Immigration or Ethnic Diversity?: Racism and cultural tolerance in modern French society

Tara Lane
College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University

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Immigration or Ethnic Diversity?

Racism and cultural tolerance in modern French society

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Tara G. Lane

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Immigration or Ethnic Diversity?
Racism and cultural tolerance in modern French society

Approved by:

Amy F. Bevers
Professor of Political Science

Camille Hime
Assistant Professor of French

Elsbeth Backlund
Associate Professor of Economics

Manju Panth
Chair, Department of Political Science

Director, Honors Thesis Program

Director, Honors Program
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Introduction

When the topic of immigration in France is discussed, it is not in reference to the specific number of legal immigrants residing in France today. It does not even include all those legally defined as immigrants. France’s immigration program came to an end in 1974, and since that time the flow of immigrants has been greatly restricted. Although illegal immigration continues, researchers contend that this flow is negligible. If it is not the official flow of foreigners across French borders, then what is the focus of discussion?

A French person who speaks of immigration is speaking about the large population of Arabs and West Africans who have migrated to France over the last 20-30 years, the majority of whom are legal citizens. At issue are the problems surrounding the integration of millions of people who are of a different race, religion, and culture into a society which does not accept difference. The problems are myriad and the solutions are endlessly debated. Why does immigration continue to exist despite attempts at regulation and general public opposition? The economics of immigration must also be considered in examining immigration policy. What caused immigration to move from an economic and labor question to a debate over citizenship, nationality and political participation within a span of fifteen years?

Immigration has moved to the heart of political, social, and economic debate in France. Why is immigration such a focal point in France today in the 1990s, more than twenty years after the official end to immigration? It involves some of the most basic ideals of French society; the principles that were set forth at the time of the French Revolution in 1789: unity of cultural and political values as well as a very strong sense of national identity and shared history. Issues of human rights, equality before the law,
religious freedom, and the right to asylum are being challenged and redefined as well. Recent legislation such as the “Debré Law” has taken on racist undertones encouraged by the extreme-right political group, the Front National. Each successive law further endangers the safety and security of both legal and illegal immigrants, extending even to French citizens who appear foreign (read “Arab”).

What is at the root of this xenophobic outbreak in France and the growing success of the Front National? While we ponder this question, French society becomes increasingly polarized over the issue of immigration. Anti-racist groups composed of “foreigners” and French citizens have formed in reaction to the harsh legislative action of recent years and the racist rhetoric of Jean Marie Le Pen, President and founder of the extreme-right political party, the Front National. Le Pen attributes all of society’s problems to the immigrant. The solution, he declares, is to send them all home. The need for economic reform of the social welfare system and accompanying high unemployment make Le Pen’s simplistic solutions extremely appealing to those suffering economic difficulties.

As Le Pen rests poised to expand the legislative influence of the Front National, France must decide its path. It can either continue down the dangerous path of discrimination and racism which is eating away at the very foundations of French society, or it must reevaluate its recent choices. If the French choose to accept immigrants into their society, they must adapt the values of acceptance and unity of their ancestors to the situation of extreme diversity in the French nation today. Forcing assimilation, while denying true inclusion in society will only result in a backlash of the immigrant population. If the French choose to follow Le Pen, they will most certainly alienate the
3.5 million strong foreign population in France, perhaps beyond repair. The benefits are less certain, although one cannot doubt that such a policy of discrimination and racism can only lead to the deterioration of the social fabric, and not to any future amelioration of a problem which will not simply disappear.
Part I:

Theories of Immigration

Immigrant Stocks and Flows

Immigration can be discussed in terms of either stocks or flows. A stock is the existing number of immigrants in a country. It can be very difficult to measure due to the variety of ways in which an immigrant enters and the different status each is accorded. Stocks not only change due to an increase in immigration or departure, but also must take into consideration the number of immigrants who are naturalized as citizens each year and who can therefore no longer be counted as a part of the immigrant stock. Flows, on the other hand, are calculated as the number of foreigners who enter the country for a specific duration, as well as the number of immigrants who have been living in the country and decide to move away. Yearly statistics are recorded by immigration agencies and other government offices (for instance those which handle asylum-seekers) and are accurate only for official immigration procedures. Illegal or clandestine immigrants may represent a sizable portion of immigrant flows and stocks, but are nearly impossible to calculate with any accuracy.

The group of people that is the subject of this paper includes stocks and flows, both real and, more importantly, perceived, of immigrants. It is not just any immigrant that is implicit in the discussion, but specifically immigrants from North and sub-Saharan Africa as well as their offspring, regardless of citizenship. Thus it is immediately evident
that the term “immigration” is a misnomer, rather it is an issue of “foreigners” and the cultural tensions caused by a large foreign population.

**Categories of Immigrants**

Immigration can be split into many different categories based on the motivation of the immigrant and in relation to the role he or she will play in the receiving country. *Labor migration* forms the largest percentage of immigration and will be the main focus of this paper. The majority of immigration to France comes from the poverty-stricken countries of North and West Africa, and Asia. *Seasonal Workers* are imported into France each year to work in agriculture. The transport of these workers is well-organized and the majority return home once the seasonal work is completed. *Political and economic refugees* occupy another category. The following definition is paraphrased from the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (1968): “Refugees or persons who leave their own country because of well-founded fear of persecution by reasons of race, religion, nationality, political association, or social grouping” (Böhning 28).

The requirements to gain refugee status in France have become more stringent as the number of asylum-seekers has increased. This increase in numbers can be attributed to the decrease in other options for entry as countries have tightened immigration policies. Only by proving a desperate need to emigrate will a candidate be approved. *Economic refugees*, on the other hand, are motivated by the desire to earn higher wages and improve their economic situation. Most countries severely limit the numbers of economic refugees that are allowed entry on the premise that they do not face a tangible threat to their freedom in their home country. This definition is questionable, as
economic troubles often do represent a direct threat to survival which will be discussed later in this paper.

*Family reunification* is a more secondary form of immigration. It is the process by which an immigrant who has left his family at home, requests that they come and live in France. There are special conditions the immigrant must meet for this process, which have evolved over time to include a minimum level of income, and proof of sufficient housing. Attempts to restrict this channel have been vehemently opposed by immigrants and left-wing political groups.

France's status as a former colonial power makes it difficult to restrict immigration from former French colonies, leading to some level of immigration from these countries each year. Negotiations have occurred periodically between France and the sending country governments to set limitations on immigration, but unilateral action on the part of France has proved unfeasible and is often overturned as the result of strong protest from foreign governments.

**Table 1:**
**Immigration in France, 1946-1990**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Permanent Workers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Annual Rate</td>
<td>325,200</td>
<td>1,205,900</td>
<td>801,300</td>
<td>192,900</td>
<td>195,100</td>
<td>50,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total for Period</td>
<td>48.94%</td>
<td>44.06%</td>
<td>39.16%</td>
<td>13.77%</td>
<td>17.42%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Seasonal Workers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Annual Rate</td>
<td>247,600</td>
<td>1,126,900</td>
<td>821,900</td>
<td>857,300</td>
<td>664,200</td>
<td>190,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total for Period</td>
<td>37.26%</td>
<td>41.17%</td>
<td>40.16%</td>
<td>61.18%</td>
<td>59.30%</td>
<td>55.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family Members</strong></td>
<td>91,700</td>
<td>404,200</td>
<td>423,200</td>
<td>351,000</td>
<td>260,600</td>
<td>100,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Annual Rate</td>
<td>9,200</td>
<td>36,700</td>
<td>70,500</td>
<td>50,100</td>
<td>37,200</td>
<td>33,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total for Period</td>
<td>13.80%</td>
<td>14.77%</td>
<td>20.68%</td>
<td>25.05%</td>
<td>23.27%</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>664,400</td>
<td>2,737,100</td>
<td>2,046,500</td>
<td>1,401,200</td>
<td>1,120,000</td>
<td>342,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Annual Rate</td>
<td>66,400</td>
<td>248,800</td>
<td>341,100</td>
<td>200,200</td>
<td>160,000</td>
<td>114,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total for Period</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source:* Office des Migrations Internationales (OMI) quoted in (Hollifield Global)
As you can see from Table 1, the average annual rate of immigration has been steadily decreasing since 1974, when immigration was officially closed. However, the end to official immigration did not prevent all immigration, although the number of permanent workers admitted has decreased dramatically. Governments cannot completely prevent some immigration, because many factors that motivate emigration are beyond governmental control.

**Push/Pull Immigrant Theory**

The Push and Pull Theory of Immigration deals with the motivations behind immigration. One side says that there are certain conditions that exist within a country that *push* its citizens to leave (emigrate), while the other side examines the "pull" factors that attract immigration to the receiving countries. Push conditions can include anything from a failing economy and high unemployment, all the way to political or religious oppression. In the case of Algeria, a failing economy accompanied by high unemployment resulted in the inability of many families to survive without seeking employment elsewhere.

