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Identity Checks and Youthful Parisians Analysis of the Paris Section of the 2010 ESCAPAD Survey

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Introduction

Identity checks are one of the most controversial types of police action, since the law leaves officers considerable discretion as to how to carry them out. The police forces are therefore frequently suspected of using this legal provision for harassment purposes or in ways that are discriminatory toward some particular population groups, so that many recommendations have been formulated in recent years as to the need to modify these practices, and how to do so, in order to dispel suspicion.

The study that follows lies within the framework of these debates, since it aims at specifying who are those individuals checked by the police, on the basis of the data collected on young Parisians aged 17-18¹ during a one-day military preparation program, the *Journée d'appel à la préparation à la défense* or *JAPD*, subsequently dubbed the *Journée défense et citoyenneté*, *JDC* (National defense and citizenship day) (ESCAPAD survey, OFDT). The study is the outcome of collaboration between the Observatoire Français des Drogues et des Toxicomanies and the CESDIP.

State of the art

Two types of quantitative surveys on identity checks are available in France. The first observes police practice, but only one systematic survey of these has been done so far². The second consists in sample surveys asking individuals whether their identity had been checked over the previous one or two years. The latter method was chosen, in particular, for the survey recently conducted by Nicolas Jounin, and which has yielded invaluable information, as we shall see, on the links between checks, appearance, and life style³.

¹The average age was 17.2, which is to say that the majority were aged 17 (81%), and the remainder 18 (19%).

²See F. Jobard, R. Lévy, J. Lamberth, S. Névanen, Measuring Appearance-Based Discrimination: an Analysis of Identity Checks in Paris, *Population*, 67, 3, 2012, pp. 349-375 and F. Jobard, R. Lévy, Identity Checks in Paris, *Penal Issues*, 2010, 23 (1).

³N. Jounin et al, Le faciès du contrôle. Contrôles d'identité, apparence et modes de vie des étudiant(e)s en Ile-de-France. *Déviance et Société*, 2015, 39, 1, 3-29.

Methodology

ESCAPAD⁴ is a permanent scientific observation scheme set up by the OFDT in 2000 for the purpose of providing a snapshot, at regular intervals, of the consumption of psychoactive substances by adolescents. The survey takes place during the JDC, in partnership with the military service department. It focuses on health, use of drugs and life styles, and is representative of adolescents aged 17 to 18.

In 2010, the city of Paris funded a version of the ESCAPAD survey confined to Paris. Between October 5 and December 4, 2010, a group of 5,432 youths from the Paris region with an average age of 17, only 2,165 of whom lived within Paris proper, were questioned in the Paris military recruitment centres. Only 169 youths from the Parisian group did not answer the question “were you subjected to an identity check by the police over the last 12 months?” They were eliminated from the analysis, which is therefore based on a sample of 1,996 Parisian adolescents⁵.

Typology of Paris neighbourhoods

One objective of the study was to update the analysis of the habits and behaviour of Parisian adolescents according to their area of residence, as investigated in previous studies⁶. In 2010, however, in order to make the definition of neighbourhoods more coherent and to take possible internal disparities of any given *arrondissement* into account more accurately, the youths called up were asked to specify not only the *arrondissement* in which they lived, but also the neighbourhood (using a map printed on the back of the questionnaire) and the subway station closest to their home.

A second phase used exogenous data pertaining to the 80 Paris neighbourhoods, provided by the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies and the CAF (*Caisse d'Allocations Familiales*, the Family Benefits Bureau), to establish a typology aimed at defining homogeneous geographic sectors with respect to the various predefined characteristics. The latter revolved around three main groups of characteristics: socio-demographic, economic and housing

⁴See: <http://www.ofdt.fr/publications/collections/periodiques/lettretendances/les-drogues-17-ans-analyse-de-lenquete-escapad-2014-tendances-100-mai-2015/>

⁵This final sample is nonetheless representative of the adolescent population of Paris.

⁶See F. Beck, S. Legleye, S. Spilka, *Les consommations de drogues à la fin de l'adolescence à Paris, Tendances*, 46, Janvier 2006, OFDT, Saint-Denis.

