seem probable that the first-generation men and women within the panel of Maghrebi viewers produced these divergent decodings of the scene because their experiences as men and women in Maghrebi society differ substantially. As already discussed, for example, far fewer first-generation Maghrebi women than men are in paid employment, the men generally being the breadwinners of the family whilst the women deal with all household matters. It follows, therefore, that these male viewers could relate to the fact that both Amar and the sales representative were trying to make a living, and that the female respondents could identify most closely with Amar's refusal to eat pork for religious reasons, in other words, the ethno-cultural aspects of the scene.

That these gendered clusters were not detected within the second-generation Maghrebi responses to question 10, is probably a reflection of the fact that the experiences of second-generation men and women are less divergent than they are
between men and women in the first-generation. Clearly, within the family, the lives of second-generation boys and girls differ significantly. However, children of both genders are, to a large extent, socialized within the school environment where they are treated in the same manner. Moreover, in contrast with first-generation Maghrebi women, a high proportion of second-generation women are, like their male counterparts, in paid employment (Tribalat 1995).

A second question viewers were asked was whether during this particular scene they could identify to a greater extent with Amar or with the pork meat salesman (question 13). Again, gendered groupings were identified amongst the responses given to this question by the first-generation Maghrebi respondents with lower levels of education: whilst all the women stated that they could identify most with Amar, all the men said that they identified equally with Amar and the sales representative. When asked why, the reasons that these viewers gave revealed that these gender-cum-generational clusters were linked to, and very similar to, those detected within the first-generation Maghrebi responses to question 10. When explaining why they could identify equally with both Amar and the salesman, the first-generation Maghrebi men tended to point out that both these characters were merely doing their jobs, and that it was only normal for the salesman to attempt to sell his products to Amar, even though Amar was Muslim and did not eat pork. On the other hand, the first-generation Maghrebi women were inclined to explain their identification with Amar in terms of him being Muslim and not wishing to eat pork.

The following examples highlight the contrast between these two types of responses, the first being by a man and the second by a woman:

Euh, l'épicier il est bien où il est, lui il est derrière son comptoir et il est le décideur du moment. C'est à lui de décider, est-ce qu'il achète, ou est-ce qu'il achète pas. Mais du représentant, euh, je peux comprendre qu'il peut raconter, dans un sens, n'importe quoi pour vendre, pour décrocher sa journée parce qu'il y
It can be seen that these two types of decodings correspond closely with the responses that the first-generation Maghrebi viewers gave to question 10. In both instances the men focused on the commercial aspects of the scene, and the women on those parts relating to their ethnicity and culture because, as seen above, these were the respective aspects of the scene that related most closely to their lives. This argument is supported by the fact that in response to question 13, one of the first-generation Maghrebi men stated that he had, over the years, been both a grocer and a sales representative and that he could, therefore, identify with both characters. With reference to this question be commented:

Ah, moi, les deux [he can identify with the two of them], les deux justement. Ce que je vous ai dit tout à l'heure: comme j'ai fait les deux [both jobs]. [...] pour le représentant, il est normal qu'il présente ses produits, il est normal de chercher un marché, de chercher une clientèle [...]. (38.B.M.L.65)

On the other hand, the first-generation Maghrebi women were not, on the whole, in paid employment (although one of them was a childminder, a job which does not take her into the workplace and outside the home), hence the fact that they could not identify with the salesman and that when they explained their reasons for identifying with Amar, they were based on the ethno-cultural aspects of his character that they share with him, such as being Muslim and not eating pork.
No gendered clusters were identified among second-generation Maghrebi responses: whilst two second-generation Maghrebi men and two women stated that they identified equally with both Amar and the salesman, three women and two men said that they could relate more closely to Amar. It would seem likely that, as in the case of question 10, second-generation Maghrebi decodings were not grouped according to gender because second-generation men and women lead less divergent lives than their first-generation counterparts. That two second-generation Maghrebi women identified equally with Amar and the salesman whilst, on the other hand, all the first-generation women stated that they could relate more closely to Amar, could well be an indication that the former women, unlike the latter, perceive their world as going beyond the domestic sphere and into the public domain of paid employment. As one of these two second-generation Maghrebi women pointed out: "tous les deux ont besoin de faire leur blé" (3.B.F.H.22).

During the scene where Zouzou asks her father and Baudoin to help her with her essay on "les raisons d'aimer son pays", Baudoin asks Amar why he does not wish to acquire French nationality. It will be remembered that Amar's somewhat allusive answer makes reference to his situation prior to, and since the independence of Algeria. He states that when he lived in Algeria he was told that he was French and ever since he has lived in France he has been told that he is Algerian. Viewers were asked what they thought of Amar's explanation (question 18). A number of respondents of Maghrebi origin did not discuss the fact that Amar was referring to colonial and post-colonial Algeria but instead, they linked his comment to their own experiences of being rejected in French society, and sometimes in their country of origin too. Analysis of these responses revealed two clusters that appeared to be shaped by gender and generation within an ethnic group: firstly, it was found that whilst the majority - four out of five - of the second-generation men of Maghrebi origin discussed their feelings of exclusion, only two out of the six second-generation women of Maghrebi origin linked the father's comment to their experiences of discrimination in France. The majority of second-generation female viewers discussed
France's colonization of Algeria. Typical responses produced by second-generation men of Maghrebi origin included:

Ça, ça résume un peu le problème qui se passe maintenant. C'est que, comme moi je me sens et comme les Algériens se sentent en France, comme tous les Maghrébins, on se sent étrangers ici et dans notre pays. Donc, on est étranger partout. [...] (14.B.M.H.24)

[...] On est né en France, on est né en France, mais on est pas français. [...] Déjà pour obtenir la nationalité française on est passé sous des tas de choses et on nous fait bien sentir qu'on a pas envie de nous la donner [...]. (17.B.M.H.24)

It would seem likely that a significant number - 6 out of 11 - of the second-generation Maghrebi respondents focused on the prejudices they face in France rather than on the issue of Algeria's colonization, because whilst they actually experience discrimination, they did not, unlike first-generation Algerians, live through the colonial period in Algeria. The de-/colonization of Algeria is, therefore, of less personal interest to them. Regarding the male-female divide among the second-generation Maghrebi respondents - with a larger proportion of the men than of the women linking Amar's comment to their feelings of being rejected in French society -, this may well be an indication of the higher levels of discrimination that the men face in France. Young Maghrebi men tend to be perceived by French society as a much greater threat than their female peers. As Jazouli points out, second-generation Maghrebi women often "bénéficient dans l'opinion publique française d'une sorte de préjugé favorable", partly due to "la relative discrétion avec laquelle ces jeunes filles réussissent progressivement leurs intégration scolaire, professionelle et sociale" as opposed to "la grande visibilité de la marginalisation subie par leurs frères" (Jazouli 1992: 179-180). However, the widespread belief amongst "native" French people that second-generation Maghrebi women are less of a "problem" and "adapt" more easily
to life in France, probably has less to do with a greater degree of acculturation on the part of women, than with the fact that second-generation Maghrebi women tend to be far more restricted by their families than are their brothers, they have fewer opportunities to go out, and they are, therefore, less visible than their male counterparts. The fact that young second-generation Maghrebi women are, on the whole, less exposed to the public sphere may also inadvertently protect them from some of the discrimination that their brothers suffer. These factors could well have contributed to the differences between the second-generation Maghrebi men's and women's decodings of the scene, with the former focusing on their rejection by French society, and the latter mainly concentrating on Amar's reference to the colonization of Algeria.

A second cluster in the responses to question 18 would also seem to be shaped by gender and generation within an ethnic group, although it is not immediately apparent why. Very different decodings were produced by the men and the women among first-generation Maghrebi respondents with lower levels of education. Whilst all of the men focused on Amar's reference to the colonization of Algeria, three out of the four women linked Amar's comment to their feelings of being rejected both in France, and sometimes, in their countries of origin. Surprisingly, therefore, these first-generation Maghrebi women decoded the scene in a manner similar to the second-generation Maghrebi men. It might have been expected that first-generation women would focus on the colonial experience in Algeria, as this is an event that they, unlike the second-generation, have lived through. The following examples highlight the contrasting responses between first-generation men and women:

Où ce que tu cherches, dèz qu'ils [French people] voient ta tête, ça y est, hein. C'est vrai: appartement, travail... ce qu'ils [the programme] disent c'est vrai, hein. Là-bas [in Algeria] on est traité comme des immigrés, ici on nous traite comme des Arabes [...] (42.B.F.L.42)
Ça fait partie d'une des aberrations de la vie [...] Bon, l'Algérie entretemps a changé, elle est devenue algérienne. Elle était française à une époque, donc une colonie, une colonie française et elle est devenue algérienne, donc elle est devenue ce qu'elle aurait dû rester toujours. [...] Là-bas je voyais le Français dominateur, il avait tous les pouvoirs, et les Algériens étaient considérés comme des indigènes, alors on était chez nous mais on était étranger. On était français mais on avait aucun droit. (38.B.M.L.65)

This leads one to the issue of why, on the one hand, the first-generation Maghrebi women related the scene to their experiences of discrimination, whilst on the other hand, the men decoded the comment within the preferred meaning, this being that Amar was referring to the de/colonization of Algeria. One suggestion is that it was a question of understanding. Most of the first-generation Maghrebi women (with lower levels of education) on the panel of respondents had a poorer grasp of the French language than did the Maghrebi men, who generally spoke fluent French. This ties in with recent research showing that first-generation Maghrebi women - Moroccan in particular - tend to speak French less well than their male peers, probably because the former have less contact than the latter with French-speaking people (Tribalat, 1995).

As already mentioned, Amar's answer to why he did not wish to acquire French nationality was rather elliptical and he made no direct reference to the colonization of Algeria but merely alluded to it. It could be, therefore, that the first-generation Maghrebi women with lower levels of education did not realize that Amar was referring to this historical event. On the other hand, not only did the men plainly understand Amar's comments regarding Algeria being under colonial rule but it was also an issue that was of personal interest to them.

Clearly, this explanation is largely speculative, although the fact that the first-generation Maghrebi women on the panel of respondents tended to speak French far less fluently than the men, is a strong indication that it was for this reason that they
did not decode Amar's elliptical comment within the preferred meaning that he was referring to France's colonization of Algeria.