On the opposite side, there are events that occur in the receiving country that attract foreigners enough to leave their home country. These "pull" factors result in increased immigration in the receiving country and include such conditions as an expanding economy with a high demand for unskilled, cheap labor exceeding the internal supply; liberal naturalization procedures and concern for the rights of immigrants; and a broad social welfare system. At the same time that Algeria was experiencing recession and high unemployment in the post-World War II era, the French economy was expanding at such a rate that there were more jobs than people to fill them. The
combination of push and pull factors caused large scale migration from Algeria to France (Papademetriou and Hamilton 16).

Immigration should be seen to some extent as the responsibility of government policy-makers. While governments have little control over the internal policies of other countries that lead to massive emigration, they do in fact have a great deal of control over the factors that contribute to the decision to emigrate to their country. The main way that a government can decrease its “pull” on immigration is to implement larger obstacles to perspective immigrants. Possibilities include tighter border controls, stricter visa requirements, employer sanctions, increased deportation, redefinition of asylum criteria, and national policy coordination (Papademetriou and Hamilton 17). For example:

“France now requires visas for entry into French territory from 158 countries. In addition to entry visas, it demands airport transit visas from nationals of Afghanistan, Albania, Angola, Bangladesh, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Haiti, Iraq, Iran, Liberia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Somalia, Sierra Leone, and Zaire—all countries whose nationals are deemed most likely to seek ways to apply for asylum in France. Along with these deterrent measures, France has instituted a 10,000-franc penalty for airlines that transport undocumented asylum seekers.”¹

Although France has increased its requirements for specific countries and tightened its borders it has not produced a list of “safe countries of origin,” as some countries have done, which would refuse all applications for asylum from certain countries considered to be free from political oppression (Papademetriou and Hamilton 18). Other ways to reduce the pull are greater penalties for employers of illegal immigrants, stricter regulations, more severe punishment for illegal immigrants and increased deportations of illegal immigrants.

¹ Papademetriou and Hamilton. Converging Paths to Restriction. P.18
Ways to reduce the “push” factors are more complicated and can be difficult to implement. Incentives to remain within the home country can be used, such as increased development aid to decrease economic gaps. Higher paying jobs in the sending country can reduce the need for migration. While this type of economic development and expansion of employment should be the responsibility of the sending country government, it has been used by receiving country governments. Previous Interior Minister Charles Pasqua advocated this type of aid, recommending a contribution of 1% of GDP to developing countries to improve living conditions. This type of policy can be effective only to a certain extent and is often unattractive to policy-makers due to the difficulty in the measurement of its effectiveness that voters often require (Papademetriou and Hamilton 19). Also, an increase in economic welfare could initially increase immigration as more people would have the means to bear the costs of doing so. Since an economic gap still exists, albeit a reduced gap, the incentive to emigrate remains.\(^2\)

Even though a state may be strong and generally capable of enforcing legislation, migrants are a difficult group to target with regulations. Policy is effective to a point, but this difficulty accounts for the existence of illegal immigration. They are vulnerable in a societal context, but are also capable of pursuing individual interests, which usually include the desire to work and remain living in the host country. Immigrants often come from very poor countries looking for better wages and a higher standard of living and are willing to face great risks to achieve these goals.

_Illegal immigration_ has been common in the Post-W.W.II era throughout Europe. It is only recently that it has come to be condemned as a “problem.” Labor immigration

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\(^2\) Commission for the Study of International Migration 1991 p.222
and migration has constituted the vast majority of illegal immigration within Europe. Many industries depend on this sort of immigration, and would be arguably less successful were it to disappear. Southern Europe especially has been a target for illegal immigration, including but not limited to this type of illegal labor migration. Weak border controls, geographical proximity to North Africa, and similar culture in France’s case make Southern Europe an accessible and desirable destination. Different groups in a receiving country view immigrants from very different perspectives. They are seen alternately as an essential source of cheap labor by employers, and as unwanted competition by unions and other French citizens (Hollifield 1992:127-28).

Economic analysis of immigration

"Of all the flows that take place between nations, none is more sensitive than the flow of humans." (Lindert and Pugel 547)

There exists a general economic analysis of immigration that examines the costs and benefits for all involved parties: The immigrant, the sending country, and the receiving country and their respective populations.³

The Sending Country: In the sending country, wages increase when large scale emigration occurs, due to a decrease in the labor supply which then raises costs of production for employers. Also, there will be fewer workers to contribute to the tax base or to GDP. People tend to migrate in early adulthood which implies that they probably received schooling at public expense. The typical immigrant earns about the average wage in the country and his departure represents a real loss to society, sometimes referred
to as a “brain drain.” However, the wage increase that was an increased cost to employers can be counted as a benefit to workers who remain behind (Lindert and Pugel 551).

The idea of the “brain drain,” while seemingly far-fetched, can actually cause the sending country great hardship. In effect, the flow of much-needed skilled labor from the south to the north can be viewed as a drain on scarce, costly human capital (Papademetriou and Martin 16). The International Labor Organization (ILO) even goes so far as to say that not only is emigration expensive, but that sending countries should be compensated by a facility with funds provided by labor-importing countries (Martin 1991:28). Economist Jagdish Bhagwati has recommended a “brain drain” tax on this type of immigrant upon departure, in order to compensate society for the money and time that the individual never repaid (Lindert and Pugel 557).

The Immigrant: Those who choose to emigrate are typically not poor, as they will need to pay migration costs. They will generally have more hope than the average citizen and be more determined to improve their situation. Immigrants will generally benefit from increased wages, a better social welfare system, and greater political and religious freedom (if this is a motivation for immigration). Even though immigrants may sometimes be paid less than their native counterparts, especially in the case of illegal immigrants, this wage rate will probably be greater than the rate they were receiving at home. However, they will lose any accumulated benefits, such as social security in some countries, when leaving their home country and will be forced to start over in the new. Overall, the immigrant will benefit in an economic sense.

\(^3\) See appendix for a graphical representation of the migration cost/benefit analysis.
On a more personal level, an immigrant faces the psychological costs of leaving home, friends, and probably even family members behind, and must endure uncertainties about life in a new country. Upon reaching the receiving country, he is often met with a hostile attitude in the form of racism and discrimination. Also, he may ultimately fail to find steady employment and be forced either to return home or live in poverty in a strange land (Lindert and Pugel 552, 556).

The Receiving Country: The same wage change works in reverse for the economy of the receiving country. The increased labor supply will decrease wages, which benefits employers but results in a loss to native workers in immigrants-competing industries. Immigrants are also seen as a drain on social welfare—although this is widely debated as immigrants do contribute to social security. There are also the political and social costs of integrating foreigners into society and the accompanying political complications. Overall, the country gains in increased economic welfare due to the increase in production and society as a whole should benefit (Lindert and Pugel 552, 552).

Based on empirical studies referred to in International Economics, the authors reached the following conclusion:

1. Freer migration makes wage rates in the migrant-related occupations more equal between countries.

2. Directly competing workers in the receiving countries do have their pay lowered relative to less immigrant-threatened occupations and relative to such non-labor incomes as rents. However, these directly competing workers are fewer in number than most people think because immigrants tend to take jobs that are increasingly unpopular with natives of the prosperous receiving nations.

3. Immigrants catch up partly, but not completely, within their own lifetimes. Numerous studies have traced their convergence toward the better pay enjoyed by native born workers, but the deficit is not erased in the first generation after
migration. Discriminatory wages may continue through second and third generations of immigrants as well.

4. World output is raised by allowing more migration. Freer movement of people allows for a more efficient allocation of labor. (p. 553)

As a whole, sending countries lose and receiving countries gain in terms of social welfare. However, as Lindert and Pugel indicate, there are winners and losers in each subgroup. The losers will care little for the overall costs and benefits, being concerned only with their individual situations (553). An important qualification to note is that there are certain assumptions that are made about immigrants in this type of economic analysis. These are that immigrants will have adequate information and will use such information rationally which in turn will lead to the efficient distribution of people and resources (Papademetriou and Martin 8). While these assumptions may be true in many cases, it can be dangerous to over-generalize.

Despite the complicated nature of cost-benefit analysis for immigration, people in the receiving country react in fear of having their jobs taken by immigrants - this opinion is a major premise for much government policy. It assumes that the number of jobs is relatively fixed and too many laborers will swamp the market. However, Brochmann emphasizes that an increase in population will also mean more consumers whose demands will need to be met by increased production of goods and services. In other words, immigration could even lead to an increase in employment opportunities (130).

Public opinion as expressed in a survey conducted by the Commission Consultative des Droits de l'Homme shows that 54 percent of those surveyed believe immigrants to be a burden on the economy, while only 33 percent believe them to be a net
benefit to the economy (47). This opinion is countered by studies that have shown immigrants to be net contributors to the welfare system, although immigrant demands are beginning to increase. Even more surprising is that illegal immigrants, as a whole, have been found to be heavier net taxpayers than legal immigrants (Lindert and Pugel 558).