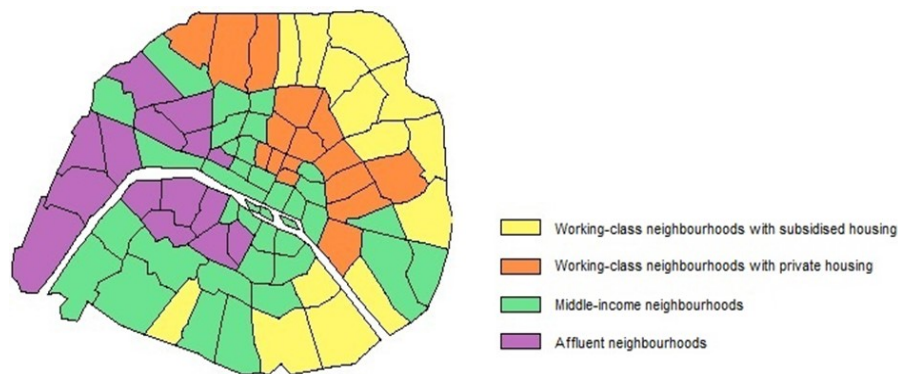


Chart 1
Typology of Paris neighbourhoods

Paris proper was found to be subdivided into four broad sectors (chart 1). Areas in yellow show working-class neighbourhoods with subsidized housing in the peripheral parts of the city; in orange, working-class neighbourhoods with primarily private housing; in green, middle-income neighbourhoods and in purple the affluent areas in western Paris. These four geographic sectors, used in previous studies⁷, were brought into play again here, so as to shed specific light on the survey data.

The survey analysed here used the latter approach, and aimed, moreover, at determining what variables turn out to be most frequently correlated with reported identity checks.

Frequency of checks among Parisian boys and girls

28% of young Parisians aged 17 to 18 claim to have been subjected to an identity check during the past year (see chart 2)⁸. This proportion is the same as that measured in the 2008 ESCAPAD survey covering the entire country⁹.

This fourth of Parisian youths checked over the past year obviously conceals sometimes quite considerable disparities between subgroups, one of the greatest pertaining to gender. Indeed, 14% of girls reported being stopped for a check, as opposed to 41% of boys (more on this later).

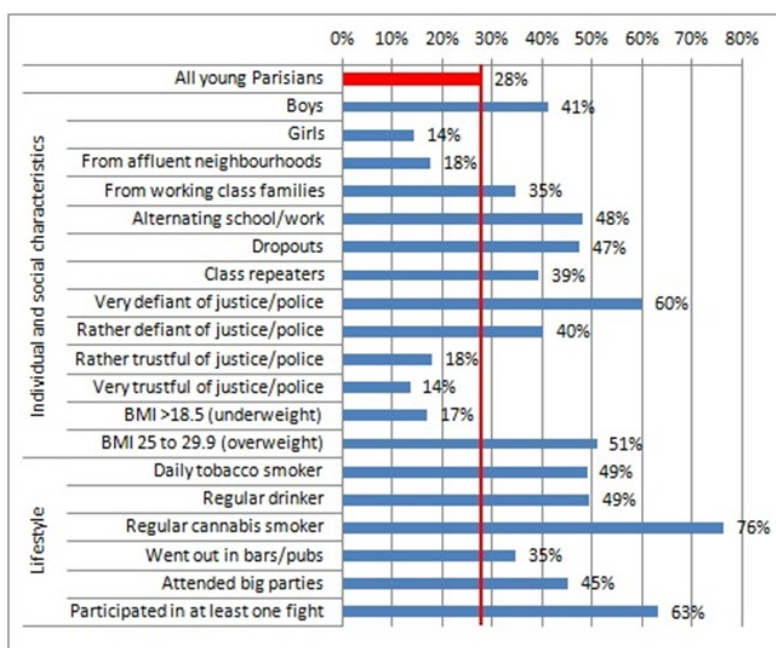
In addition, 16% of this population responded positively to the following question: “during the last 12 months, were you given a body search for cannabis by the police in a public place?” The contrast between boys and girls is proportionately greater in this case, since 7% of girls and 26% of boys underwent this sort of check.