When viewers were asked what they thought of the scene where Amar is seen preparing the evening meal whilst his wife looks after the grocery shop (question 24), it was found that responses varied greatly between second-generation Maghrebi men and all the other Maghrebi respondents, and it would seem that these two clusters were moulded by gender and generation within an ethnic group. As discussed in the section on the influences of generation in an ethnic group, at one level, all the second-generation Maghrebi viewers across both genders reacted to the sight of Amar doing the cooking in a similar manner: they all expressed surprise and commented on the fact that it is rare for the man to prepare meals in a Maghrebi household. For example, the following two respondents have very similar initial reactions to the scene:

Ça, j'ai trouvé ça marrant [laughs] ça arrive pas souvent. J'ai vu mon père qu'une fois faire la cuisine. [...] (3.B.F.H.22)

Je l'ai trouvé marrante [the scene] mais... c'était marrant de voir un père arabe en train de cuisiner. Je sais qu'il doit en avoir qui cuisinent, mais moi j'en ai jamais vu dans mon entourage. [...] (17.B.M.H.24)

It is clear that both the first viewer who is a woman, and the second respondent who is a man, were amused by the scene because of the incongruity of seeing a first-generation Maghrebi man cooking, and they go on to point out that Amar's behaviour is uncommon. It was also seen in the section on the influences of generation in an ethnic group that, on the other hand, the first-generation Maghrebi respondents reacted in a very different manner - they were not surprised to see a Maghrebi man preparing the food - and it was suggested that this is because many first-generation Maghrebi men used to cook for themselves when they initially immigrated to France without their families. However, beyond these initial responses, a marked difference
can be detected between the second-generation men's responses and those produced by all the other Maghrebi respondents. On the one hand, all the first-generation Maghrebi respondents across both genders and all but one of the second-generation Maghrebi women - five out of six - asserted that it is very good to see a man doing the cooking. On the other hand, the second-generation men of Maghrebi origin did not comment on whether Amar's behaviour was positive or not but merely pointed out that it was unusual. This gender-cum-generational contrast between the second-generation Maghrebi responses and those produced by all the other Maghrebi viewers was one of the most well-defined clustering of responses found in the data analysed. The five following examples - the first two being by second-generation men and the next three by other Maghrebi viewers - illustrate the clear-cut nature of these differing responses:

Ce que j'ai pensé c'est que c'est pas courrant chez nous déjà de voir un homme qui fait la cuisine, chez nous, chez nos familles, quoi. C'est l'image typique de la femme arabe, c'est la femme qui cuisine, la femme qui fait le ménage et donc l'homme il fait pas tout ça. (14.B.M.H.24)

C'est un petit peu étonnant ça aussi, c'est rare qu'un père arabe fasse la cuisine. C'est vrai que c'est étonnant, parce qu'il y en a pas beaucoup, hein [pause] ouais ouais, parce qu'il y en a pas beaucoup qui font la cuisine [laughs]. La plupart du temps c'est la femme qui fait la cuisine ou les filles. (15.B.M.L.23)

Ben, ça fait partie des choses... je sais pas si on peut dire tabou, mais des choses qui sont rares chez nous, qui se font rarement. Généralement tout ce qui est en rapport avec la cuisine, le ménage, ou quoi, ça doit être la femme. L'homme il le touchera pas. Mais en même temps j'approuve ça, j'essaie d'appliquer la même chose ici. Je suis d'accord avec cette idée. Je suis d'accord, moi, tant que femme, tant que maghrébine. (6.B.F.H.24)
Je trouve ça extraordinaire, c'est très bien, absolument. Qu'il fasse la cuisine, pourquoi pas? C'est très bien. (38.B.M.L.65)

C'est rare quand ils font la cuisine. Là il l'a fait, le vrai cuisinier. Non, je trouve ça... c'est génial qu'un homme se mette à cuisiner. Oui. (40.B.F.L.50)

Although all the Maghrebi viewers, except the second-generation men, stated that it was good to see a man doing the cooking, it was noticeable that second-generation Maghrebi women particularly emphasized the fact that they considered Amar's conduct to be very positive. Their responses would seem to be a clear reflection of the personal interest they have in the issue raised by this scene, this being the woman's role in Maghrebi families. Their responses reveal a rejection of the traditional view that all household tasks are the responsibility of the women in the family. Thus, one such respondent referred to these cultural practises as "ces moeurs ridicules" (3.B.F.H.22), whilst another vehemently stated that "dans la religion musulmane il n'est a pas écrit que la femme doit être à la maison" (5.B.F.L.22). Their strenuous advocacy of a fairer division of labour within the home suggests that their own lives are affected by these practices: as one of the second-generation Maghrebi men cited above said, "la plupart du temps c'est la femme qui fait la cuisine ou les filles [my emphasis]". In other words, if it is not the mother in the family who prepares the meals, it is the daughters, such as these second-generation women on the panel of respondents, who are expected to do the household chores.

That the first-generation Maghrebi respondents across both genders expressed approval at seeing Amar preparing the evening meal, may well be linked to the fact that many first-generation men have cooked during their lives. On the other hand, most second-generation men have never had to cook, nor have they seen their fathers preparing meals.
On the other hand, the second-generation Maghrebi men's decodings of the scene disclose a general aloofness from the issue: they neither condemned nor condoned the idea of a Maghrebi man cooking but merely expressed surprise at seeing Amar working in the kitchen. Although evidence is circumstantial, second-generation Maghrebi women authors such as Soraya Nini and Ferrudja Kessas, frequently make reference in their novels to the particularly chauvinistic behaviour of their brothers. Moreover, a comment made by one of the second-generation Maghrebi women would seem to suggest that there may be a tendency for second-generation men to perpetuate these traditions: "même les jeunes d'aujourd'hui sont assez fermés par rapport à la tradition: c'est la femme qui doit faire ça." (3.B.F.H.22). This may explain, therefore, why the younger men did not go beyond merely expressing surprise at the sight of Amar, a first-generation Maghrebi man, doing the cooking.

Reda, the Badaouis' eldest son, was one of the characters least liked by the panel of respondents (question 30). It was seen in chapter 3 that less than half of all the viewers were favourably disposed towards him. Two clusters were identified among the decodings of Reda, and both of these appeared to be shaped by gender and generation within an ethnic group. Firstly, it was found that only 4 out of the 16 Maghrebi viewers who produced processable responses stated that they liked Reda. Significantly, three out of these four respondents were second-generation men. In other words, most of the second-generation men on the panel of Maghrebi viewers were favourably disposed towards Reda. On the other hand, all but one of the other Maghrebi respondents stated that they either disliked him or were indifferent towards him. Whilst most Maghrebi viewers commented negatively on Reda's behaviour regarding the setting up of his new business venture (selling Muslim prayer mats with compasses) and his attitude towards his parents, the second-generation men tended to

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14 See Ferrudja Kessas's *Beur's story* (1990), and Soraya Nini's *Ils disent que je suis une beurette* (1993).
praise Reda for having ambition and for trying to succeed in life. The following examples typify these divergent decodings of Reda's conduct:

Oui, moi j'ai aimé parce que comme je t'ai dit il est ambitieux, quoi. Il est ambitieux, puis il rend visite à ses parents. Bon, c'est vrai qu'il les rend visite parce qu'il a besoin d'argent, mais c'est aussi qu'il essaie de faire quelque chose, quoi.
(14.B.M.H.24)

[...] Il sait pas où il en est, quoi. Il sait pas quoi faire. Il vend des tapis. Il a des idées, c'est sûr qu'il a des idées, mais il cherche, quoi, c'est ça.
J.H. Tu l'as aimé?
Ben oui, parce qu'il se débrouille, quoi, il essaie de s'en sortir. (15. B.M.L.23)

Non [je ne l'ai pas aimé], parce que comme il lui a dit le père "tu viens juste quand tu as besoin de moi". Il vient pas les voir, mais quand il a besoin de quelque chose il vient voir ses parents. (41.B.F.L.38)

Quand il trouve pas de facilité pour vendre sa marchandise il le colle à son père, donc c'est pas bon. Il barratine son père, il colle tout à son père, il prend son argent. (37.B.M.L.43)

It is clear from the above examples that whilst the second-generation men see nothing wrong with Reda's behaviour, the other Maghrebi viewers perceive his actions as inappropriate. The first respondent cited, for example, states that it was positive that Reda visited his parents, a comment that contrasts strongly with that of the third viewer quoted above, who criticizes Reda for only going to see his parents because he needed something from them. It could well be that the second-generation men of Maghrebi origin liked Reda because he was, essentially, a representation of themselves. It would seem likely that they could identify with the fact that Reda did
not have a stable job but was, in their opinion, trying to make the most of his situation by coming up with business ideas. That all three of the second-generation men who liked Reda stated that he was ambitious, would seem to support this argument. On the other hand, many of the Maghrebi viewers who were not favourably disposed towards him, commented that, on the contrary, Reda did not try hard enough to succeed.

A second cluster moulded by generation and gender within an ethnic group was detected among the second-generation Magrebi women's responses to whether or not they liked Reda. As already seen, none of these respondents liked Reda - three were indifferent towards him and three disliked him - but it was also found that the three viewers who objected to him stated that his behaviour was typical of second-generation Magrebi men. Their comments were:

[...] tu sais, c'est typique, le garçon qui part puis qui revient, puis qui demande du fric, puis qui part [...] C'est tout à fait ça, hein. Il pose pas de questions, rien du tout. (4.B.F.L.25+or-)

[...] C'est vrai que c'est tout à fait le fils qui vient, qui vient vraiment pas souvent pour voir ses parents, mais dès qu'il a un petit problème on le voit arriver et on sait automatiquement que c'est pour un besoin d'argent. (2.B.F.L.20)

[...] Il y a beaucoup de jeunes arabes qui sont comme lui, quoi, ils arrêtent les études et puis il font pas grande chose pour s'en sortir et tout, puis qui comptent encore sur ses parents [...] Il [Reda] représente un nombre d'Arabes qui font rien [...] il essaie pas de s'en sortir. Ça j'aime pas trop. (1.B.F.H.24)

That these second-generation Magrebi women disapprove of Reda and perceive him as being representative of their male peers could well be a reflection of the differential treatment that they experience as daughters in Magrebi families. It would seem likely that their criticism that Reda comes and goes as he wishes and that this is
typical of second-generation Maghrebi men, reveals a rejection on their part of the 
traditional organization of the Maghrebi family whereby the daughters are expected to 
stay at home whilst their brothers may go out as they wish. This would explain why, 
on the one hand, the second-generation Maghrebi men saw nothing unusual about 
Reda's behaviour, whilst on the other hand, the second-generation women's decodings 
of Reda were particularly hostile.

Having asked respondents whether or not they liked the various people 
portrayed in the programme, it was enquired whether there was one character in the 
episode that they could particularly identify with (question 35). As seen in the section 
on the influences of ethnicity on viewer decodings, nearly half of the "native" French 
respondents stated that there was no character that they could identify with. On the 
other hand, all but two of the Maghrebi viewers said that they could identify with one 
of the people portrayed in the programme. It was suggested earlier that the "native" 
French respondents were unable to identify with the characters in La Composition 
Française because they were Maghrebi, and ethnicity was a barrier to identification.

Although only 12 Maghrebi responses could be analysed out of a possible 
total of 20, a pattern is very clearly present among these 12 responses, and this pattern 
would appear to be shaped by gender and generation within an ethnic group. As 
already seen, two Maghrebi viewers stated that could identify with no one in the 
episode. However, the majority of the remaining ten Maghrebi viewers - eight - 
identified with members of the Badaoui family who were of the same gender and 
generation as themselves. Thus, two first-generation women identified with Farida, 
two second-generation men with Reda, and four second-generation women with 
Zouzou. On the one hand, therefore, many of the "native" French viewers could not 
identify with anyone in the programme because of the "ethnic interference", whilst on 
the other hand, the Maghrebi viewers tended to identify with those characters that 
represented them most closely. In other words, ethnicity, gender and generation all 
played a role in this identification process.
To conclude it can be said that nine aspects of the episode led to decodings that appeared to be shaped by gender and generation within an ethnic group, and it would seem noteworthy that all these clusters occurred among the Maghrebi responses. Similarly, it will be remembered, all the clusters identified as being moulded by generation within an ethnic group were detected within the two groups of minority ethnic viewers. It was suggested that these generational clusters occurred within the ethnic minority responses, rather than the "native" French decodings, because generational differences between the former respondents are far more pronounced than they are between the two generations of "native" French viewers. Clearly, generational differences among Maghrebi respondents and those originating from sub-Saharan/Central Africa are heightened by the fact that the first-generation spent their formative years in their respective countries of origin, whilst the second-generation have grown up in a largely French environment.