The current inequalities that exist among countries, sometimes referred to in terms of First World and Third World, or industrialized and developing, make available a large and very elastic supply of labor. There will always be people in economically disadvantaged countries wishing to leave to work in wealthier, industrialized countries. Barring any reduction in these inequalities, which is highly unlikely in the short-run, the supply side of international labor will remain relatively unaffected (Hollifield 1992:14). Increased communication and better international transportation suggest that the supply might actually increase.

The abundance of illegal immigration demonstrates the force of markets. As employers wish to hire cheap labor, immigrants are willing to make large sacrifices and take enormous risks to fill the demand for labor (Hollifield 1992: 12).

"Migrants tend to be highly motivated economic actors with important claims to rights in the liberal polity, even though they are not citizens. These characteristics make it exceedingly difficult for liberal democracies to regulate immigration. Still, governments may be compelled by popular and/or partisan pressures to take some type of symbolic action" (Hollifield 1992:140).

What is also important to note is that an illegal immigrant implies other actors who helped the process. In order to have an illegal worker, it is necessary to have an illegal employer! Unless this type of illegal employment is severely punished, immigrants will be employed, and therefore provided with an incentive to emigrate. Governments have shied away from such regulations, illustrating their unspoken acceptance of its benefits to
some industry despite overall public disapproval. Also, as it becomes more and more difficult to enter Europe, illegal immigration grows. As the risks of illegal immigration trafficking grow, so does the money to be made by traffickers (Brochmann 136).

Differing Perspectives on Immigrant Labor: The Political Versus Economic Dilemma of Immigration Policy

There are two precepts of classical liberalism which apply to immigration. The first is that markets function at their best in the absence of regulation. This implies that politics could be separated from economics into different spheres of influence. However, it is obvious that the two interact and influence each other constantly. The second precept is that labor is a commodity and can be bought and sold like any other good (Hollifield 1992:6). The danger here is that labor is done by individuals who have at least some level of rights that cannot be ignored. Another question therefore emerges: "Can immigrants be used to lessen the shocks between recession and growth?" Immigrants are easy to exploit particularly if they are illegal, as they have no legal recourse against low wages or poor working conditions. They can be hired in times of growth, and easily laid off in slower economic periods. This is true to a lesser extent for legal immigrants who still face discrimination and often have few job opportunities. They are desperate to find stable employment, many hoping to earn enough to prove themselves capable of supporting family members, as family reunification laws require before an immigrant can be joined by members who remained home. The possibility to exploit immigrants in this fashion once again raises the issue of the rights of both legal and illegal immigrants (Hollifield 1992:9).

The question that remains is "Why does immigration persist in spite of public
opposition and increasing government control?" As the international economy becomes more interdependent, states lose some control of sovereignty and autonomy. Even though transportation and communication have become cheaper, and the flow of goods and services has grown faster and faster, the industrial democracies of the world have worked to slow the international mobility of people (Hollifield 1992:5). There is no state which fails completely to regulate migration. But can a state completely end migration either? One argument says that stopping immigration altogether is not feasible because it offends foreign countries and domestic ethnic groups, harms businesses and individuals who wish to employ the immigrants. Finally, this level of restriction is almost completely impossible to enforce, short of building a sort of Berlin Wall and creating a police state (Lindert and Pugel 552).

Papademetriou and Martin's use of the term "survival migrant" gives us a more realistic view of the forces that motivate migrants to pick up their entire lives and move to a foreign country. The more common euphemism "economic refugee" makes it easier for governments to reject entry for these people, even though migration may come down to a matter of survival (1991: 5). The economic analysis paints a beautiful picture of the benefits an immigrant receives in the new country. However, even if it is true that the immigrant is better off than before, he is now at the bottom of the economic ladder in the new country:

"[Immigrants] often hold marginal jobs abroad (in agriculture, mining, and the informal sector) and they often experience spells of unemployment while earning relatively low wages. Survival migrant earnings are typically meager, their savings and remittances are modest, and remittances are often spent on consumption for the survival of the family."^4

^4 Papademetriou and Martin p. 5
Viewing the situation in this way brings a more humanitarian language to the debate, that provides an alternative to the typical demonization of the immigrant.

Another view of immigrant labor sees it as a supplement to national labor; that only in times of labor shortages do immigrants step forward to fill the gap. As nationals climb the economic ladder to better, higher-paid jobs, immigrants come in at the bottom level to fill the vacated jobs. Then, since there is an increased demand for this lower level work, wages would tend to increase and employers would search for new labor sources to prevent wages from rising too high. Both of these forces would attract immigrants and lead to the perpetuation of immigration. However, this theory ignores the political reasons for hiring foreign labor since immigration also exists during times of unemployment, and immigrants are hired alongside citizens. One reason given for this practice is that it allows employers to “neutralize” demands for higher wages as foreign laborers will accept lower wages than will nationals (Brochmann 131). If this is true, it is easy to see why unions dislike immigration, as do citizens employed in so-called “immigrant,” unskilled jobs. The fact that immigrants are willing to work for low wages could reduce the general national wage level, or restrict wage increases in typically immigrant industries - especially those in which most French citizens are unwilling to work (Brochmann 133).
Part II:

Immigration In France

Immigration?

"Nowhere is one more of a foreigner than in France." -Julia Kristeva (1993:30)

The unity of the nation-state is the highest ideal of French society. The retention of an ethnic identity or "ethnicity" that comes between the state and the individual is seen as an obstacle to cohesion and nation-state solidarity (Papademetriou and Hamilton 22). The term "immigration" in France has come to mean the permanent settlement of a foreign population and encompasses all of the surrounding conflicts and issues. The use of this word illustrates the difficulties that the French have in accepting the settlement of people from a different country and culture (Hargreaves 1995:1). In the United States, we would use the phrase "race relations," for the political and societal issue, and what the French call immigrants, we would call "ethnic minorities." These terms are unacceptable in French society because they give recognition to ethnic differentiation. The use of terms like "integration" is preferred because they imply that cultural distinctions are to be reduced as soon as possible and eventually eradicated. The use of the term "ethnic groups" on the other hand, gives the idea of permanent differences and a heterogeneous society; a direct affront to national unity and equality (Hargreaves 1995:2).

The extent to which France denies the existence of racial and ethnic groups is evident when the state refuses to collect data on the basis of racial or ethnic origins. Once
citizenship is gained, the immigrant is expected to blend completely into society with no
discernible effect. Migration flows are tracked, but there are no studies of the actual stock
of foreigners nor of their descendants once they gain French citizenship (Hargreaves
1995:3).

Kristeva discusses the reasons for the French reaction in terms of the impact of
immigration on society. The influence of the foreign culture may threaten values of
freedom in French culture after the long struggle to gain them. One example is women’s
rights. The wearing of the head scarf by Muslim women (a hotly debated topic in France)
and the implied submission of women flies in the face of feminist movements and the
freedom they have fought for (Kristeva 37). Additionally, it touches on the sensitive
topic of state secularity which has been a traditional point of conflict in French history.
Such challenges to national ideals are met with hostility and resentment.

The French Nation-State and Citizenship: Country of Immigration

France has historically been a land of immigration and a haven for the politically
oppressed dating back to the days of the First Republic. On June 24, 1793, the new
Constitution of the First Republic was adopted in France after the Revolution of 1789.
Asylum became a right for the first time. Article 120 of the Constitution declared that
France would “give asylum to foreigners banned from their countries in the name of
liberty” (Boyd 1996:260). A debate in 1791 over a matter of an Austrian request to
extradite an alleged counterfeiter further emphasizes the importance of the right to asylum
issue. One delegate was prompted to make the following speech:

...I believe that in principle it is true that a nation should always render fugitive
criminals to a foreign power that reclaims them, but this should not be done on the
simple request of a minister, on an arbitrary requisition...I thus beg the Assembly
to consider if this is not the moment when France can become the asylum of all the friends of liberty...that she should extend even to the biggest villains this right to asylum until such time as their crime can be proven and established by evidence.

Two hundred years later, immigration and asylum are some of the most important issues in French society and politics. The Preamble of the Constitution of 1946 reads that “Everyone persecuted because of his actions on behalf of liberty has the right of asylum in the territories of the Republic” (Boyd 1996:261).

In modern days, France has been the second destination choice among immigrants after the United States (Boyd 1996:257). After the 1920s, when the United States placed stricter quotas on immigration, France became the most important country of immigration in the industrialized world. Foreigners represented a larger proportion of the population in France, than they did in the United States (Hargreaves 1995:5). France was able to maintain its reputation for welcoming immigrants, even though it expected them to integrate into the French life-style. Reasons for France’s attractiveness as a receiving country include generous aid programs providing emergency housing, clothing, welfare programs, language training and work permits for asylum-seekers. In fact, a 1984 study noted that acceptance for an asylum-seeker amounted to permanent residence (Boyd 1996:258).