Main categories of youths given checks

Most social and health indicators, taken singly, are particularly strongly correlated with the probability of an identity check. With the exception of the difference between boys and girls (whose numbers are equally distributed among young Parisians) and that affecting smokers (31% of young Parisians) – two groups checked almost twice as often as the entire population – the subgroups of youths reporting over-average numbers of checks usually represent small fractions of the overall population.

What defines those small fractions of the juvenile population who are significantly more or less often stopped than the average? Youths from the “affluent sector” (in purple on chart 1), not very numerous to begin with (14% of the juvenile population) experience significantly fewer identity checks: 18% of them as opposed to 28% for young Parisians as a whole. Conversely, youths in apprenticeship, in alternating school/work programs (5% of youths) or dropouts (4%) are checked about 1.5 times as often, as are class repeaters (28%). Youths whose body mass index¹⁰ defines them as “underweight” (i.e., under 18.5) are checked nearly two times less than the overall group, whereas those who are “overweight” (25<BMI<30 – 5% of young Parisians) are checked over twice as often. Indicators of sociability and utilisation of public places also play a role, as shown by the survey headed by Nicolas Jounin: coming out of a bar or leaving a

Chart 2: One identity check at least during the past year
Proportion of identity checks, according to various characteristics of the Paris population aged 17-18.



Source ESCAPAD 2010

Reading the chart: 41% of boys have been subjected to checks, vs 28% of all young Parisians; all differences presented are significant

“big party” (that is, a crowded place – 20% of Parisian youths) increases the probability of an identity check.

Other indicators examined in the survey turned out to be closely correlated with checks, since they characterise groups who report checks over twice as often as the overall population. They are connected with extremely small subgroups. Above all, they pertain to the population of regular consumers of cannabis (7%). Three-fourths of these claim to have been stopped, a proportion three times higher than for youthful Parisians as a whole. Regular drinkers (12%) are also checked more often, but the proportion is closer to the double of the overall population than to the triple. Having participated in a fight¹¹ (17%) is also linked to a rate of identity checks more than twice that of the overall population. Last, “not trusting the police and/or the justice system at all” (12%) is tied to twice as many identity checks as the overall population, and conversely, having “complete trust in the police and/or the justice system” (10%) entails half as many identity checks.

What multivariate analysis tells us

This initial description of the factors linked to identity checks examines variables independently of each other. It is important, consequently, to conduct multivariate analysis, the only method capable of taking all of the variables into account simultaneously,

⁷ See *Rapport d'étude, Avoir 17 ans à Paris, une exploitation des résultats de l'enquête ESCAPAD Paris 2010, Atelier parisien d'urbanisme (APUR)*, June 2013, Paris

⁸ All of the deviations mentioned in this paragraph are significant at 0.01%.

⁹ According to the analysis by Sophie Névenan of the 2008 survey of 50,000 youths called in for the JAPD, in F. Jobard et al, op. cit., p. 352

¹⁰ The BMI provides a figure used to estimate physique, based on the person's weight and height (BMI = mass/height²).

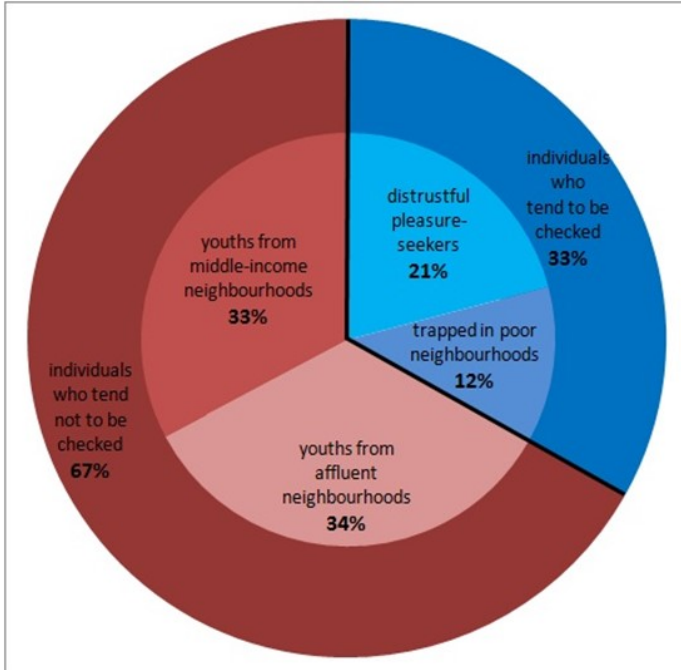
¹¹ The question is put as follows : « During the past 12 months, did you ever participate in a fight in a public place (street, transportation, park, or other) ? »

along with their possible influence on each other, thus evidencing those groups of individuals, given checks or not, who share a series of characteristics.