This leads one to the question of why all the clusters shaped by both generation and gender in an ethnic group also occurred among minority ethnic viewers. The answer would seem to be three-fold. Firstly, as already discussed, greater differences between the two generations of Maghrebis than between the two age groups of "native" French people can be observed. Secondly, gender is inextricably linked to ethnicity, and gender differences, like generational ones, are greater among those of Maghrebi origin than they are between "native" French men and women. As seen earlier, the particular roles of men and women in Maghrebi society are clearly defined and very different from each other. Even among second-generation Maghrebis, gender differences are more pronounced than they are between "native" French people of a similar age. Finally, gender and generation are more interdependent among those of Maghrebi origin, than they are among "native" French people. In other words, whilst gender differences among first-generation Maghrebis differ considerably from the gender differences that can be detected within the second-generation, this is less the case between the two age groups (18 to 30 year olds and those over the age of 40) of "native" French people. Thus, gender and
generation are both intertwined with ethnicity, hence the fact that their influence on decodings of the programme differed between the two ethnic groups.

4.7 Education within an ethnic group

Only two questions led to clusters in the decodings that appeared to be shaped by education within an ethnic group, and in both instances these clusters were identified among the Maghrebi responses. As seen in previous sections, respondents were asked whether they liked each member of the Badaoui family, and for what reasons. Analysis of viewer responses revealed very similar groupings among the Maghrebi respondents' decodings of Amar and Farida (questions 26 and 27 respectively), and these clusters appeared to be shaped by education within that ethnic group. Although the viewers of Maghrebi origin gave a wide range of reasons for liking, or otherwise, these two characters, it was noted that in both instances, whilst all the first-generation respondents with lower levels of education gave reasons that were unrelated to the ethnicity of the characters, many of the second-generation viewers across both levels of education, and the first-generation respondents with university education, based their opinions of Amar and Farida on aspects of these characters that were linked to their ethnicity and their representativity. Thus, in the case of Amar none of the first-generation Maghrebi respondents with lower levels of education referred to his ethnicity or whether they perceived him as realistic: many stated that they liked him because he was a kind father, he helped his eldest son, he was an astute businessman, and so on. On the other hand, the two first-generation Maghrebis with higher levels of education spoke of Amar in terms of his ethnicity, one stating that he was unrepresentative of Maghrebi men, and the other commenting that it was positive to see a first-generation Maghrebi portrayed on television as someone capable of speaking French properly.

A high proportion of the second-generation sample of Maghrebi respondents - six out of nine - based their opinions of Amar on ethnically marked aspects of his
character. For example, several stated that they particularly liked Amar because he had retained his ethno-cultural origins despite having lived in France for many years, which they felt was a realistic portrayal. The following examples highlight this contrast between, on the one hand, the decodings produced by first-generation Maghrebis with lower levels of education, and on the other hand, second-generation Maghrebis as well as those produced by first-generation Maghrebis with university education:

Avec son fils aîné je crois qu'il [Amar] était gentil. Chaque fois il [Reda] demande quelque chose, alors il obéit, ouais, au niveau de l'argent et tout. Malgré il trouve que son fils a toujours quelque chose à demander, mais finalement il lui donne. (43.B.F.L.37)

Euh, parce qu'il était gentil, puis en même temps il était, euh, il était quand même dans le vrai. Enfin, il a quand même ses racines qu'on voit [pause] qu'on sent, quoi. [...] (2.B.F.L.20)

Whilst the first-generation viewer with lower levels of education cited above focuses on Amar's kindness towards his son, the second-generation respondent comments on his representativity: "il était quand même dans le vrai".

Similarly, when viewers were asked what they thought of Farida, all the first-generation Maghrebis with lower levels of education focused on non-ethnically marked aspects of her behaviour, many stating, for example, that she was a good mother. In contrast, a significant proportion of the second-generation respondents of Maghrebi origin - five out of nine - made reference to her ethnicity when giving their opinions of her, some expressing disapproval of her lack of representativity. The following examples typify this split within the Maghrebi decodings of Farida:
Although the second-generation respondent clearly likes Farida, it is noticeable that he comments on the fact that she speaks French at home, behaviour which he considers untypical of first-generation Maghrebi women. These examples of viewer decodings of Amar and Farida would seem to suggest that the second-generation Maghrebis and the first-generation with university education regarded the programme not simply as a portrayal of a number of individuals but also as, in a certain sense, representing the Maghrebi population in general. On the other hand, first-generation Maghrebis with lower levels of education took the characters more at face value, and were less inclined to regard them as representatives of their ethnic group. Thus, whereas less educated first-generation Maghrebis appeared to conceive of television viewing as a private relationship between themselves and the characters portrayed on screen, others were clearly conscious of the fact that the programme was being viewed by a mass audience, whose perceptions of ethnic differences might be significantly affected by this. This would explain, therefore, the emphasis they put on whether or not the characters were realistic, as they clearly have a vested interest in being portrayed in a favourable light on television because their futures in France depend to quite a large extent, on how they are perceived by the majority population. That this education-related split in the responses did not occur among second-generation respondents of Maghrebi origin, is probably linked to the fact that they have all attained a certain level of education that is considerably higher than that of the first-generation Maghrebi viewers with lower levels of education, and so they are all aware of television as a social institution having an impact on a mass audience.
That these clusters shaped by education within an ethnic group occurred within the Maghrebi decodings of the programme and that none was detected among "native" French responses is probably a reflection of the fact that all "native" French people have attained a minimum level of education which is significantly higher than that of the first-generation Maghrebi viewers with lower levels of education.

4.8 Gender across ethnic groups

All the clusters of decodings discussed until now have, to varying degrees and in various manners, been shaped by ethnicity. This, and the following sections, examine clusters where ethnicity appears not to have been significant, with respondents uniting across ethnic divisions. Thus, in this section, clusters in the responses which appear to be shaped by gender across the ethnic groups will be analysed. A total of five questions - numbers 10, 11, 17, 34 and 35 - led to clusters of decodings that seemed to be moulded by gender, apparently regardless of ethnic origin.

Question 10, it will be recalled, is based on the scene where a pork meats salesman tries to sell Amar his products. Viewers were asked what, in general terms, they thought of this particular scene. It was seen in previous sections that respondents focused on different aspects of the scene. Thus, whilst there was a tendency for "native" French viewers to refer to the sales representative's discussion of his private life, the majority of Maghrebi respondents commented on the fact that Amar, as a Muslim, did not wish to taste the pork products. It was also noted in the section on the influences of gender and generation within an ethnic group that, on the one hand, the first-generation Maghrebi men discussed the commercial aspects of the scene, such as the two men's selling techniques, whilst on the other hand, the first-generation Maghrebi women concentrated on Amar's refusal to eat pork. It would seem noteworthy that a number of "native" French respondents also focused purely on the commercial aspects of the scene, and that all these viewers were men. Thus, when asked about this scene, a cluster of six respondents solely made reference to the
commercial elements of the scene, and they were all men, both "native" French and of Maghrebi origin. On the other hand, women, across both ethnic groups, concentrated on other aspects of the scene, such as Amar not wishing to eat pork products because of his religion, and the salesman's discussion of his private life.

Whilst it was suggested that the first-generation Maghrebi men viewed the scene from a commercial angle because, unlike most first-generation Maghrebi women, they are the breadwinners of the family and could, therefore, relate to this part of the scene, it would seem less clear why three "native" French men, and no women of French origin, focused on this aspect. Gender differences among "native" French people are, on the whole, less pronounced than they are among those of Maghrebi origin. Moreover, two out of the three "native" French men who made reference to the commercial elements of the scene were in the 18 to 30 year old age bracket, and gender differences within this age group are generally not very marked. Thus, no single explanation covering the whole of this cluster can be found, although it is apparently shaped by gender across ethnic groups. This is the only grouping detected in the decodings of the programme, where no consistent reason for its presence has been ventured.

With regard to the same scene, viewers were also asked what they thought of the reasons that the salesman gave for having lost both his previous job selling women's underwear, and his wife (question 11). It may be recalled that the sales representative confided in Amar that he was made redundant, and his wife left him because "avec les essayages, j'ai perdu la tête". Analysis of viewer decodings revealed the presence of a cluster of 11 respondents, from across all three ethnic groups, who expressed disapproval at the salesman's behaviour. It would seem significant that 8 out of these 11 viewers were women. Thus, whilst four "native" French women, two of Maghrebi origin and two originating from sub-Saharan/Central Africa were critical of the sales representative's conduct, only one man from each

15 Quotation taken from the broadcast version of La Composition française.
ethnic group commented unfavourably on the salesman's actions. The following examples typify these women's criticisms of the salesman:

Moi je me suis dit que c'était de sa faute, c'est de sa faute s'il a tout perdu, parce qu'il court après les autres filles. (45.C.F.L.17)

Ben, c'est un vicieux, non? Ben, qu'il a bien fait de tout perdre. (31.A.F.L.21)

These women are clearly of the opinion that the sales representative deserved to lose everything because of his unacceptable behaviour towards women. Their comments contrast strongly with those of most of the male respondents who merely pointed out that the salesman's behaviour was commonplace but did not express disapproval. Thus, one such viewer stated:

[laughs] C'est banal, c'est classique. Non, je vois pas... ouais, non, je veux dire, c'est un fait qui peut être tout à fait valable: la tentation de la chair [...] C'est une chose qui est très banale, qui est très latine. C'est latin, ça. (24.A.M.H.42)

This "native" French man plainly finds the sales representative's antics rather funny, and, certainly, does not appear to be in any way critical of his actions. Moreover, his comment that the salesman's behaviour is typically "Latin" would seem to reveal a certain sense of pride in the widespread myth surrounding the "Latin lover". It is interesting that with reference to this aspect of the scene, the image of the "native" French man is expressed in a very different manner by a young woman originating from the Democratic Republic of Congo. She comments that "c'est le côté un peu vicieux des Français, je trouve" and she goes on to state that "les Français, c'est vrai qu'ils sont de ce côté un peu cochon-cochon" (49.C.F.H.18). It would seem probable that the women on the panel of respondents tended to be more censorious than the men with regard to the salesman's conduct because he was a man who had been
unfaithful to his wife and who had behaved improperly towards other women. It could well be that if the scene had focused on a woman who had deceived her husband, more male viewers would have been critical and fewer of the women would have expressed disapproval.

Question 17 is based on the scene where Zouzou discusses her essay on "les raisons d'aimer son pays" with her father and the French neighbour Baudoin. Baudoin appears to be of the opinion that Zouzou is Algerian but she is quick to point out that in actual fact she is French because she was born in France and she has French nationality. However, on hearing Zouzou's comment, Amar is displeased and tells Zouzou forcefully that she is Algerian because "le pays de la femme c'est celui de son père et après son mariage c'est celui de son mari". Respondents were asked what they thought of Amar's reaction when Zouzou stated that she was French. Two closely related clusters were detected among the responses to this question, and both would seem to be shaped by gender across ethnic groups. Firstly, a total of 20 viewers said that they disagreed with Amar's comment regarding women and their nationality. It would seem significant that the majority of those who disagreed - 14 out of 20 - were women from across all three ethnic groups. Thus, whilst only 6 out the 21 men who gave responses to this question, objected to Amar's comment, 14 out of the 23 women who produced processable decodings, dissented. The following example is typical of the responses given by the women on the panel of viewers:

Totalement idiot, totalement idiot. Non. Ben, déjà moi je suis français, donc c'est pas parce que je me marierai avec quelqu'un qui serait peut-être étranger que je serais forcément étrangère. Ça, ça veut rien dire. Je suis née en France, je resterai française. [...] (32.A.F.L.22)

16 The question asked was: " Toujours dans la même scène, que pensez-vous de la réaction d'Amar lorsque Zouzou dit qu'elle est française?"
17 Quotation taken from the broadcast version of La Composition Française.
Clearly, this respondent completely rejects Amar's statement, and it would seem noteworthy that she uses herself as an example to point out that even if she were to marry someone from another country, she would still be French. It would seem likely, therefore, that her strong objection to Amar's comment was largely fueled by the fact that, as a women, she felt personally targeted by Amar's remark. This, in turn, would explain why significantly more women than men challenged Amar's ideas regarding women and nationality.