The French have always welcomed asylum seekers, and have depended throughout recent history upon foreign labor supplies. However, even though France has been referred to as a country of immigration, it has never been a nation of immigration. While the distinction seems minor, the underlying reasons may hold the key to the
problems of integration faced by millions of immigrants today as well as the complications that the government must face in creating immigration policies.

The formation of the modern French nation-state occurred during the years directly preceding the French Revolution which then culminated in the Revolution itself in 1789. Immigrants were never a part of the “founding myth” like they were in the United States. The formation of the nation-state in France was finished before immigrants arrived on the scene (Cornelius 114). The results of this absence are evident in the current dealings of the government on the subject of immigration:

“...the more closely associated immigration is with the political myths that legitimate and give life to a regime, the easier it is for the state to justify its immigration and refugee policies and to manage the ethnic or distributional conflicts that often arise as a result of immigration” (Cornelius 145).

Because the French political system was formed at a time when there were no immigrants present, the government today has a difficult and prickly job in forming its immigration and integration policies (145).

Concepts of citizenship and rights are also based upon the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, which advocate republican virtue, civic duty and commitment to the republican ideals of liberty and equality before the law (Hollifield 1992:172). These principles have traditionally been extended to immigrants and minority populations as well. However, if immigrants are less willing today to forfeit their original culture, this action in effect upsets the unity of the state and denies the foundations of society. In the words of Eric Raoult, the Minister of Integration and of the Fight Against Exclusion, “Every person living in France must accept the Republican values which, far from constraint, have as their objective to protect” (Raoult 124).
While other European countries experienced emigration to other parts of the
globe, relatively few French people have left to live elsewhere. The French have a deep
satisfaction with their own culture, and a strong preoccupation with their own history.
The founding myths of the French state over the hundreds of years of monarchical rule
were recast by the French Revolution in 1789 and continued on until present day. So
strong are these myths which center upon an ideal of a unified nation-state that the French
have taken little notice of the contributions made by immigrants (Hargreaves 1995:5).
Indeed, the nature of the myths that present a homogeneous, natural, unified state make
acceptance of cultural diversity an impossibility. Only since the 1980s have the French
started to take notice of the large immigrant population, and they have focused mainly
upon the problems rather than on any positive contributions.

Evolution of the immigrant population

Today, one in four French citizens is an immigrant or has a parent or a grandparent who
settled from abroad. France would not be the world player it is without its immigrants.
However, in 1993, Interior Minister Charles Pasqua ushered in a new era of French
immigration policy by saying that "France was once a country of immigration, but it no
longer wants to be one, because it does not have the means." With this statement, Pasqua
implies that acceptance of immigrants has been an act of humanitarianism and social
justice. It seems to ignore both the economic and social contributions of immigrants from
which France has greatly benefited. The focus has been turned to fear that French identity
and culture will be overwhelmed by the increasing numbers of immigrants, especially
those from North and Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia ("The French Fear..." Nov 1996).
Immigrants before the 1960s came mainly from other European countries. Their similar backgrounds, including language, customs, and religion made it easy for the French to ignore them. These immigrants were especially obliging in their willingness to assimilate and there were few problems except during times of economic recession. Table 2 illustrates the demographic evolution of the immigrant population.

### Table 2: Demographic Evolution of the Immigrant Population in France (1921-90)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1921</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1954</th>
<th>1975</th>
<th>1982</th>
<th>1990</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>38,797,540</td>
<td>41,228,466</td>
<td>42,781,370</td>
<td>52,599,430</td>
<td>54,273,200</td>
<td>56,625,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tot. Foreign Population</td>
<td>1,532,024</td>
<td>2,714,697</td>
<td>1,765,298</td>
<td>3,442,415</td>
<td>3,680,100</td>
<td>3,607,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Foreigners in Total</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Nationalities (Including USSR)</td>
<td>1,435,976</td>
<td>2,457,649</td>
<td>1,431,219</td>
<td>2,102,685</td>
<td>1,760,000</td>
<td>1,453,360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Europeans in Total Population***</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Nationalities</td>
<td>37,666</td>
<td>105,059</td>
<td>229,505</td>
<td>1,192,300</td>
<td>1,573,820</td>
<td>1,652,870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of African Nationalities in Total Population***</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algerians</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>211,675*</td>
<td>710,690</td>
<td>795,920</td>
<td>619,923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moroccans</td>
<td>36,277</td>
<td>82,568</td>
<td>10,734</td>
<td>260,025</td>
<td>431,120</td>
<td>584,708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisians</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4,800**</td>
<td>139,753</td>
<td>189,400</td>
<td>207,496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French West Africans</td>
<td>16,401</td>
<td></td>
<td>70,320</td>
<td>138,080</td>
<td>178,133</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Nationalities</td>
<td>22,402</td>
<td>32,120</td>
<td>49,129</td>
<td>41,560</td>
<td>50,900</td>
<td>77,554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Nationalities (NOT USSR)</td>
<td>28,972</td>
<td>86,063</td>
<td>40,687</td>
<td>104,465</td>
<td>293,780</td>
<td>417,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turks</td>
<td>5,040</td>
<td>36,119</td>
<td>5,273</td>
<td>50,860</td>
<td>123,540</td>
<td>201,480</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*French Muslim Algerians
*Individuals from within the French Empire (L’Union française) are counted as French, except French Muslim Algerians, who were counted as foreign during this period.
***Computed by author from data provided by Costa-Lascoux 1989.

From examining the demographic make-up of the foreign population, one notices that while the percentage of foreigners in France is relatively stable, there is a significant shift in its structure. The percentage of Europeans decreases as the number of non-European
immigrants (especially of African origin) increases. It is interesting to note the increase in African immigrants can be associated with the rise in perceived “problems” with immigration. Arabs and Africans are a highly visible component of society, which makes them an easy target for discrimination. These statistics also put a new spin on claims that the immigrant population is maintaining itself at a constant level. True, foreigners in general may not be increasing, but the percentage of other races is definitely doing just that. Also interesting to note is that once an immigrant gains status as a French citizen, that person virtually disappears from official records. Therefore, even as foreign population figures remain constant, and even are slightly diminished, the actual number of people of foreign appearance is increasing. As some gain citizenship, others gain immigrant status and the official statistics hide this evolution to some extent.

After Immigration: The process of integration

After the last wave of labor migration ended in the early 1970s, the French realized too late that this new type of immigrant - African, poor and Muslim - would not easily integrate into French society as previous European immigrants had done. It now had to deal with a large ethnic group that it could no longer view as a temporary economic tool, but as a major presence in France that was there to stay. Many of the problems surrounding immigration today are due to cultural and religious differences. The debate that rages about how best to deal with the 3.5 million immigrants that currently live in France is based on three different terms or methods: Integration, assimilation, insertion. While the terms may seem similar in meaning, the differences in the connotations they carry are significant.
Integration is perhaps the most widely accepted of the three terms. It is used by groups all along the political spectrum as a compromise. Integration suggests the unification of different cultures to form a whole. There will thus be parts of all cultures in the fully integrated culture and all will be accepting of each part, forming an interdependent society (Costa-Lascoux 1989:10).

The term assimilation carries the connotation of transforming the foreigner into the same substance of the citizen, therefore losing all semblance of the previous culture. It entails the sacrifice of all values, traditions and language of the previous culture in order to take on the traits of the new. Implicit in this definition is that the person must be a good candidate for assimilation. In other words, those who have cultural and religious backgrounds similar to those of France will have the greatest success. Also, this type of assimilation cannot be carried out on a grand scale but only through small infusions. Large numbers of immigrants cannot be absorbed into the culture without the danger of affecting the culture itself (Costa-Lascoux 1989:11).

Finally, the term insertion is held mainly by the immigrant population which is not willing to surrender its old ways for those of the new culture. Problems can occur especially in areas of law and the rights of women and minors. With insertion, there is no loss of the previous culture, but there is no sense of belonging to the new society either. The immigrant remains on the periphery, contributing economically, but not in any way necessary to the cultural development of society (Costa-Lascoux, 1989:12).
Policy Timeline

French immigration policy goes back to the 19th century and the policy of "jus soli" towards immigrants from French colonies. This policy states that a person born on French soil to foreign parents has the right to opt for French citizenship. In 1927, a five year residency requirement was added to the policy. In the post-W.W.II era, was a slow liberalization of policy. This was accompanied by a high demand for foreign labor due to the reduction in the male work force after World War II claimed many of France's young men. Approximately 1.5 million died out of a total population of 39 million. Rather than leaving labor migration in the hands of employers, the government established the National Immigration Office (ONI) in 1945 to oversee the formation of a government policy. The purpose of the office was described by former director Pierre Bideberry as:

"...to avoid all unfair competition in work and salaries with the national labor force; to protect the national community through an effective selection process based on considerations of health, employment and moral conduct; to protect the immigrants against diverse forms of exploitation and to avoid the abuses of which they had been victims in the past; to guarantee as far as possible a distribution of foreigners in France."^5

Employers wishing to recruit foreign workers were required to establish a work contract including definitions of work and housing conditions. This contract was submitted to the departmental service of employment and labor, and then to the Ministry of Labor. If approval was granted by these agencies, only then was it submitted to the ONI who would send it to an overseas office to make the arrangements.