On the basis of the findings provided by multiple correspondence analysis (MCA), we have constructed a typology of individuals via a hierarchical cluster analysis method, which arranges people in groups as homogeneous as possible according to their resemblances. Each group has an average profile, based on those characteristics most shared by members of the group. This draws up a clearer overall picture of different individual profiles. This analysis uncovers four profiles, two of which are characteristic of young Parisians experiencing identity checks and two covering those young Parisians who, conversely, are not given checks

Chart 3

Hierarchical cluster analysis. Distribution of groups of youths .



Example of reading: 67% of young Parisians report a below-average number of identity checks. They may be divided into two groups: 33% are primarily characterised by an above-average percentage of residents of middle-income neighbourhoods, whereas 34% live in affluent neighbourhoods.

(chart 3).

a – Profiles associated with identity checks

Among young Parisians, two groups show significantly above-average rates for identity checks. While most members of these groups definitely do attend some school, they tend more to have been 1 class repeaters, and are also nearly twice as often in apprenticeship or in alternating school/work programmes in comparison with the rates observed for the youthful population at large. This explains why an above-average proportion of these youths report having received more than 100 euros (wages, compensation or spending money) during the past month. The two groups differ with respect to frequency of going out, but both are characterised by less parental supervision, especially for their evening outings. In addition, those who get into fights and youths who have already threatened or aggressed someone are overrepresented here and more than half do not trust the justice system and/or the police. A last noteworthy shared feature is that the two groups given identity checks contain a higher than expected proportion of youths who judge their health not very or even not at all satisfactory.

The first group defined by multivariate analysis includes young people we have dubbed “distrustful pleasure-seekers” (21% of the sample). They are subjected to identity

checks in public places twice as often as the average. Most are male (60% of the group) with male friends (6 or more) and almost all (99%) claim to go out at least once a week, and to go to all sorts of places. Be this as it may, the place they go to is unknown to their parents more often than the average, the same being true for their associates on those outings. Moreover, members of this group have under-average primary concern with their family, and are more interested in their friends. These youths live in relatively well-to-do parts of Paris, they like their neighbourhood and are proud of it. Slightly over two out of three have parents who are in management or in the intermediate professions. Although consumption of every kind of legal and illegal substance is over-represented here, the majority of youths in this group are mostly heavy smokers (77% smoke every day), with alcohol and cannabis only consumed on a regular basis by 33% and 25% of individuals, respectively (as against 12% and 6% for this population as a whole). Half of the group does claim to have taken drugs other than cannabis, however. As opposed to the other groups, and especially to the other identity-checked group, victims of threats and violence are also over-represented.

The second group is more moderately associated with checks, but still 1.6 times the average. It includes individuals whose characteristics are often the opposite of those of the “distrustful pleasure-seekers”, so that we have called them “trapped in poor neighbourhoods” (12% of youthful Parisians). Indeed, the majority, an above-average number of them (74% versus 43%) live in the working-class neighbourhoods of the capital (in yellow and orange on chart 1). Neighbourhoods they describe as very poor (51%), with a bad or very bad reputation (61%) where drugs circulate (75%), where there is crime (67%) and where they say the police do many identity checks on young people (52% versus 12%). Consequently, an above-average number are not proud of their neighbourhood (20% vs. 9%) and spend very little time there (28% vs. 21%). Boys are always over-represented (49% vs. 43%). Friendships are more frequently with girls (43%), but a particularly salient fact is the over-representation of individuals who claim not to have any close friend – 5%, which is 6 times the average figure (0.8% of the overall group). This characteristic is not found in any other group. When they do have friends, they are usually few in number, with an over-representation of youths claiming to have only 1 to 5 close friends (25%). It is not surprising, then, that these are the youths who go out the least frequently. Only a slim majority claims to go out at least once a week (54% as against an average of 83%), usually with comrades known to their parents (64%). As opposed to the other over-frequently checked youths, the family (44%) followed by health (13%) are more often than the average the most important elements in the life of these young people. The vast majority of them do not drink (88%) or smoke cannabis¹² (95%), in proportions close to those of the overall group. Whereas one would expect that these youths would have a rather healthy way of life, given the above-mentioned claims about consumer habits, this group also contains an over-representation of youths who are overweight (10% as against an average of 5%), or even obese (3% as against 1%).