A second cluster identified among the responses to this question is closely linked to the first one discussed. Of the 44 respondents who answered this question, the majority expressed a variety of views regarding Amar's comment on women and their nationality. However, 9 out of the 44 viewers produced responses that appeared to be devoid of opinion, and it is of interest that 7 out of these 9 respondents were men. Thus, one such viewer stated:

Alors il est... bon, étant donné qu'il est d'origine marocaine...

J.H. algérienne
algérienne, bon, il a son idée comme ça. Donc, peu importe si sa fille est née en France ou a la nationalité française, pour lui, bon, c'est sa fille, il est algérien, donc elle, elle est algérienne. [...] (19.A.M.L.19)

Although this respondent explains why he thinks that Zouzou's father perceives her as Algerian, he does not indicate whether or not he agrees with Amar's ideas concerning women and their nationality. That most of the respondents who expressed no opinions regarding Amar's comments were men, would seem to indicate that the men on the panel of viewers tended to feel more detached and aloof from the issue raised by Amar's statement, than did the female viewers. This finding ties in with the fact that far fewer men than women were critical of Amar's remark.

Finally, it is of interest to note that eight respondents stated that they agreed with Amar's remarks concerning women and their nationality, and five out of these
eight viewers were men. That more men than women agreed with Amar's ideas would seem to lend weight to the argument that the two clusters identified in the responses to this question were moulded by gender across ethnic groups.

When viewers were asked whether there was one character in the programme that they particularly liked (question 34), a distinct gender-related pattern was detected across ethnic groups: it was found that the majority of "native" French and Maghrebi respondents particularly liked characters who were of the same gender as themselves. The chart below highlights the gendered nature of these results, with the horizontal axis indicating each character in the programme and whether that character was male or female, and the vertical axis specifying the number of respondents who stated that that character was their favourite in the programme. As is shown by the key, the black columns represent male respondents and the grey columns, female viewers. Thus, in the case of Amar, for example, whilst six male respondents stated that he was the character that they most liked, only two female viewers chose him as their favourite character in the episode.

![Chart 4.1 Influences of gender on viewer choices of favourite characters](image)

It is clear from the graph above that, with the exception of Yoyo, each character was liked by more respondents of the same gender as the character than of the opposite sex. That this gendered pattern occurred, would seem to suggest that viewers were able to relate more closely to characters who were of the same gender as themselves,
and that as a result, they tended to be more favourably disposed towards these characters.

It was seen in the section on the influences of ethnicity, that whilst many "native" French respondents appeared to be unable to identify with the Badaouis because they were of a different ethnic origin (question 35), ethnicity did not seem to be an obstacle to liking member of the Badaoui family. From the FAS's perspective it is particularly encouraging that the majority of "native" French viewers chose characters of Maghrebi origin, despite the fact that there were two "native" French characters - Baudoin and the pork meats salesman - that they could have stated were their favourites. Thus, gender rather than ethnicity, shaped viewer liking for the various characters. As is shown in the chart, Yoyo was the one exception to this rule with more female than male viewers choosing him as their favourite character. It can also be seen that Yoyo was the most well-liked character in the programme. It could well be that because Yoyo was a child, he was not perceived by respondents in terms of his gender but rather, from the viewpoint of him being either a son, a grandson or a younger brother. This argument would seem to be supported by the fact that a number of respondents spoke of him in these terms. Thus, whilst one young women stated: "j'avais l'impression de retrouver mon petit frère" (33.A.F.H.21), another viewer commented: "ça serait bien d'avoir un fils comme ça" (27.A.M.H.62). This may well explain why, therefore, the gender-related pattern detected among responses to question 34, applied to all characters except Yoyo. From the point of view of the FAS's objectives, viewer responses to the question of which character they most liked in the episode, are very positive. It will be recalled that one of the key objectives of the series was to encourage the "native" French audience to like, and ultimately identify with, a Maghrebi family. These results would seem to suggest, therefore, that the programme was successful in terms of fostering a liking for the Badaouis among "native" French viewers.

Having asked respondents which character they most liked in the programme, it was enquired whether there was one character that they could particularly identify
with (question 35), and it was found that gender defined responses to an even greater extent than it did regarding the previous question. Apart from those viewers - mainly of French origin - who stated that they could identify with no one in the episode, all but one of the respondents - 18 out of 19 - identified with characters of the same gender as themselves. As seen in the section on the influences of ethnicity on viewer responses, the Badaoui's ethnicity hindered identification among many "native" French viewers. However, among the remaining respondents, across all three ethnic groups, gender was the main variable defining viewer identification with the characters.

In conclusion, it can be said that this section highlights the fact that there were moments in the viewing process when respondents of different ethnic origins were brought together by their gender, perceiving things in a similar manner, apparently regardless of ethnicity. It is noticeable, however, that only five such instances were detected, a small number in comparison with all the clusters that were shaped in various ways by ethnicity.

4.9 Generation across ethnic groups

Analysis of viewer responses to the episode revealed only two clusters in the decodings that would appear to be moulded by generation across ethnic groups, and both these clusters are related to the same question. Question 19\textsuperscript{18} refers to the scene where Reda, the Badaouis' eldest son, shows his father his latest business idea: the Muslim prayer mat with a compass attached to it so that the user can be sure of praying in the correct direction. As Reda enters the living room, he gets a dollar note out of his pocket and, showing this to the people in the room, he states that dollars are the universal passport. Viewers were asked what they thought of this comment, and two distinct clusters could be identified among the responses. On the one hand, a

\textsuperscript{18} Question 19 asked: "Au cours de cette scène, Reda, le fils aîné d'Amar arrive. Que pensez-vous de la remarque de Reda selon laquelle les dollars sont le passeport universel?"
cluster of 15 respondents expressed disapproval at Reda's statement, whilst on the other hand, 33 viewers produced decodings that were uncritical of his comment. Significantly, 13 out of the 15 respondents who objected to Reda's remark were respondents over the age of 40. In contrast, a majority - 24 out of 33 - of those who did not disapprove of Reda's comment, were in the 18 to 30 year old age bracket. In other words, generation would seem, to a large extent, to have shaped these viewers' opinions of Reda's statement regarding the dollar. It would seem probable that the older viewers tended to be more critical of Reda than the younger respondents because, in their eyes, Reda represented negative attitudes which they associated with the younger generation. The younger viewers, on the other hand, were of the same generation as Reda. That many of the older respondents who objected to Reda's comment stated that his behaviour was typical of "les jeunes", would seem to support this argument. The following four examples emphasize the contrasting attitudes between the two generations of viewers, towards Reda's remark. The first two responses were produced by older respondents, and the second two by younger ones:

Et bien c'est le langage de beaucoup de jeunes: le dollar, l'argent, il y a que ça qui compte, et puis voilà. Je trouve ça un peu triste, un peu décevant, mais très réaliste, alors. Oui, pas mal de jeunes en fait pensent que l'idéal c'est de gagner de l'argent très rapidement. (12. A.F.H.68)

C'est la jeune génération ça, le fric, qu'elle soit arabe, française ou anglaise: fric. C'est une génération qui m'intéresse pas. (26.A.M.H.58)

Avoir de l'argent c'est avoir presque le monde sous ses... je dirais pas le monde, mais avoir beaucoup de choses sous ses pieds, et puis lui [Reda] comme il est jeune, il est un peu dynamique, il connaît un peu la société, il connaît un peu le problème du chômage, alors il se dit que l'argent c'est vraiment... je dirais qu'il a plutôt raison [...] Ce qu'il dit pour l'argent, c'est vrai ça. (18.B.M.L.26)
The two older respondents cited above object strongly to Reda's statement which they both perceive as being representative of young people. On the other hand, neither of the younger viewers is hostile towards Reda's comment. On the contrary, they both affirm that money is, indeed, the passport to the world and that wealth gives people power. In other words, the responses produced by the latter viewers would seem to actually confirm the older respondents' impressions of today's youth. It would seem revealing, however, that one of the two younger respondents quoted above explains Reda's interest in making money in terms of him having encountered unemployment. That many of the younger viewers agreed with Reda's comments, could well be a reflection of the harder times that young people encounter today, with high unemployment levels and fewer opportunities than the older generation had when they were young.

To conclude, it was noted in the previous section that only five instances were detected where gender across ethnic groups shaped viewer decodings. Even fewer clusters of responses - only two - appeared to be moulded by generation across ethnic groups. This may be an indication that certain elements of gender are more "trans-ethnic" than generational traits. In view of the hugely different experiences of first-generation Maghrebis and "native" French people of a similar age, it is not surprising that only one cluster was detected where these two groups of respondents were united in their viewing of the programme. On the other hand, it can be argued that certain gendered experiences are similar across ethnic groups despite their very different experiences in other areas. This may explain, at least in part, why more clusters
shaped by gender across ethnic groups than generation, were identified. It would seem, however, that the most notable aspect is that whilst both these variables rarely shaped responses across ethnic groups, they frequently influenced decodings within ethnic groups.

4.10 Education across ethnic groups

One question led to a cluster in the decodings that appeared to be shaped by education across ethnic groups. Question 8 is based on the scene where Yoyo asks his Uncle Aziz to name the leader of the Francs who stopped the Arabs at Poitiers. It will be remembered that, having had little schooling, Aziz is unaware of this historical event, and the answer he gives has nothing to do with the question. Respondents were asked what they thought of Aziz's reply, and as seen earlier, the majority of viewers pointed out that Aziz did not know the answer to the question, due to a lack of schooling. However, three respondents appeared to be in the same position as Aziz. In other words, they did not understand the question, and were, consequently, unaware that Aziz's reply had nothing to do with the question. Two of these respondents were first-generation Maghrebi women, one was a "native" French man in his late 40s, and all three of these viewers had low levels of education. Whilst it might have been expected that first-generation Maghrebi women with lower levels of education would not necessarily know about the Arab invasion of France, it is more surprising that a French man appeared to be oblivious of this historical event. With reference to this scene he stated:

J'ai pas... j'ai pas bien compris pourquoi il a ... il a posé cette question. J'ai pas bien saisi là.

J.H. Qu'avez-vous pensé de la réponse de l'oncle?

C'est pas à dire que le contrôleur il avait la réponse aussi. (10.A.M.L.47)
That this "native" French man did not understand Yoyo's question, is probably linked to his educational level. Although there were other "native" French respondents with low levels of education, this particular viewer had had less formal education than all the other "native" French viewers: he had left school at the age of 14 with no qualifications. Similarly, one of the first-generation Maghrebi women had attended school until the age of 13, and the other Maghrebi respondent had only had three years of schooling. It would seem, therefore, that particularly low levels of education shaped these viewers' decodings of the scene.

That only one cluster of decodings appeared to be shaped by education across ethnic groups may be linked to the fact that educational levels within the sample of respondents were very varied. It will be recalled that the two levels of education used for the purposes of this study were those people who had a minimum of two years of university education, and those who had less than a baccalauréat. However, whilst all but one of the "native" French respondents had been in education at least until the age of 16, the majority of first-generation Maghrebis had had far less schooling. Thus, although they were all classified as having lower levels of education, levels varied greatly within this educational category. A second reason why few clusters of responses moulded by education across ethnic groups were detected, may be that all the "native" French viewers and second-generation Maghrebis, had attained a certain basic level of education that was sufficient for the decoding of the episode. It could well be that if the programme had been more "intellectual" and had dealt with, say, political issues, many more cross-ethnic, education-related clusters would have been apparent in the decodings.