Rather than go through this lengthy bureaucratic process, employers chose to directly recruit laborers, thus greatly decreasing the credibility of the ONI and state-
controlled immigration policy. Free movement between Algeria and France, established in September of 1947 actually contributed more to the immigrant worker population than the official government policy meant to encourage immigration. Between 1946 and 1954, the Algerian population in France increased from 20,000 to 210,000, representing an increase of 32.5 percent annually as compared to a 1.3 percent increase in the immigrant population as a whole. In 1964 this agreement was replaced with one limiting the number of Algerian immigrants to France to be reviewed each trimester and based upon the economic situation in each country. During the same time period, similar agreements were created for the French overseas departments of Martinique, Guédeoupe, and Reunion whose populations were legally French nationals. Similarly, the former French colonies of Morocco, Tunisia, Mali, Mauritania and Senegal in West Africa were accorded liberal immigration agreements allowing a larger number of nationals to enter France (Silverman 42).

The diversity of French migration flows is evident in the various countries with which it formed agreements. France reached bilateral agreements with Italy in 1946 and 1951, with West Germany in 1950, and with Greece in 1954, specifying entry limits and requirements. It later signed bilateral agreements with both Turkey and Yugoslavia in 1965.

During the 1960s, efforts to regulate immigration had for all practical purposes failed. Immigrants were able to enter clandestinely and to legalize their position by producing an offer to work. In 1965, only 21 percent entered through the official process set forth by the ONI, the remaining 79 percent opted for the regularization process.

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9 Silverman, p. 39
described above. There is even evidence to suggest that this type of illegal immigration was actually *endorsed* by government agencies rather than being regarded as a problem. The Minister of Social Affairs, Jean-Marcel Jeanneney stated in 1966 that: “Illegal immigration itself is not without a certain value, for were we to pursue a policy of strict enforcement of the rules and international agreements governing this area, we would perhaps lack the manpower we need.” By looking the other way with cases of illegal immigration, the government was allowing immigration to be determined by market forces of supply and demand. There was a nation-wide consensus on the need for a cheap, unqualified foreign labor force in order to meet France’s economic expansion.  

While many remained in favor of labor migration, especially employers, the late 1960s marked the beginning of concern over the ethnic “balance” of the immigrant labor force. Some officials voiced concerns over social problems created by the recent influx of North Africans. A quota system based on adaptability and assimilability of immigrants was recommended. This system would discriminate against those with different cultural backgrounds, especially North Africans who have little in common with the French other than language. As the first step toward achieving this type of racial balance, on July 1, 1968, France unilaterally limited Algerian immigration to 1,000 per month. This limit was raised in December to 35,000 per year due to Algerian protests. Regularization by producing a work offer was also overturned and the ONI re-established its control in 1968 (Silverman 49).

The year 1968 also witnessed the student and worker demonstrations during May in which thousands protested out-moded education policies and low wages. The Grenelle

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* Silverman P.44
Accords were signed the following year, boosting wages by approximately 25 percent. The result of the inflated wages included a boom in consumer demand which was non-inflationary due to a thriving international economy, which in turn led to an increase in exports. This rapid expansion in the economy increased the demand for labor, causing the yearly immigration rate to jump from 16,500 to 19,500 in the manufacturing industry alone. Higher wages for citizens also increased employer preference for cheap immigrant labor (Hollifield 1992: 145-46).

This focus on immigrants as fulfilling an economic purpose ignored the needs of the workers themselves. Employers took advantage of the position of illegal immigrants who did not understand the possibility of regularization that was open to them, and who feared deportation. Employers capitalized on their ignorance, paying them low wages and ignoring state policy on official notification of employment. Labor organizations were too concerned with their own problems to worry over the plight of the exploited immigrant worker (Silverman 45). A few government organizations were formed to address the needs of Algerian immigrants in particular. The SONACOTRA was established in 1956 to deal with housing needs. The Social Action Fund (FAS) was created in 1958 to aid Algerian workers, expanding during 1964-66 to cover the needs of all immigrant workers.

Through the beginning of the 1970s, the immigrant labor force continued to be seen in a positive light. Government and employers alike lauded the benefits to the French economy created at the expense of immigrant laborers who were willing to perform tasks that French citizens refused to undertake at low wages. An excerpt from *L'Usine Nouvelle* (New Factory) illustrates the attitude of employers towards immigrants:
The presence of this immigration gives our economy more flexibility, since it is a question of people who are extremely mobile, are willing to change firms and regions and, if needs be, go on the dole. Immigration is therefore beneficial in that it allows the country to save on education costs (which are incurred by the country of origin) and to help balance the nation’s budget. As they are young, the immigrants often pay more in taxes than they receive in allowances. (Silverman 1992: 48)

This excerpt demonstrates how little regard was accorded to immigrants. They were seen only in terms of their positive influence on the economy and social welfare as a whole.

The Marcellin-Fontanet circulars of 1972 went further in regulating the immigrant population by tying residence permits to proof of employment and housing. Failure to produce this proof would result in expulsion. These circulars made a huge impact due to the implication that even those who had been living and working legally in France for several years could be expelled if they lost employment for any reason. During the same period that the position of immigrants became less secure, the French government was passing legislation that would further integrate foreign workers into society. In June of 1972, foreigners were given the same rights as French nationals for election as delegates to company committees and in 1973, the five year waiting period for naturalized citizens to acquire the right to vote was abolished.

After the official end to immigration

The oil crisis and resultant world-wide recession in the early 1970s led to the suspension of labor migration to France in 1974. At the same time, the economic crisis in the Third World, sparked by the OPEC embargo, and debt refinancing, drove increasing numbers of North and Sub-Saharan Africans, and to a lesser extent Asians, to emigrate to France (Boyd 1996:257). With an economy in recession, there were no jobs for these
immigrants. Immigration policies were tightened, and border controls were increased and more strictly enforced. In October of 1974, shortly following the suspension of immigration, a program of 25 measures was announced with the following main points: Maintenance of suspension of immigration for the purpose of integration, an improvement in the rights of foreigners to the level of French nationals, better and more affordable housing for immigrants, and improvements in reception and orientation of newly arrived immigrants. The program also included a policy of encouragement towards immigrants who might be willing to be repatriated as well as an effort to replace foreign workers with French nationals in the workplace.

The social programs for immigrants were largely a failure due to insufficient funding and amounted to little more than political rhetoric. Certain municipalities began to implement “thresholds of tolerance” limiting the percentage of immigrants that could live in a certain area, usually somewhere between ten and thirty percent of the total population. This practice along with the failure of the administration to improve the welfare situation of the immigrant led to an increasing use of strikes, marches, protests and hunger strikes by immigrant communities throughout the 1970s in an attempt to gain recognition of fundamental rights (Silverman 51).

In 1977, Lionel Stoléru took office as Secretary of State, bringing a new focus to the immigration debate. Dropping the “rhetoric of choice and pluralism” of the past, he emphasized the opposition of the interests of the nation-state to those of the immigrant. Cost-benefit analysis became the practice, noting the outflow of money as immigrants sent money to dependents in their home country, the taking of French jobs by immigrants, and the growth in illegal immigration. Along with the new focus came new policy
priorities such as tighter entry controls and residence rights, the substitution of foreign for French workers, and aid to encourage voluntary repatriation, especially concentrated on Algerians. The aid came in the form of the "million Stoléru" scheme to repatriate one million immigrants within five years. Secretary of State Stoléru promised 10,000 francs (approximately $2,000) for all those willing to participate in voluntary repatriation. The program was a failure, and in 1981 when the Socialists gained power it was quickly discontinued (Silverman 53).

The 1980s: Socialist Rule and Recession

The move from an industrial to a high-technology information based economy, that began in the 1970s and continued on into the next decade, presented the newly elected Socialist government with the difficult task of economic restructuring. As nationalized industries continued to founder in spite of increased government support, the government responded by actually nationalizing more private sectors. This economic strategy ran counter to world-wide trends toward deregulation and policies to spur competition and trade. The results were double-digit inflation and a growing current account deficit, throwing the economy into recession (Cornelius 159-60). Finance Minister Jacques Delors urged a reversal of these policies and the government launched a program of economic austerity and anchored the franc in the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM). These moves further increased unemployment and more restructuring led to the laying-off of large numbers of unskilled immigrant workers in the manufacturing industries, reaching a high of 10 percent unemployment in the mid-80s (Cornelius 161).