In conclusion, young Parisians who are subjected to identity checks more than the average, who represent one third of the entire group of youths, are divided into two highly contrasting sub-groups: the “distrustful pleasure-seekers”, for whom life seems easy and promising, but who often have a distrustful attitude toward the police and aggressive behaviour toward others; and those “trapped in poor neighbourhoods”, who are much more pessimistic about their every-day life and tend more to be loners.

b – Profiles associated with no identity checks

Two-thirds of youths are significantly less checked than the average. These young people belong to two groups that have a number of points in common, on the whole, but are separated pri-

¹² For this group, use of cannabis ranged from none at all to less than 10 times per month.

marily by their place of residence. Most are girls, whose close friends are also girls. In approximately four out of five cases the individuals in these groups never repeated a class at school, and almost all are high school or university students. For the majority, income (usually spending money) does not exceed 100 euros. On the whole, they tend to be proud or very proud of their neighbourhood and are not particularly distrustful of the police or justice system. Actually, not only have most of them never undergone an identity check, but a vast majority has never had any trouble such as fights, threats or violence that might have put them into contact with the police. They do not smoke much, to begin with (eight to nine out of ten say they smoke less than once a week, or not at all), they consume even less alcohol, and practically none are regular consumers of cannabis (less than 1%). Responses are more varied where other drugs are concerned, but slightly over half claim no use of other drugs. Under these conditions, it is not surprising that a majority of these youths judge their state of health satisfactory. At least four out of five say they go out at least once a week, in spite of a slight over-representation of youths from middle-income neighbourhoods who claim to go out less often (19% as against an average of 12%). In the second group, those living in the most affluent neighbourhoods (purple on chart 1), a slightly over average number goes to cafés, bars or pubs on a weekly basis, but on the whole they are not very fond of those outings or of “big parties”. It seems that individuals who tend less to be subjected to identity checks than the average differ from those more often checked by the places they frequent. In any case, outings seem to be closely monitored by parents here, since the majority know where their children are going and what friends they are with.

The two groups associated with no checks differ on several other points as well. First of all, the milieu in which they live. On the one hand, we have an over-average number of youths from Paris’ working-class neighbourhoods (yellow and orange on chart 1), whereas 88% of youths in the other group live in middle-income neighbourhoods (green on chart 1) or in the affluent western Parisian neighbourhoods (purple on chart 1). Nor is the family setting the same. An over-average number of youths from the well-to-do areas live with their two parents, at least one of whom works in a managerial position or in an intermediate profession. Conversely, among the youths from working-class neighbourhoods single-parent families and homes in which the highest occupational/socio-professional category (PCS) is employee, blue-collar, or no profession are over-represented. An over-average number of the former (affluent neighbourhoods) report having

Chart 4

The six descriptive categories most characteristic of identity-checked and non-checked youths



Reading the chart:

Participants in at least one fight represent 15% of the total population of youths questioned (average rate), but 36% of those identity-checked had already participated in a fight (% of those checked). Conversely, 85% of the overall population had never participated in a fight (average rate) and 92% of the non-checked were in that category (% among the non-checked).

¹³ In all, 54 modalities of the variables significantly describe the identity-checked group and 39 the non-checked group. The six variables that best characterize both groups are shown here.

¹⁴ This term does not designate a type of personality, but rather a statistical reality. These are respondents who had participated in at least one fight during the previous year.

over 15 close friends and the majority have more than 6 friends. In three-fourths of cases they go out in the evening. The majority of the other group claim to have 1 to 10 close friends, with an over-representation of those reporting from 1 to 5 friends. A more than average number do not go out in the evening. The majority of individuals in both groups had a normal BMI.