4.11 Education and generation across ethnic groups

When respondents were asked which character in the episode they particularly liked (question 34), it was seen earlier that viewers tended to be most favourably disposed towards characters of the same gender as themselves (see chart 4.1). It was also found
that education and generation seemed to shape respondents' choices of their favourite character. Firstly, it was noted that whilst there was a tendency for all groups of viewers to particularly like characters of the same gender as themselves, some respondents appeared to be more willing to cross gender and generational barriers than others. Analysis of the responses revealed that among the older generation of respondents, both "native" French and Maghrebi, viewers with higher levels of education were more inclined to cross the gender and generational divides, than were the respondents with lower levels of education. The chart below highlights this apparent influence of education on the older generation's responses to this question. The horizontal axis specifies each group of respondents and their level of education, and the vertical axis indicates the number of viewers who stated that their favourite character was someone of the opposite sex or of a different generation. The black columns represent characters of the opposite gender to the respondents who chose them, and the grey columns, characters of a different generation. It can be seen, for example, that no first-generation Maghrebis with lower levels of education chose a character of the opposite sex as their favourite but that one first-generation Maghrebi with higher education crossed the gender divide.

![Chart 4.2 The influences of educational level on older generation's choices of favourite character](image)

It can be seen that, in each case, those viewers with higher levels of education were more inclined to choose a character of the opposite gender or different generation from
themselves, than were the respondents with lower levels of education. It could well be, that higher levels of education gave viewers a greater intellectual flexibility which enabled them to cross the mental barriers of gender and generation more easily. The chart also highlights the fact that all the older generation of viewers, across both educational levels, appeared to find it easier to cross the generational divide than the gender barrier. In other words, for these respondents, gender would seem to have been a greater obstacle than generation, to liking a character.

Among the 18 to 30 year-old respondents, however, this education related pattern was not detected. The chart below emphasizes the fact that educational level did not seem to influence the younger generation's choices of favourite character. It can be seen that viewers of both educational levels appeared to cross gender and generational divides with relative ease. Comparison of chart 4.2 and the graph below, emphasizes the distinct differences between the responses produced by the two generations of viewers. Firstly, it can be seen that, overall, the older respondents were less likely to be favourably disposed towards characters of the opposite sex or of a different generation from themselves. Secondly, whilst higher levels of education appeared, at least to a certain extent, to "liberate" the older respondents from these constraints, higher levels of education did not seem to shape the younger viewers' responses in this manner.

Chart 4.3 Educational level and young generation's choices of favourite character
These results would seem to suggest that both generation and education shaped viewer responses to this question. It may well be that where higher levels of education created a greater mental flexibility among the older respondents, among 18 to 30 year old viewers there is a more pliable psychological disposition, thus making them cross generational and gender barriers more easily.

4.12 Conclusions

The aim of this chapter was to evaluate the relative influences of four variables - ethnicity, gender, generation and educational level - on the decodings of La Composition française. The use of open-ended questions as a means of ascertaining how viewer perceptions and understandings of the programme were shaped by the variables, ensured that, as far as possible, spontaneous decodings were obtained for the analysis. Clearly, adopting this methodology meant that it was only through a long process of categorizing and reclassifying viewer responses, that a landscape of clusters began to emerge among the decodings of the episode. Having identified these groupings within the viewer interpretations of the programme, I attempted to determine how they linked up with, and in what ways they were shaped by, the four variables.

Whilst the initial objective was to examine the extent to which each of the four variables moulded responses, analysis of viewer decodings revealed a far more complex picture than might have been expected. It was found that not only did each individual variable shape certain clusters of responses but that the four variables combined with each other in a number of intricate ways. Thus, some of the clusters were moulded primarily by one of the four variables, while others were shaped by combinations, which in five cases involved two variables and in another case involved three. Numerous groupings in the decodings were, therefore, influenced by two or even three, interdependent variables, whilst other groupings in the decodings
were only shaped by one variable. The decoding process was, in other words, far more convoluted, and less transparent than had initially been presumed.

Analysis of the relative importance of the four single variables - ethnicity, gender, generation and educational level - revealed that ethnicity had, by far, the greatest influence on viewer interpretations of the programme. Nearly half of all the clusters identified among viewer decodings of the programme, appeared to be moulded by ethnicity. On the other hand, there were comparatively few instances where gender, generation or educational level united respondents from across the ethnic divide, in their perceptions of the episode. It was, for example, only on a small number of occasions that women, regardless of ethnic origin and generation, decoded the programme in a similar manner. There were even fewer moments during the viewing process when respondents from across the ethnic spectrum, were brought together in their understandings of the episode, by their generation. Similarly, educational level rarely seemed to unite viewers of different ethnic origins, in their decodings of *La Composition française*. Thus, gender, generation and educational level, appeared to have far less influence than ethnicity in shaping viewer perceptions of the programme.

That respondents across the ethnic divide were rarely brought together by either gender or generation can be explained in terms of the hugely different experiences of "native" French people and those of Maghrebi origin. Thus, a first-generation Maghrebi will have very little in common with a "native" French person of the same age group. Similarly, the experiences of, say, a Maghrebi woman will differ substantially from those of a "native" French women. Moreover, a first-generation Maghrebi woman is unlikely to perceive things in the same way as a second-generation Maghrebi woman. The probability, therefore, of viewers of the same generation or gender across ethnic groups, decoding the episode in a similar manner, would seem quite small. Thus, in most instances ethnicity was the predominant influencing variable, and it was only rarely that gender, generation or educational
level pierced through the constraining parameters of ethnicity, and became the preponderant forces shaping respondents' interpretations of the episode.

This does not imply, however, that gender and generation had little influence on the decoding process. Clearly, ethnicity was the single variable that influenced responses to the greatest extent. However, notwithstanding the fact that gender and generation were largely incapable of breaking through, and transcending, the confines of ethnicity, these two variables frequently combined with ethnicity to shape viewer responses. Thus, a significant number of clusters - 11 - were shaped by generation within an ethnic group, 12 others by both gender and generation within an ethnic group, and one by gender alone within an ethnic group. On the one hand, therefore, many clusters were shaped by generation within an ethnic group and by gender and generation within an ethnic group, whilst on the other hand, only one grouping was moulded by gender within an ethnic group. The explanations as to why these differences occurred, are revealing both in terms of the ways in which the four variables interacted with each other, and in terms of the hierarchy of influence of the four variables.

Firstly, it was seen in this chapter that gender across generations and educational levels within an ethnic group only appeared to shape one cluster of decodings, and this gendered cluster was detected among the "native" French responses. That gendered clusters across generations and educational levels were not identified within the Maghrebi decodings is almost certainly linked to the fact that gender differences between first-generation men and women differ considerably from the gender differences experienced by the two sexes within the second-generation. In other words, among those of Maghrebi origin, the influence of gender is inextricably linked to generation. The two generations of Maghrebis have, largely, been socialized in very different circumstances: Maghrebi countries, on the one hand, and France on the other. This, in turn, clarifies why a significant proportion of clusters were shaped by gender and generation within an ethnic group, and why all these clusters occurred among Maghrebi decodings of the episode. Thus, although gender rarely moulded
responses across ethnic groups and generations, it did have influence on the decodings within the two generations of Maghrebi viewers. That within the Maghrebi group of respondents, the influence of gender was varied by generation, also highlights the importance of this latter variable. Moreover, it was found that numerous clusters were shaped by generation within an ethnic group, namely, the Maghrebi panel of respondents. Due to the generation-gap between first- and second-generation Maghrebis, amplified by their enormously divergent experiences in life, these two groups of Maghrebi viewers frequently perceived the programme in very different ways.

The first observation that can be made about these combinations of variables that shaped decoding clusters, is that they are all underpinned by ethnicity. Thus, ethnicity was not only important in single-variable clusters but also in multi-variable clusters, particularly in conjunction with gender and generation. The implication of this is that the overall influence of ethnicity on the decoding of La Composition française was immense, with 60 out of the 71 clusters identified in the responses being shaped by ethnicity, either primarily or in combination with other factors. A second finding highlighted by this chapter's analysis of the ways in which interacting variables moulded decoding clusters, is that generation was also of enormous importance, and second only to ethnicity, in terms of the extent to which it shaped viewers' interpretations of the programme. Thus, a third of all groupings detected among viewer responses - 26 out of the 71 - , were influenced in various ways by generation. Significantly fewer clusters in the decodings - 19 - appeared to be moulded by gender, although gender clearly played an important role in the decoding process, especially among the two generations of Maghrebi respondents. Finally, educational level seemed to have little influence on viewer decodings of the programme, and it was suggested that this was may be linked to the nature of the programme that was used as a stimulus for viewer decoding. It could well be that if the programme had been more complex and intellectually challenging, rather than
being a lighthearted sitcom (albeit with a serious message), many more education-related clusters would have been apparent in the decodings.

In conclusion, it would seem necessary to emphasize the fact that although ethnicity was undoubtedly the predominant variable shaping the way respondents watched and perceived *La Composition française*, this result must be seen within the context of the subject matter of the programme. *Fruits et Légumes*, was a series about France's Maghrebi population and the relationship between French society and this minority ethnic group. The entire programme was, in other words, ethnically marked, and it would seem very likely that this intensified the influence of ethnicity on the ways in which viewers decoded the episode. Moreover, the fact that it is extremely rare to see Maghrebi people featuring in television series, is bound to heighten respondents' realization that this was a programme about ethnicity in France. In short, it would seem probable that if a programme that was not directly linked to ethnicity had been used as a basis for this audience reception analysis, ethnicity would not have had such an overwhelming influence on the decoding process, although in all likelihood, it would still have shaped viewer decodings to a considerable extent.
5.1 Overview

The present study set out to explore the role of ethnicity in the decoding of television programmes within the specific context of France's ethnically diverse population. Focusing in particular on "native" French viewers and people of Maghrebi origin, an analysis was conducted of the ways in which people of different ethnic origins perceived and reacted to a sample episode of the FAS-financed sitcom, *Fruits et Légumes*. From the FAS's perspective *Fruits et Légumes* was a tool for communicating a very specific social message regarding relations between minority ethnic groups in France and the majority population. The fact that the series was used by the FAS as a vehicle for conveying its "integrationist" message, and that the sitcom clearly privileged certain meanings over others, made it particularly suitable for the purpose of investigating encoding and decoding, as well as the influences of ethnicity on this process.

As a means of exploring the meanings structuring the programme, both the production process and the broadcast version of *Fruits et Légumes* were examined in detail. This analysis revealed a complex partnership between the FAS, Cinétévé, the script writers - Henri de Turenne and Akli Tadjer - and France 3. Whilst these four parties were in agreement that the series would be of the sitcom genre and would focus on a family of Algerian origin living in France, beyond these two fundamental principles defining the programme, their objectives were not always convergent. Thus, the four production partners had their own agendas regarding the series, and they all, to varying degrees and in various ways, influenced the construction of meaning within the programme. In turn, this led to tensions within the encoded meanings of the series. In particular, the FAS's "integrationist" message was beset by ambiguities. On the one hand, the FAS stated that it wanted the series to encourage greater acceptance of ethno-cultural differences, but on the other hand, the FAS's
requests during the making of the series pointed to a wish to efface such differences. Like a pendulum, the FAS's notion of "integration" oscillated between "integration" defined as mutual acceptance by majority and minority ethnic groups, and "integration" as a virtual synonym for "assimilation". The encoded message was further complicated by the presence of two script-writers - one of French, and one of Algerian origin - who were drawing on significantly different frameworks of reference when writing the series. *Fruits et Légumes* was not, in other words, a single-authored work, underpinned by a set of clear-cut, unequivocal meanings. On the contrary, at certain moments in the programme there was no single, unified message being communicated to the audience, but rather, a number of conflicting preferred meanings.