The recession posed a great number of difficulties to the Socialist government in creating policy. During the period of 1981-1986, they passed many new policies, lauded
as a "new immigration policy," in contrast to the hard-line policies of previous conservative governments. These included the suspension of expulsions of all foreigners born in France or who had entered before age ten, and the retrospective regularization of all foreign workers who had illegally entered France before January 1, 1981. The latter declaration resulted in 130,000 naturalized foreigners. The government also officially sanctioned the existence of immigrant associations, until this point restricted by the state, as well as easing police controls. (Hollifield 1992:190). In 1983, the introduction of a single residence and work permit valid for 10 years, rather than separate permits, provided some immigrants with greater security. However, the card was available to only a small number of immigrants. The passage of time showed that this new program was not much different than the old. While President Mitterrand hoped to make life easier and more secure for immigrants, the state of the economy forced him to pass stricter immigration controls as well. Rising unemployment and a failing economy led to increased political pressure to alleviate these financial troubles, and hostility toward immigrants grew more intense.

At the same time that legal immigrants were given greater freedom, stricter measures of control were announced in May 1982, leading to such a large number of refused entrants that the Algerian president registered a protest. Once again the French government relented and loosened controls. However, the number of expulsions still increased more than three-fold between 1982 and 1984. At the same time requirements for family reunification were made impossibly strict. These contradictions represented an effort by the Socialist government to appease all parties, and ended up pleasing none. The Socialists were driven to these restrictions on immigration by increasing
unemployment combined with the loss of votes to the extreme right wing who ran on an anti-immigrant platform during the 1983 elections.

The Socialists lost control of the National Assembly in the elections of 1986, ushering in the first period of cohabitation in French history. Cohabitation is the state that results from having Presidential elections held every seven years and legislative elections every five. While the president François Mitterrand was a Socialist, the Prime Minister, Jacques Chirac, came from the center-right party, the Rally for the Republic (RPR). Obvious differences in ideology made it difficult for the two to agree on an approach to immigration policy formulation.

The conservative government of Prime Minister Jacques Chirac (1986-88) faced the dilemma of sharing the anti-immigrant stand of the far right without being identified too closely with political extremists. As attitudes toward immigrants became increasingly hostile, the RPR risked losing votes to the extreme-right wing party, the Front National. As part of a campaign to crack down on immigration, the Minister of the Interior, Charles Pasqua, enacted legislation transferring the decision to deport from the judiciary to the prefecture, making it an administrative rather than legal decision. This act made the process of deportation much faster, and more importantly, took away the right of the immigrant to appeal the action in the judicial system. Pasqua also supported an even further tightening of border controls including the reintroduction of the visa requirement for all non-EC nationals. Deportations sky-rocketed beginning in September 1986.

Chirac spawned a national debate with his proposal of a "nationality code" in October 1986 that would have removed the century-old principle of "jus soli" in which a child born of foreign parents on French soil automatically attains French citizenship at
The proposed code would have instead required that each perspective citizen prove that they were “integrated” into French society and could speak an “appropriate” level of the French language. Also, those who had served a prison sentence of more than six months would be automatically rejected from consideration. These children who did not have citizenship in their parents’ country of origin would have no state if they were not admitted as French citizens upon application.

The call for a “nationality code” is interesting when one looks at the premise underlying the policy of “jus soli.” It has always been assumed that immigrants from other countries could only gain citizenship if they could prove their integration into French society. However, their children, having been socialized from birth in France through school and cultural contacts, could be granted citizenship automatically with no proof necessary (Hargreaves 1995:31). Chirac called this assumption into question. President Mitterrand emphatically opposed the new policy as “deplorable.” The measure failed to pass into law, and in 1988, the socialists once again gained control of the National Assembly.

The 1990s: Toward a new era of immigration policy

The 1990s started off with the official installation of the High Council on Integration which was intended to provide recommendations for ways to further promote integration using analyses of the history of immigration. However its first meeting reverted to discussion of the need for stricter immigration controls and the fight against illegal immigration. The poorly-funded Council has failed to come up with any important measures to improve the integration process. Perhaps this failure is due in part to the framing of the issue as one of irreconcilable difference between two cultures. The
political debate in the 1990s has shifted to issues of racism/anti-racism, and the problems of the suburbs of Paris and many southern cities where large concentrations of immigrants are to be found. Suburbs in French cities are often plagued by poverty and crime while the central part of the city houses the more affluent members of society.

In 1993, French Interior Minister Charles Pasqua pushed through the most controversial set of laws in the history of French immigration policy. Along with the laws, Pasqua stated that "the goal we have set, given the seriousness of the situation, is to tend toward zero immigration." (Boyd 1996:258) The infamous "Loi Pasqua" aimed to:

1. Tighten laws that allow legal immigrants to bring their families to France to live.

2. Terminate the policy of issuing a ten-year work permit to children at the age of 18, who entered the country under family reunification policies.

3. End the granting of French nationality to an illegal immigrant upon marrying a French citizen.

4. Tighten regulations under which foreign students can acquire long-term residency.

5. Make requirements for gaining political asylum more difficult.

The new laws also gave the police the right to check identification papers without cause. Checks could be made merely on the basis of "all elements that allow the presumption of foreignness, with the exception of racial appearance" (Glazer 10/93). Mayors were also granted the authority to delay weddings suspected of being marriages of convenience (Boyd 1996:262).

Numerous question come to mind about the legitimacy of such laws and their potential for abuse. Our fears are somehow not assuaged by the following quote from the
author of the text, Gaullist Deputy Alain Marsaud: “I don’t want yellow people to be checked because they are yellow, or blacks to be checked because they are black,” and “It will be up to the police to use their imagination.” (Glazer 10/93). During the same time period, the “nationality code” debate of 1986 once again reared its ugly head. Children born in France of foreign parents would now have to wait until they turn 18 to gain nationality and would be required to make an official application (LaFranchi 06/21/93).

Pasqua believed that these measures would help legal immigrants by addressing the problems caused by illegal immigrants. By getting rid of the “trouble-makers” in the foreign population through greater surveillance, he predicted that racism against foreigners would die down and allow for more complete integration of the foreign population. He also admitted that the laws had the potential to become oppressive if applied over-zealously. His defense was to state that “I do not accept the excesses, the outrages, and the fears this text could cause.” (LaFranchi 06/21/93)

Criticism of the “Loi Pasqua,” or Pasqua Law, was widespread. Catherine Wihtol de Wenden, an immigration expert in the French Institute for Political Science, said that the new laws would not stop immigrants from coming because the laws did not address employers of illegal immigrants; as long as the demand continues, the supply will not diminish. She believed the laws would only create tensions and encourage violence against immigrants and would not amount to an effective policy (Glazer 10/93). Sami Nair, another immigration specialist condemned the laws as “creating the conditions for a veritable destabilization of immigrants by placing them under systematic surveillance” (LaFranchi 06/21/93).
Part III:

The French Immigrant Experience

Islam as a minority religion and its interaction with French society

Religion is often very important among the poor. When the religion of the immigrant coincides with that of the receiving country, integration is more easily attained. The Catholic Church in France played a major role in integrating the Portuguese as well as the Lebanese maronites and other Catholic immigrants. (Barreau 63). While those of different religious backgrounds are not as easily integrated into France, they do not have a problem if they are very subtle in their religious practice. The secular tradition in France reacts strongly against any who try to impose their beliefs on others, or are obvious in the display and practice of religion (Barreau 63-64).

Islam is a very strong religion with very different values from those of most French people. Islam is not only a religion, it is a way of life and a system of government in Islamic countries. It has never adapted itself to being a religion of the minority as other religions have throughout history, for instance Catholicism and Judaism which faced persecution at different times. Must Islam, like all other religions since the end of the Revolution, learn to be discreet? (Barreau 72-73). Jean-Claude Barreau was the principal advisor to former Interior Minister Charles Pasqua. He believes that no further concessions should be made to Muslims in France. Contrary to the advice of Barreau, others believe that France must work to reach some sort of relationship with Muslims. If this does not occur, the opportunity is lost to establish a more moderate, secular,
"westernized" form of Islam and might lead instead to a more fundamentalist trend in the religion (Papademetriou and Hamilton 30-31).

The extent of assimilation and acceptance into society also depends in large part upon the origin and social class of the immigrant. The French welcomed and integrated waves of immigrants even as late as the Portuguese in the late 1970s. This integration of a large number of poor immigrants was accomplished during a period of economic crisis, which seems to refute claims that problems with integration are often connected to economic conditions (Barreau 60). This willingness to integrate by the French continued past this time for middle class immigrants as well. No matter the origin of the person, the middle class immigrant could easily adapt to his or her new situation, having the funds and security to do so. In fact, according to Barreau, it seems that the problem of integration that exists today is very socio-economic in nature, affecting only the poor and the underprivileged that come to France seeking a better life (61). This characteristic is common among North and West Africans. Whether the reasons for discrimination are economic, cultural or racial, the reality of the situation is that these immigrants are becoming ever more alienated, with no sign of a shift in this trend toward a more inclusive spirit.