We now know that our population of young Parisians is divided into four main groups with respect to their reported identity checks. Individuals belonging to two of these groups are more often given checks than the overall population, whereas the other two groups tend, conversely, not to be checked.

Analysis of the most discriminant factors

In an attempt to clarify what distinguishes the minority of individuals given identity checks from the majority of those who are not checked, we have identified those features that best discriminate between these two groups¹³. These variables are: participation (or non-participation) in a fight, gender, “great trust” or “none at all” in the police and justice system, perception of identity checks as “quite” frequent (or not) for youths in their neighbourhood, regular use (at least 10 times per month) or not of cannabis, the fact of having (or never having) committed an assault. Chart 4, below, details these six factors for the two groups, identity-checked and not checked.

One group more prone to identity checks: the “fighters”¹⁴

One factor, specific to the ESCAPAD survey in that it is not found in any other survey, seems to be decisive in reporting an identity check: participation in at least one fighting. Almost all of the non-identity-checked individuals had never participated in a fighting (92%) and conversely, almost two thirds of fighters had been given a check (62%).

One wonders whether the greater tendency of fighters to be checked is a mechanical phenomenon – fights draw the attention of the police, whence a greater proportion of identity checks – or whether fighters are given more checks because of some specific features, independently of whether a fight was going on. The identification of some essential characteristics of individuals in this group may provide a partial response to this question.

If we take the most discriminating indicators (those 2.5 times as frequent as in the population at large), these fighters both commit and are victims of violence and they utter threats. They have already used 3 to 5 drugs (other than cannabis) more often

than young Parisians as a whole, are very defiant of the police and/or justice system, and go out to a nightspot on a weekly basis. These fighters are among those Parisian youths who are more than usually dropouts or in apprenticeship or alternating school/work programmes, who go out more often than their peers and generally speaking, spend more time away from home, use drugs more often than their peers (and especially, more cannabis), are more distrustful of institutions and live in neglected neighbourhoods more often than other youths. Thus, the fighters count a number of characteristics that make them more visible to the police.

Conclusion

The comparative advantage of the ESCAPAD survey with respect to all other studies available up to now is that it addresses a very strictly defined group (young Parisians called up for a military defence day), and asks them a series of questions that are rarely raised in surveys: those pertaining to sociability, to practices in public places and festive events, to health, with special emphasis on use of drugs, legal and illegal. Thus, the ESCAPAD survey is reminiscent of early studies on the link, among youths, between victimization and life style, as well as of the 2012 study by Nicolas Jounin and his team, conducted according to a comparable method (self-administered questionnaire survey) on a comparable population (students representative of the Paris region students) with the same focuses (in terms of use of public places, in particular). Jounin's survey introduced a broad range of indicators of bodily appearance (piercings, hood, sports shoes, etc.), which are lacking in the ESCAPAD survey, aside from the indicator of body mass (which plays an important role for youths termed "under-" or "overweight"). The ESCAPAD survey introduced one original question, the one on fights, which turned out to be the most discriminating one for youths reporting an identity check or lack of such. It must be kept in mind, however, that ESCAPAD does not consider some variables whose importance is otherwise well known, such as skin colour or family history of immigration.

The main findings of this survey are varied. First of all, ESCAPAD shows the high frequency of police identity checks of youths (one fourth of young Parisians). Two variables well distributed among the population of young Parisians are related to checks: being male and drinking. Other variables were found to be closely linked to checks, including frequent use of cannabis, the fact of being a school dropout, in apprenticeship or in an alternating school/work programme, of not trusting the police and/or the justice system at all and above all, participation in fights. These features, which are usually not mentioned in surveys (except for status with respect to schooling) lead to the identification of a small group of youths who are far more exposed to identity-checks by the police than their peers. These findings indicate that identity checks by the Paris police are mostly aimed at youths who are defined by a whole series of characteristics that are not only social but above all behavioural, school-related and linked to certain urban spaces, which over-expose them to attention from the police.

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¹⁵ See the 3 volumes (published in 1987-1988) by Hughes Lagrange and Sébastien Roché, *Baby Alone in Babylone*.