Through this systematic analysis of the encoding process it was possible to build up a detailed picture of the meanings structuring the programme. In turn, this provided a solid basis from which to assess the extent to which these meanings were successfully transmitted to the audience. To this end, a sample of viewers was constructed, incorporating four variables: ethnicity, gender, generation and educational level. With the inclusion of four parameters rather than merely one - as in the case of most reception studies (see, for example, Morley 1980, Hobson 1982, Liebes and Katz 1990) - it was possible, not only to evaluate the net influence of ethnicity on the decoding process, but also the relative influence of it, in relation to the three other variables. The panel of respondents viewed the sample episode of the series and then took part in one-to-one, in-depth interviews that were designed to capture spontaneous readings of the programme.

Hall's encoding/decoding model (1973) was used as a basic framework within which to analyse the transcribed interviews. The model was significantly modified and the reading positions expanded, so as to cater for a more detailed classification of decodings. This contrasts with Morley's study of the *Nationwide* audience (1980) which attempted to fit viewer responses into Hall's three hypothetical decoding positions. By extending Hall's encoding/decoding model, it was possible to assess
both the extent to which preferred meanings in the programme were successfully communicated to viewers, and the degree to which readings diverged from the intended meanings. Having categorized viewer responses in this manner, groupings or clusters of similar types of decodings were examined in relation to the four variables - ethnicity, gender, generation and educational level - being tested. Thus, correlations were established between each cluster of readings and the four parameters. Through this process, the relative influence of each variable on the decoding of the episode was evaluated, as well as the ways in which these parameters combined with each other to shape viewer readings.

The wider aim of this reception analysis was to shed light on more general questions regarding the potential role of television in facilitating inter-ethnic relations. In France, where immigration has become a politically charged issue, and the debate surrounding ethnic minorities has increasingly revolved around the notion of "integration", television is seen by the FAS - a government agency - as a potential means of encouraging the effective incorporation of minority ethnic groups. But to what extent can television help bridge ethnic differences by encouraging inter-ethnic understanding? Whilst the present study was conducted at a micro-level, the findings are clearly pertinent to this wider issue.

Firstly, analysis of responses showed that nearly a third of all viewer decodings of the episode diverged significantly from the intended meanings, and that many of these differential readings actually contradicted encoded messages that were essential to the programme-makers' aims. Thus, in spite of the production partners' attempts at promoting some meanings whilst suppressing others, the media text was open to a variety of interpretations. Where aberrant readings occurred, these can, to a certain extent, be attributed to the fact that the various parties involved in the production of the series had competing objectives. In particular the FAS's "integrationist" message was deeply ambiguous. Whilst the presence of the FAS as a co-financer of the programme clearly exacerbated tensions within the encoded meanings of the series, this is not a problem unique to Fruits et Légumes. The
creation of any television programme requires the collaboration of a number of different parties with their respective agendas, and it would seem probable, therefore, that encoded meanings within many television programmes are troubled by inconsistencies. Thus, the findings of the present reception study suggest that it cannot be assumed that the consumption of a similar diet of television programmes by ethnically diverse groups will, in a simple and linear manner, feed into the development of shared attitudes and experiences among them. In turn, therefore, it can be said that the production and dissemination of programmes such as Fruits et Légumes, specifically aimed at facilitating relations between ethnic groups, does not guarantee a rapprochement among people of different ethnic origins, as people watching these programmes do not necessarily "see" and understand the same things.

Although nearly a third of cognitive decodings differed substantially from preferred meanings in the media text, some of the results in terms of attitudinal decodings were more positive, viewed from the FAS's perspective. One of the FAS's key objectives was to encourage "native" French viewers to be favourably disposed towards the Maghrebi family at the centre of the sitcom. That a majority of "native" French respondents - over two thirds - stated that they liked members of the Badaoui family is clearly a successful result from the perspective of inter-ethnic relations. This result is less positive, however, when seen within the context of the means used by the production partners to win over the "native" French audience to this attitudinal decoding. The programme-makers chose to de-ethnicize the Maghrebi characters in the series, as it was felt that this would encourage "native" French viewers to identify with them. But de-ethnicization was pushed so far that this was not only at the expense of promoting greater acceptance of ethno-cultural differences, but also at the expense of the credibility of the characters and of the programme as a whole. Thus, some "native" French viewers were unsure whether Farida, the mother in the Badaoui family, was "native" French or Maghrebi. It is particularly revealing that very few respondents believed the Badaouis to be representative of Maghrebi families in France. Moreover, it was found that parallel to the positive responses regarding the
Maghrebi family starring in the sitcom many "native" French viewers stated that they disliked the programme, whilst a majority asserted that they would not choose to watch the series. Clearly, therefore, more creative thinking is needed on the part of the FAS and other production partners if television is to play a more effective part in promoting inter-ethnic understanding.

Analysis of the extent to which the four parameters - ethnicity, gender, generation and educational level - shaped viewer decodings of the episode revealed not only that each of the variables mould certain clusters of decodings, but also that they combined with each other in complex ways. Thus, whilst in some cases a single variable had shaped a cluster of decodings, in other instances, a combination of two or even three parameters had moulded groupings identified among the responses. The intricate ways in which these variables intertwined with each other, was far more complex than had initially been expected. A salient feature of these combined variables was that ethnicity was almost always one of them. Ethnicity shaped clusters not only as a single variable but also in combination with, in particular, gender and generation. Nearly half of all the clusters detected within viewer decodings of the programme were moulded by ethnicity as a single variable, and in addition, a large number of groupings was shaped by a combination of variables that included ethnicity. The net result was that an overwhelming majority of clustered decodings were influenced by ethnicity, either solely or in combination with other variables.

By contrast, there were few clusters bringing viewers together across the ethnic divide by either gender, age or educational level. This does not imply, however, that these variables had little or no influence on the decoding process. Despite the fact that gender and generation rarely broke through the constraining parameters of ethnicity, these two variables frequently combined with ethnicity to shape viewer responses. Thus, a significant number of clusters were moulded by either generation within an ethnic group, or by both gender and generation within an ethnic group. Noticeably, most groupings shaped by these combinations of variables occurred among responses produced by Maghrebi viewers. That age frequently
moulded decodings within the Maghrebi panel of respondents can be explained in terms of the vastly different experiences of the two generations, with the first generation having been socialized in Maghrebi countries and the second generation in France. This, in turn, sheds light on why many clustered Maghrebi decodings were shaped by both gender and generation, but few were moulded by gender across generations. Owing to the wide generation-gap among Maghrebi respondents, gender differences between first-generation men and women are sharper than those experienced by the two sexes within the second generation. In other words, among those of Maghrebi origin, the influence of gender is inextricably linked to generation. Thus, the overall influence of generation on the decoding process was far from negligible, although in terms of the hierarchy of importance of the four variables, it is a distant runner-up to ethnicity. In short, analysis of responses to the sample episode of *Fruits et Légumes* would seem to suggest that, far from sharing identical outlooks, the viewing public is divided into ethnicity-based interpretive communities, producing "ethnoscapes" (Appadurai, 1990) resisting the cultural steamroller of television.

5.2 Project limitations

Despite the strong evidence that ethnicity played a major role in the decoding of *La Composition Francaise*, it would not be sensible to claim that these findings can be unquestioningly generalized to other programmes or to the population as a whole in France. Clearly, the present study was conducted at a micro-level, with a relatively small number of respondents, and using only one episode of the series. There are certain limitations, therefore, to this study of ethnicity and television audiences, although I would argue that these are amply off-set by the fact that this is a first, and significant step into a new field of research on the relationship between minority ethnic groups and the media in France.
It would seem necessary, however, to make a number of points regarding the confines within which this research project was conducted. Firstly, the sample of respondents who participated in the study was constructed in such a way that it would be possible to analyse systematically the influences of four variables on viewer readings of the programme. In view of the fact that 4 variables can combine in 24 different ways and that, therefore, 24 different categories of viewers were needed for the study, it was not possible to have very many people in each of these categories. Thus, whilst the panel of 49 respondents included a wide range of people from diverse ethnic, social and cultural backgrounds, it cannot be asserted that it was wholly representative of France's population. In the limited time available, and with only one researcher conducting and transcribing the interviews, it would have been impossible to construct a sample that could be claimed to be truly representative. The results of the present study should, therefore, be viewed within this context. There are, nevertheless, strong indications from the present research to show that ethnicity shapes the ways in which people perceive and react to television programmes. Moreover, these results broadly support Liebes and Katz's findings in their study of cross-cultural readings of *Dallas* (1990). Their research highlighted the fact that viewers of different ethnic origins engaged with the soap opera in different ways.

A second limitation of the present study concerns the television programme used as a basis for the reception analysis. *Fruits et Légumes* focused on a family of Maghrebi origin and was, essentially, a series about inter-ethnic relations in France. It would seem likely that because the programme was ethnically marked, this intensified the influence of ethnicity on the ways in which respondents perceived the episode. It may well be that if the subject matter of the programme had been entirely unrelated to ethnicity, viewer decodings would have been shaped to a lesser extent by ethnicity. On the other hand, viewers were asked questions relating to most scenes in *La Composition Française*, and not all these aspects can be classified as ethnically marked. Viewer decodings of a number of these non-ethnically marked scenes were clearly shaped by ethnicity.
A third, and related limitation of the present project is the fact that the study was based on only one television programme. In view of the point made above, the best option would have been to investigate audience decodings of two very different programmes: one ethnically marked and the other non-ethnically marked. This was considered during the initial stages of the research - the idea being to use both a sample episode of *Fruits et Légumes* and one current affairs programme - but due to the practical difficulties involved in setting up interviews and the limited fieldwork time available, it was decided that the reception analysis should focus on *Fruits et Légumes* alone.

5.3 Contribution to wider fields of research

Notwithstanding the limitations within which the present study was conducted, it can be said that this thesis contributes significantly to two main fields of knowledge: audience reception analysis and ethnic relations in France. This research has, for the first time, brought together these two fields. By focusing on the ways in which both "native" French viewers and people of Maghrebi origin interpreted a television programme, and by setting these readings within the context of their respective experiences, the study has revealed the intricate ways in which ethnicity, gender and generation impinge on the decoding process. In turn, this has shed light on the potential part that FAS-financed television programmes can play in bridging ethnic divisions in France.

Reception analysis is a comparatively new discipline within media research, and the focus on ethnicity in these studies is a very recent phenomenon. The few studies that have set out to explore the influences of ethnicity on the negotiation of televisual meaning have tended to concentrate on ethnic origin to the near exclusion of other factors in subjectivity. Thus, as discussed in chapter 1, Liebes and Katz, in their study of cross-cultural readings of *Dallas*, point out that in all likelihood, variables such as gender, age and educational level would significantly influence
viewer decodings of the programme. Despite this admission, however, their research focuses purely on ethnicity. Similarly, both Hobson's (1982) and Radways's (1984) respective studies investigate only one variable, gender. Buckingham (1987) and Morley (1980) also concentrate on merely one parameter, the former examining the influences of age and the latter, class. Whilst the decision in the present research project to include four variables proved complex to administer, the findings reveal the clear advantages of this methodological approach. On the one hand, the above-mentioned studies could only explore the net influence of one variable on the decoding process, whilst on the other hand, the present study has investigated the ways in which ethnicity interlocks with both gender and generation, shaping viewer decodings in different ways at different moments during the programme.