**Immigrants and society: personal stories of discrimination and exclusion**

While immigrants are independent economic actors in a sense, they have very little political power in the new society. They have no other choice but to accept low-paying, undesirable employment. Whereas citizens are able to organize in unions and are protected by government regulations, immigrants, particularly those who are illegal, have
been denied access to unions and therefore have no recourse against exploitative employers (Hollifield 1992: 227).

For those who do not believe that racism exists in France, Adil Jazouli in his book entitled L’Action collective des jeunes maghrébins de France⁷ (1986) shares with us the stories of young immigrants, and children of immigrants who face racism every day. The actions they take today are the result of a long experience with a profound feeling of social, political and economic exclusion (Jazouli 45). In the example of religion, by attempting to ignore Islam and the accompanying cultural differences, the French make impossible any true sense of belonging for Muslim immigrants and their descendants. Although these people may gain citizenship, they will never belong in the deepest sense to the French nation and must hence remain on the periphery (Papademetriou and Hamilton 29).

Perhaps the violence and mistrust of these young people can be better understood through their perception that they have been placed outside of society - both symbolically and physically - and deprived of all power and legal redress. Housing conditions for immigrants were, and continue to be extremely substandard and segregated. Immigrants are concentrated in suburbs of major cities where crime is extremely high and living conditions are poor, which is different that the inner-city problems in the United States. Infested with rats and illness, lasting way beyond their intended time frame, public housing projects, the so-called “bidonvilles,” were a breeding ground for the social diseases of today (Jazouli 46).

⁷ The Collective Action of Young North Africans in France
You cannot know what it is like to have had a childhood like mine, I remember everything, the smallest details or words which marked me and signified very early that my difference would be insurmountable and that I would stay in a world apart. Already at school, there were 4 or 5 Algerians in my class, nobody wanted to sit next to us, then the teacher put us together at the back of the class. I was ashamed, and I cried from frustration without saying anything to anybody, I made my parents believe that I had lots of French friends in class and that everything was going well, I don’t know why; maybe I wanted to avoid hurting them, or then maybe I didn’t know who to incriminate. It seemed to me unjust for everyone, this was a normal situation. Fortunately, later on I had more intelligent teachers who tried to mix the children, which permitted me to really have French friends. But I didn’t forget, I can’t, and sometimes when I’m angry and frustrated, all of these memories come back and enhance my rage.8 (Jazouli 46)

This blatant example of segregation and discrimination is repeated throughout the book. It is obvious that the experiences with racism of these young children last into adulthood and are both the cause and the amplifier of anger and resentment towards society. The French school system that is lauded as an excellent tool for socialization and unification in society was, in this case and others, used as a tool of segregation and suppression (Jazouli 47). When socializing institutions fail in this manner, what hope is there for a unified society? How can the French blame immigrants for their unwillingness to accept French culture and values when they are excluded in an abstract sense from basic cultural experiences such as schooling?

Immigrants feel excluded from other public services as well, and in some cases perceive that they are instead victimized by these institutions. The police are regarded with distrust and even hatred by many young immigrants. Even Arabs who have legal citizenship are often harassed and provoked and questioned as to where they bought their identity card. Others are abused and called every name. The list of those injured or killed

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8 Translation by author
by the police in “self-defense” is long. These young people feel that the system is unjust and warped (Jazouli 52).

Why do immigrants receive this type of treatment? Some bring up the issue of Algeria. “For me, it’s clear, all this, it’s because of the Algerian war. There are plenty of cops and judges who were repatriated or who fought in the war over there, and among them, there is a group who can’t stand us, who each time they see an Arab head, want to avenge themselves.” (Jazouli 52). It is true that there exists a sentiment in France that reflects resentment of a people that fought so hard against French rule, only to come live in French society a few years later. Their children continue to pay the price for Algerian independence.

**The new immigrant**

Throughout history, immigrants and their children had a strong desire to become French in every sense of the word. They would change their names to make them more French. Even those who hated the police and the upper classes, and resented their lack of power still loved France at heart and considered themselves French. Now, for the first time a group of young people have no desire to be French. They prefer to maintain ethnic ties and cultural traditions. Although this is only a marginal portion of the immigrant community it is very active, vocal and visible (Barreau 65).

When this unwillingness to integrate was observed, attempts were made to further aid in the integration of certain groups of young people. Included in these attempts were better housing, greater freedom of association and attention was focused on cities and regions where large concentrations of immigrants existed (Barreau 67). However, the difficulties of integration posed by Islam were underestimated. Even though the majority
of young Muslims in France are not strictly practicing, the religion has a cultural element that is a common support for these young people who feel excluded from the rest of society (Barreau 68). This unwillingness to accept French culture is arguably a reaction to the exclusion they face.

**Political Immigrants: St. Bernard’s Demonstration**

More than any other event, the occupation of a Paris church by more than 300 illegal immigrants focused national and international attention directly upon immigration in France. In March of 1996, 300 Africans, who were mainly from Mali, occupied St. Ambroise Church in Paris in protest of new laws that threatened deportation to many previously legal immigrants. When they were forced to leave by church officials, they moved to a sports arena, and then a theater, finally landing in St. Bernard’s. Other immigrants joined the protest, occupying buildings throughout the country. Human rights activists claim that up to 250,000 people face expulsion under the 1994 laws - people who have made France their home and have nothing to return to in their country of origin (Smith 11/96).

Among the 300 protesters were ten who staged a hunger strike. Those who took part in the protest all fit a similar profile. Each had arrived in France as immigrants during the previous ten years. They had faithfully renewed their residence permits, worked, and paid taxes and social security contributions like all citizens. For example:

Hamady Kamar, 34, arrived in France six years ago on a renewable visa and planned to work, save, and eventually return to Mauritania. But the law changed in 1994, and he and many other immigrants were classed as illegal. (Smith 11/96)

The strike was meant to pressure the French government to allow these immigrants to stay in France (Chaddock 8/14/96). Interior Minister Jean-Louis Debré refused to meet
with protesters and promised to increase expulsions, including three chartered plans per day (Smith 11/96).

On August 12, the 39th day of the hunger strike, French riot police broke into the church to take hunger strikers to a hospital for treatment. Hunger strike experts claimed that after 40 days, damage to health could become irreversible. The strikers were allowed to return to their strike untreated a few days later. Doctors had agreed to respect their wishes (Chaddock 8/14/96). On August 23, Chirac authorized a raid on the church. However, due to procedural errors by the police, including incomplete files and falsified interviews, only 4 of the 220 illegal immigrants could be legally deported (WPR 11/96).

The police action can be seen as pandering to a xenophobic portion of the electorate in France. Chirac was hoping to gain the support of right-wing, and even far right groups who have made immigration restrictions a political priority. Chirac seemed unconcerned by the outcome, feeling that his ploy for support from anti-immigrant groups had succeeded (“Chirac Bows…” 11/96). The protesters saw President Chirac’s actions in a different light. In an “address to the government” in June 1996, the mediators of the Africans of the Church of St. Bernard wrote that “France is sliding into a tendency characterized by the repression that has seized all of Western Europe.” The protesters were particularly concerned with a prevalent “negative image of the foreigner.” Other worries focused on government actions including an increase in restrictions on asylum-seekers, and violation of individual rights (Colombani 11/96).

The portion of the population referred to as “immigrants” includes newcomers just arriving from other parts of the globe, but also encompasses second and third generation immigrants who have French citizenship. It is a diverse group of people at
different levels of integration. One thing is certain: 3.5 million foreigners cannot be ignored once they choose to organize.
Part IV:

Xenophobia

Public Perception of Immigration

Whatever the realities of immigration might be, it is important to realize that it is public perception which drives public policy. In an annual study by the Commission Nationale Consultative de Droits de L'Homme (1995), statistics were gathered on how a sample of French citizens perceive racism in society, and issues related to racial conflict. When asked whether they considered themselves racist, 6% said they were frequently racist, 21% were occasionally racist, 31% were racist only rarely. These numbers taken separately do not seem to important until we realize that they add up to a grand total of 58% who consider themselves racist in some degree. Even more significantly, over half of this group considered their racism to be “justified” (Commission Nationale 46). As for whether France should continue to allow immigrants to enter, 38% believed that there are too many immigrants already, and immigration should be ceased completely, while only 26% still believe that France should open its doors to all who are persecuted. The remaining portion are somewhere in the middle, believing that economic refugees should be rejected, but that political refugees should still be accepted (52).