From the perspective of reception analyses, this micro-study of viewer decodings is particularly fine-grained. Whilst most of the audience studies discussed in chapter 1 are based on group interviews (Morley 1980, Liebes and Katz 1990, Bobo 1995), the decision in the present research to use one-to-one, in-depth interviews, has allowed for a notably detailed analysis of the ways in which respondents perceived and reacted to different aspects of the sample episode. If Hall's encoding/decoding model (1973) had been unquestioningly applied to viewer responses, the complexities of these decodings would, to a great extent, have been lost. However, by evolving Hall's model to include seven decoding types, rather than the three hypothetical reading positions originally proposed by Hall, it was possible to capture the subtleties of viewer responses to the programme. In turn, this allowed for a more sensitive analysis of both the ways in which decodings diverged from preferred meanings, and the extent to which they differed.

Hall's encoding/decoding model (1973) and Morley's application of it to the Nationwide audience (1980) heralded a significant shift in focus from the media text to the audience. This does not imply, however, that reception analyses examine viewer readings of television programmes to the exclusion of the media text. Clearly, to investigate audience perceptions of a programme it is important to analyse encoded
meanings within the given media text. However, most reception studies (such as Bobo's (1995), for example) limit analysis of encoded meanings to the broadcast version of the television programme or film. And yet, as was discussed in chapter 2, many of the encoded meanings within *Fruits et Légumes* could not have been fully revealed through analysis of the media text alone. By examining both the production process of the series and the finished version, a particularly detailed picture was drawn of the preferred meanings structuring *Fruits et Légumes*. In turn, this meant that it was possible to analyse, with a greater degree of certainty, the subtle ways in which readings of the programme diverged from encoded meanings. Clearly, therefore, a reception study - like the present one - which investigates both the production and consumption of a programme, provides a far more complete picture of the communication process than one which limits analysis to the broadcast version of the programme alone.

In terms of the study of ethnicity in France, it is only of late that academics have turned their attentions towards the relationship between the media and minority ethnic groups. Most research conducted in this area focuses on the representation of ethnic minorities, and only very recently have a few studies investigated minority ethnic groups as a constituent part of the television audience in France. Thus, research into ethnic minorities as consumers of television is far from comprehensive. Whilst a small number of studies focusing on programme preferences have been carried out, no research has attempted to explore the ways in which France's ethnically diverse population - both majority and minority ethnic groups - interprets television programmes. And yet the fact that the FAS has an audiovisual policy vis-à-vis France's minority ethnic population is indicative of the notion that television has a role to play in inter-ethnic relations. The present study was, therefore, a first step into exploring how France's multi-ethnic television audience decodes programmes, and in turn, this has gone some way towards shedding light on the extent to which television can help bridge ethnic divisions.
5.4 Directions for future research

In view of the fact that research into the relationship between ethnicity and television consumption in France is a new area of enquiry, there is a need for further research on a number of fronts. Three main directions are identified here.

In terms of investigating the part that television plays in facilitating inter-ethnic understanding, an important future direction should be the study of those programmes that are highly popular with both majority, and minority ethnic viewers. A number of studies, such as Ang’s research on the Dallas audience (1985) and Buckingham’s on young viewers of EastEnders (1987), have focused on why some series are widely watched. Few, however, have investigated the cross-ethnic popularity of certain soap operas, the notable exception being Liebes and Katz’s project (1990). Whilst the present study illuminates the complex influences of ethnicity on viewer interpretations of television programmes, the sitcom used as a basis for the research did not have a large audience. Why, on the other hand, are some programmes so widely watched, and what is their popularity among viewers of different ethnic origins based on? Are there certain elements within these programmes that transcend ethnic divisions? Or, on the contrary, do viewers of different ethnic origins engage with and enjoy different aspects of these programmes? Answers to these questions would provide a further basis for evaluating the extent to which television can encourage a rapprochement between ethnic groups.

A second direction concerns generation. The present research project has taken into account and investigated the influences of generation on the decoding process. The results have shown that generation significantly shaped Maghrebi viewers’ interpretations of, and reactions to the sample episode of Fruits et Légumes. In view of this finding, it would be valuable if further research, of a similar nature to that carried out by Gillespie in the British context (1993, 1995), could be conducted into the ways in which second-generation Maghrebs negotiate and articulate their identity through the viewing of television. How do these young people, who find
themselves at a cultural cross-roads, reconcile the viewing of programmes from the Arab world (on video and satellite) which their parents may choose to watch and which are rooted in their cultural origins, with mainstream French television and its potent mix of French and American programmes? In turn, how does this culturally heterogenous diet of television feed into and mould the "new ethnicity" (Hall 1988) being created by the second-generation?

The question remains, however, of the extent to which television in France can be expected to contribute towards the creation of an ethnically inclusive society as long as the FAS's policy continues to focus on the financing of one-off programmes and series. Research into the representation of minority ethnic groups on French television has highlighted the fact that these groups are rarely seen on the small screen, and that on the few occasions that they are, this is mainly within the context of news and current affairs programmes (Hargreaves and Perotti 1993). Unlike on British television, therefore, where ethnic minorities are visible across a wide range of programmes, France's minority ethnic groups are relegated to being the subjects of (mainly negative) news reports, and they rarely feature in light entertainment programmes. If the FAS does not redirect its audiovisual policy in an attempt to redress the ethnic balance on television, and if programmes such as Fruits et Légumes remain mere dots on France's audiovisual landscape, it would seem unlikely that television can have a significant and positive impact on France's ethnic relations. Perhaps, therefore, a further direction for future research should be a wider investigation and assessment of the FAS's audiovisual policy towards minority ethnic groups in France.

The present research has shown that television does have considerable potential for encouraging inter-ethnic understanding - most "native" French respondents liked members of the Maghrebi family in Fruits et Légumes - but that the communication process is, nevertheless, constrained in important ways by ethnic differences. It would be valuable to extent this work by additional research in the three areas discussed above: popular programmes, the influences of television on the
construction of second-generation identities, and potential changes in public policy relating to this field. This is an ambitious agenda, but bearing in mind the importance of ethnicity-based issues in contemporary French society, it would be well worth pursuing.
ANNEX

Interview questions

Section 1: Questions pertaining to *La Composition Française*

Q1 Avez-vous vu cette émission quand elle est passée à l'antenne il y a quelques mois?

Q2 C'était à propos de quoi, cette émission?

Q3 Est-ce-que dans l'ensemble le programme vous a plu?

Q4 Quelle scène vous a frappée le plus? Pourquoi?

Q5 Y a-t-il eu une scène qui vous a particulièrement plu? Pour quelles raisons?

Q6 Y a-t-il eu une scène que vous n'avez pas du tout aimée? Pourquoi?

Q7 Que pensez-vous de la réaction d'Amar lorsque Yoyo lui présente sa nouvelle copine de classe, Svetlana?

Q8 Qu'est-ce que vous avez pensé de la replique d'Aziz lorsque Yoyo lui demande "qui a été le chef des Francs qui a arrêté les Arabes à Poitier"?

Q9 Dans la scène suivante, lorsque Yoyo et Svetlana prennent leur goûter, Farida demande à son fils, Yoyo, comment va l'école. Que pensez-vous de la réponse de Yoyo et la réaction de Svetlana par rapport à cette réponse?
Q10 Que pensez-vous de la scène où un représentant de charcuteries essaie de vendre ses produits à Amar?

Q11 Que pensez-vous de la raison avancée par le représentant pour avoir perdu son ancien travail et sa femme?

Q12 Le représentant est obligé de faire des affaires avec une seule catégorie d'épicier. Que pensez-vous de ce qu'il dit à ce propos?

Q13 Dans cette scène est-ce que vous vous identifiez/vois vous sentez plus proche avec Amar ou avec le représentant?

Q14 Que pensez-vous de la scène où Zouzou demande à M. Baudoin de l'aider sur le sujet de sa rédaction: "les raisons d'aimer son pays"?

Q15 A propos de Zouzou, elle est française ou algérienne?

Q16 Quand M. Baudoin a dit "moi, je suis français, vous, vous êtes algériens, on est d'accord jusqu'là", Zouzou répond "moi, je suis née en France après 1963. Je suis française". Qu'est-ce que vous avez pensé de ces deux remarques?

Q17 Toujours dans la même scène, que pensez-vous de la réaction d'Amar lorsque Zouzou dit qu'elle est française?

Q18 A un certain moment, Amar explique à Monsieur Baudoin pourquoi beaucoup d'immigrés algériens ne veulent pas avoir la nationalité française. Que pensez-vous de cette explication?
Q19 Au cours de cette scène, Reda, le fils aîné d’Amar arrive. Que pensez-vous de la remarque de Reda selon laquelle les dollars sont le passport universel?

Q20 Quelques minutes après, Reda demande à Aziz et à Amar de lui montrer la direction de la Mecque. Que pensez-vous du fait qu’aucun d’eux ne soit capable de répondre correctement?

Q21 Quelle est votre opinion sur l’affaire que Reda veut monter?

Q22 Qu’avez-vous pensé quand Reda a dit que la seule chose qui lui manquait c’était l’argent?

Q23 Quand Amar dit que Reda veut être le "Tapis Arabe", qu’est-ce que vous avez entendu par ça?

Q24 Que pensez-vous de la scène où Amar cuisine et Aziz lui donne des conseils?

Q25 Que pensez-vous des notes et appréciations que Zouzou et Yoyo ont reçues pour leur devoirs? Est-ce-qu’elles étaient justes?

Q26 Avez-vous aimé Amar? Pour quelles raisons?

Q27 Avez-vous aimé Farida? Pour quelles raisons?

Q28 Avez-vous aimé l’oncle Aziz? Pour quelles raisons?

Q29 Avez-vous aimé Zouzou? Pour quelles raisons?

Q30 Avez-vous aimé Reda? Pour quelles raisons?
Q31 Avez vous aimé Yoyo? Pour quelles raisons?

Q32 Avez vous aimé Monsieur Baudoin? Pour quelles raisons?

Q33 Avez vous aimé le représentant de charcuterie? Pour quelles raisons?

Q34 Y-a-t-il un personnage qui vous a particulièrement plu? Pour quelles raisons?

Q35 Avec quelle personnage est-ce-que vous vous identifiez le plus?

Q36 Que pensez-vous du rapport mari-femme entre Amar et Farida?

Q37 Que pensez-vous du rapport parents-enfants dans la famille Badaoui?

Q38 Comment avez-vous trouvé le comportement de Zouzou envers son père?

Q39 Trouvez-vous que les Badaoui sont une famille typiquement maghrébine vivant en France?

Section 2: Questions regarding respondent's media consumption

Q40 Combien d'heures de télévision regardez-vous par jour?
- jusqu'à 3 heures par jour
- entre 3 et 5 heures par jour
- plus que 5 heures par jour

Q41 Combien de postes de télévision avez-vous à la maison?
Q42 Quels autres types d'appareils audiovisuels avez-vous à la maison?

Q43 Quels genres de programmes aimez-vous regarder à la télévision?

Q44 Quels genres de programmes ne regardez-vous jamais?

Q45 Est-ce qu'il y a des programmes auxquels vous êtes fidèle?

Q46 Regardez-vous la télévision habituellement seul ou en famille?

Q47 Y a-t-il un membre de la famille qui a tendance à choisir les programmes, ou est-ce-que c'est premier arrivé premier servi?

Q48 Est-ce qu'il vous arrive de vous disputer en famille quand il s'agit de choisir les programmes?

Q49 Discutez-vous des programmes que vous avez regardés en famille? Si oui, quels genres de programmes?

Q50 Ces discussions mènent-elles parfois à des disputes en famille à cause des différences d'opinion?

Q51 Discutez-vous sur les programmes avec vos amis? Si oui, quels genres de programmes?

Q52 Regardez-vous la télévision dans des endroits autres que chez vous?

Q53 Est-ce que cela vous arrive de laisser allumé la télévision sans regarder attentivement les programmes?
- jamais
- parfois
- souvent

**Q54** Regardez-vous souvent les informations à la télévision?
- tous les jours
- un jour sur deux
- un jour sur trois
- moins d’un jour sur trois

**Q55** Lisez-vous souvent des journaux, revues, magazines?
- tous les jours
- un jour sur deux
- un jour sur trois
- moins d’un jour sur trois

**Q56** Est-ce-que vous écoutez souvent la radio? Quelles stations?

**Q57** Quel genre de musique aimez-vous et écoutez-vous?

**Q58** Sur lequel de ces trois média - la télévision, la radio et la presse - comptez-vous le plus pour les informations?

**Q59** Avez-vous des sources d’information autres que la télévision, la radio et la presse écrite?

**Q60** Trouvez-vous que vos opinions - politiques ou autres - sont exprimées à la télévision?
Q61 Y a-t-il des opinions qui ne sont pas exprimées? Lesquelles?

Q62 Quelles sont les opinions qu'on entend le plus souvent à la télévision?

Section 3: General background information on respondent

Q63 Où êtes vous né(e)?

Q64 Si vous n'êtes pas né(e) en France, quel âge aviez-vous quand vous êtes venu en France?

Q65 Avez vous la nationalité française?

Q66 Si oui, quand est-ce que vous avez acquis la nationalité française?

Q67 Vous avez le sentiment d'être de quel pays?

Q68 Quel âge avez vous?

Q69 Quel est votre emploi? (si au chômage / à la retraite / mère de famille, quelle est votre formation?)

Q70 Quel niveau d'éducation avez-vous atteint, où espérez-vous atteindre?

Q71 Quelles sont vos croyances religieuses?

Q72 Vous considérez-vous comme une personne religieuse?

Q73 De quelle manière / comment pratiquez vous votre religion?
Q74 Célébrez-vous en famille certaines fêtes religieuses? Lesquelles, et de quelle façon?

Q75 Avez-vous de fortes opinions politiques?

Q76 Etes-vous membre d'un mouvement politique ou et un syndicat? Lesquels?

Q77 Si vous aviez à voter demain, pour quel parti voteriez-vous?

Q78 Quelles questions politiques - nationales et internationales - sont pour vous les plus importantes en ce moment/ dans les années passées?

Q79 Quelle est votre opinion sur l'immigration en France?

Q80 Pensez-vous que l'immigration a été une bonne chose ou une mauvaise chose pour la France?
1.1 Unpublished written sources

1.1.1 Documents written by script writers

"Bibles"

"Bible" for a second series of *Sixième Gauche*, December 1991

"Bible" for *Paradis pour Tous*, July 1993

"Bible" for *Paradis pour Tous*, September 1993

"Bible" for *Fruits et Légumes*, January 1994

Scripts for *Fruits et Légumes*

*Amar, ce Héros*, November 1993 (first version)

*Un Amour de Zouzou*, November 1993 (first version)

*Aziz s'Annonce*, July 1993 (first version), December 1993 (second version), January 1994 (broadcast version)

*Le Chat de Suzanne*, July 1993 (first version), December 1993 (second version)

*La Composition Française*, July 1993 (first version), November 1993 (second version), December 1993 (third version), January 1994 (broadcast version)

*La Déprime de Suzanne*, April 1994 (broadcast version)

*Erreur sue la Personne*, April 1994 (first version)

*Le Fiancé de Marilyn*, July 1993 (first version), December 1993 (second version)

*L'Héritage d'Honoré*, May 1994 (broadcast version)

*Honoré le Vigile*, February 1994 (broadcast version)


*Le Malade Imaginaire*, April 1994 (broadcast version)
L’Ordinateur d’Amar, November 1993 (first version), January 1994 (second version)

La Perle de Tipaza, November 1993 (episode rejected by the FAS)

Petits Boulots et Gros Cabot, March 1994 (second version)

Le Philtre de Bamako, February 1994 (broadcast version)

Le Q.I. de Yoyo, November 1993 (first version)

La Quinzaine Africaine, November 1993 (first version), January 1994 (second version), April 1994 (broadcast version)

La Super-Coupe, April 1994 (broadcast version)

Télé Junior, April 1994 (broadcast version)

Toto l’Aristo, April 1994 (broadcast version)

Tout est Permis, July 1993 (first version), December 1993 (second version), January 1994 (broadcast version)

La Vidéo de Yoyo, November 1993 (first version)

Week-End à Enghien, November 1993 (first and final version)

Yoyo Dépouillé, January 1994 (second version), March 1994 (broadcast version)

1.1.2 Cinétévé documents

Dossier de présentation for Fruits et Légumes, July 1994

Financial break-down of Paradis pour Tous from Cinétévé to FAS, 29.9.93

Note d’intention from Cinétévé to FAS, Paradis pour Tous, 1991

1.1.3 FAS documents

Letter from FAS to Cinétévé, 7.10.93

Letter from FAS to Cinétévé, 17.3.94

1.1.4 Documents written by script editor

Letter from Bruno Fourcade to Fabienne Servan-Schreiber, 16.12.93
Notes written by Bruno Fourcade in the margins of the first and second versions of the scripts for *Fruits et Légumes*.

1.1.5 Médiamétrie documents

Audience ratings for *Fruits et Légumes*, 2.9.94

1.2 Video recordings

*La Famille Ramdam*, 40 episodes broadcast on M6 from October 1990 to July 1991

*Mister mon fils*, episode 1

*Fruits et Légumes*, 26 episodes broadcast on France 3 from 25.7.94

*Amar ce Héros*, episode 4

*Un Amour de Zouzou*, episode 17

*Aziz s'Annonce*, episode 8

*Le Chat de Suzanne*, episode 3

*La Composition Française*, episode 2

*Déjeuner chez Amar's*, episode 26

*La Déprime de Suzanne*, episode 25

*Erreur sur la personne*, episode 5

*Farida se Rebiffe*, episode 7

*Le Fiancé de Marilyn*, episode 24

*L'Héritage d' Honoré*, episode 20

*Honore le vigile*, episode 15

*Les Loulous de Zouzou*, episode 1

*Le Malade Imaginaire*, episode 21

*L'Ordinateur d'Amar*, episode 6

*Petits Boulots et Gros Cabot*, episode 18

*Le Philtre de Bamako*, episode 22

*Le Q.I. de Yoyo*, episode 14
1.3 Interviews with production partners

Barruel, Jean-François & Herro, Christiane, Paris, 16.12.93
Barruel, Jean-François, Paris, 13.5.94
Barruel, Jean-François, Paris, 24.4.97
Fansten, Sylvie, Paris, 9.5.94
Fourcade, Bruno, Paris, 9.1.94
Servan-Schreiber, Fabienne, Paris, 12.6.92
Servan-Schreiber, Fabienne, Paris, 6.1.94
Tadjer, Akli, Paris, 24.4.97
Turenne, Henri de, Paris, 24.4.97
Turenne, Henri de & Tadjer, Akli, Paris, 7.1.94
Turenne, Henri de & Tadjer, Akli, Paris, 11.4.94

1.4 Interviews with programme viewers

1.4.1 Pilot interviews

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1.4.2 Main survey interviews

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For ease of reference, in the main body of the thesis the following abbreviations are used. The first figure indicates the number of the respondent (as shown in the table above). Letters are used to indicate the ethnic origin of each viewer:

A - "native" French
B - Maghrebi origin
C - sub-Saharan/Central African origin

Letters are also used to identify the gender of each viewer: the letter "M" refers to male respondents and the letter "F" to female viewers. Letters are used to indicate the educational level of each respondent, with the letter "H" indicating those with a higher (university) level of education, and "L", those with a lower (less than baccalauréat) level of education. The final number indicates the age of the viewer. For example, viewer 49 (the last entry in the table above) would be identified as follows: 49.C.F.H.18. Respondent number 43 would be given the following identity code: 43.B.F.L.37.

2 PUBLISHED SOURCES

2.1 Books, journals, conference papers, reports and theses
Allouche, A. (1994) "Les Modes de lecture de la presse quotidienne par les immigrés", in Migrants-Formation, no. 96, March, pp. 84–90.


*Babylone* (1989) nos 6-7, November, special issue: "L'Immigration à l'Université et dans la recherche"

Battegay, A. "La médiatisation de l'immigration dans la France des années 80" in *Les annales de la recherche urbaine* no.57-58 December 1992 PAGES ???


Bocard, B. (25.7.94) "Les Fruits édulcorés des Badaoui" in Libération.
Champagne, P. (1991) "La construction médiatique des 'malaises sociaux'”, in Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales, 90, December, pp. 64–75.
CinémAction (1990), no. 56, special issue: "Cinémas métis de Hollywood aux films beurs"


Eco, U. (1972) "Towards a semiotic enquiry into the television message", in *Working papers in cultural studies*, 3.


— "Comme Nous" in *Le Monde*, 31.7.94.


Migrants-Formation (1990), hors série, October, special issue: "Images des immigrations"


London: SAGE.


Ms cope (1993), no. 4, April, special issue: "Images de l'immigration dans les médias"


2.2 Newspaper and news magazine articles

Centre Presse, "Fruits et Légumes: des beurs dans les épinards", 3.8.94

L'Express, "Télémanie", 30.6.94.

L'Express, "Salade de saison", 21.7.94.

Famille Chrétienne, "Fruits et Légumes", 21.7.94.

Le Figaro, "Avec les meilleures intentions", 25.7.94.

Le Figaro TV magazine, "Fruits et Légumes: beur sur la ville", 23-29.7.94.

France-soir, "Immigration: le feuilleton sourire", 26.7.94.

L'Humanité, "Au bon beur", 21.7.94.

InfoMatin, "Avec 'Fruits et Légumes', France 3 relance le sitcom beur", 26.7.94
La Montagne, "Fruits et Légumes: des beurs dans les épinards", 4.8.94.


Le Parisien, "Nadia Samir fait son cinéma", 25.7.94.

Pélérin Magazine, "Fruits et Légumes", 22.7.94.

Pélérin Magazine, "Fruits et Légumes", 29.7.94.

Le Point, "La famille Badaoui", 23.7.94.

Télé Journal, "Epicerie sur la 3", 23-29.7.94.

Télé Loisirs, "Fruits et Légumes: l'épicerie des Badaoui est ouverte tout l'été", 23-29.7.94.

Télé Magazine, "Nadia Samir rêve de jouer Racine", 30.7.94 - 5.8.94.

Télé Magazine Poche, "Fruits et Légumes' primeurs à l'aventure", 23-29.7.94.

Télé Moustique, "Grands problèmes en petites séries...", 5-11.8.94.

Télé Pro, "Les aventures des Badaoui", 21.7.94.

Télérama, "B comme banlieue" in no. 2304, 9.3.94.

Télé 7 Jours, "Fruits et Légumes' avec Nadia Samir", 20.5.94.

Télé 7 Jours, "Moustéfa Stiti instit comme Macias", 23-29.7.94.

Télé Top Matin, "Nadia Samir en série", 15-21.5.94

TV Hébdo, "France 3, un carnet bien rempli", 6.7.94.

TV Hébdo, "La femme de l'épiciers", 23-29.7.94.

La Voix du Nord, "Primeurs", 28.4.98