In the French political arena of the 1990s, public perception of immigration has become more important than the statistical data on legal and illegal immigration. The term “compassion fatigue”9 gives us a sense that it is not immigrants that have changed,

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9 Commission for the Study of International Workers 1991 p. 221
but simply the attitudes of French citizens. According to the same study cited above, 46% of those polled were sympathetic towards North Africans, while 45% voiced their antipathy - a more or less even split of the population. This study illustrates the polarization that increases daily over the future of immigrants and immigration (Commission Nationale 47).

Another perception, as noted in the economic analysis, is that many French citizens see immigrants as taking French jobs and as a burden on the social welfare system. In reality, immigrants are net contributors to social funds, and are mainly employed in jobs which most French people are unwilling to fill. However, it is important to note that those citizens who do work in these industries will suffer from reduced wages and competition with immigrants for jobs. These people will most likely be very vocal members of society, and a greater percentage of them will participate in politics as is usually the case when citizens are extremely unhappy with a situation.

Negative attitudes about immigration focus mainly on the presence of Third World immigrants, particularly Arabs (mahgrébins) from North Africa. North Africans did not, in fact, comprise the majority of the immigrant population in France until the 1990s. They were previously outnumbered by the Portuguese. Nonetheless, more than 70 percent of the French feel there are “too many Arabs” and feel threatened by their presence (“The French Fear...” Nov 1996). Arab immigrants are easy targets for discrimination because of their appearance (Cape 02/06/84). Not only do they have a more difficult time fitting in, but are often unwilling to submit to what some of them refer to as “French cultural imperialism.” They do not wish to completely give up their way of life to adapt to French culture. One reaction has been to adopt a militant Islam to combat
the perceived threat to cultural heritage by the French demand to assimilate ("The French Fear...") Nov 1996).

Tensions that exist today between French citizens and the large North and sub-Saharan African immigrant populations have parallels in French history. Periods of xenophobia marked economic downturns during the 1880s and the 1930s as well. Italians and Poles, who respectively made up the majority of immigrants during these periods, were announced to be unassimilable, or impossible to integrate.

Today those immigrants who come to France from within the European Union are not seen as a problem. When the issue of immigration comes up, these people are not the focus and tend not to be included when immigration is discussed. The reason given for their ease in entering French society is that they have a much easier time blending in, as they share religious, lingual and cultural backgrounds. What changed over the last century that now makes immigrants who were once despised and ostracized by society, an accepted and almost unnoticd addition?

There must be other reasons other than the one outwardly declared by the French; that it is simply cultural differences that create problems. Hargreaves argues that claims of a cultural inability to adapt are less a reflection of cultural differences, and more a reflection of an unwillingness among the French themselves to accept and integrate newcomers in times of economic difficulty (Hargreaves 1995:32). Arabs are a large, highly visible group of foreign citizens and non-citizens that provide an easy target.

To further illustrate the inconsistency in assigning blame in French society, black immigrants actually have an easier time integrating into French society than do Arabs. There are several reasons for this seeming anomaly. First, there are fewer blacks than
there are Arabs, making them a less visible group. Also, black African colonies were able to gain their independence peacefully, unlike Algeria where war was necessary to end French rule. Algerians are seen as a people that fought for independence only to move to France once they had gained it. Finally, these former colonies currently maintain cordial ties with Paris, and encourage their nationals to take pride in a mastery of the French language (Cape 02/06/84). In these aspects, they are better candidates for assimilation than their North African counterparts.

The papers in France often tell of the horrors of racism and racial conflict in America. Many French people believe that France is by no means racist, especially compared with countries like Germany and the United States. Immigrants who adapt to French culture and learn the French language and meld with society are very welcome, provided that they do not make too much noise, or publicly display differing religious beliefs. However, many others believe that France, while perhaps not being a mirror of either Germany or the United States, has its own particular brand of racism that is just as destructive and oppressive as any other. Proponents of this viewpoint are often Arab immigrants who come from North Africa; namely Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. Many are second and third generation immigrants who have lived in France for years, but still face threats from police spot identity checks, social and economic discrimination, and racist violence from citizens (Glazer 10/93).

These two opposing sides have become increasingly polarized, with many French citizens also jumping to the aid of the persecuted, forming groups like S.O.S. Racisme and France Plus. On the other side is Jean-Marie Le Pen, and his extreme-right political group, the Front National. While the Front National has been around for over 20 years,
it is only in recent years that the party has become a serious political contender. Its recent success indicates how serious the issue of immigration has become.

The Front National, Jean-Marie Le Pen, and the Anti-Immigrant Movement

"What do you do when you see an Arab on a motorbike? Run after it, because it's yours."

"Why do rats wear rollerskates in Tours? To clean out garbage cans faster than the Arabs."

Believe it or not, these two "jokes" were used in leaflets distributed as voting materials by the Front National in recent municipal elections (France: Immigration Reform Approved 3/97). The Front National was formed in 1972 under the leadership of Jean-Marie Le Pen. It is based on:

Nostalgia for the days of Empire and of French Algeria in particular, anti-communism, the cult of the leader, anti-semitism...the nationalist theory of 'France for the French,' and opposition to the degeneration of the country through immigration and its related infections, AIDs, unemployment, drugs and crime. (Frears 1991: 115)

For Le Pen and the Front National, the "immigrant is always wrong" (Barreau 15). He is blamed for all the bad in society, including unemployment, insecurity of the suburbs, degradation of the urban environment, and the "hole" that is Social Security (Barreau 15).

The electorate of Le Pen inhabits popular suburbs where they encounter more problems with poor immigrants that other, more affluent quarters. They are often blue collar workers who work in immigrant-employing industries. While Le Pen has no real answers to these problems, nor does he address the real issues, he does present the immigrant as the perfect scapegoat for disillusioned, lower-class, French citizens.
particularly those who work in immigrant-dominated jobs. He relieves the people of responsibility for their problems, and uses patriotism and natalism to rally further support (Barreau 16).

Table 3:  
Front National - Vote by Social Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Parliamentary 1986 %</th>
<th>Presidential 1988 %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total in France</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 25</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-49</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-64</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 and over</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small traders</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top Management</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Management</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical Employees</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manual Workers</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No occupation/retired</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Education Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Parliamentary 1986 %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary or none</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Algerian element: the aftershocks of the war for independence

The roots of the FN in the Algerian war bring to light certain factors of racism against Algerians. The extreme right was completely opposed to Algerian independence. They organized and carried out terrorist attacks against Algerian and French political leaders who were involved in working for Algerian self-determination. Some of those who participated in these attacks are now elite members of the Front National. In 1962, one
million French people had to give up their land and businesses in Algeria. This group of “rapatriés” settled mostly along the southern coast and constitutes the core of the electorate of the FN today (Frears 1991: 113-114).

To add to the problem, it is not only the past, but also the present that plays a role in French perceptions of Algerians. Recent terrorist acts of Algerian Islamic extremists, including airplane high-jackings, and numerous bombings throughout France, have heightened tensions to a new level. The movement of Algerians into France since the acts of terrorism began faces greater restrictions and reinforced surveillance. “The French government also reserves the right to deport illegal immigrants presumed to be Algerians, even in the absence of official documentation of Algerian citizenship” (Papademetriou and Hamilton 30).

Ironically enough, the region in southern France which received the bulk of French people ousted from their homes in Algeria during the Algerian War is now the most popular destination for immigrants; the result being that the Front National enjoys great support in the region along the Mediterranean. By looking at a map, one can easily see that the south of France is a likely destination for immigrants, as it is closest in proximity and enjoys a similar climate to that of North Africa as compared to the rest of France. These areas where immigrants are highly concentrated seem to have more conflicts and immigrant-related problems. In the 1995 Municipal elections, the FN won three seats in the southern cities of Orange, Marignane, and Toulon.

Support for the Front continues to grow at an alarming pace. On February 9, 1997, the FN won a landmark victory, gaining control of the Vitrolles city hall in southern France. Although this is only one of four offices now held by the Front, it is the
first to have been won by an absolute majority in a one-on-one race. Until now, a vote for
the FN was more of a vote against mainstream government, and was used to emphasize
concerns over immigration (Chaddock 2/12/97). The Vitrolles victor was the wife of a
FN elite who during a pre-election interview claimed that there are genetic differences
between the races (France: Immigration Reform Approved 4/97).

Table 4:
Front National: Best Départements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bouches du Rhone (Provence)</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var (Provence)</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>25.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alpes Maritimes (Provence)</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>24.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaucluse (Provence)</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haut-Rhin (Alsace)</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bas-Rhin (Alsace)</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gard (Languedoc)</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pyrénées Orientales (Languedoc)</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hérault (Languedoc)</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seine St. Denis (Paris)</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


According to a recent poll on February 11, 70 percent of those polled believe that the FN
should have deputies in the National Assembly which is not the case at present. The
same polling agency determined that for ten to fifteen districts in the south of France, the
FN is approaching 42-44 percent of the vote and could possibly win in the next legislative
elections (Chaddock 2/12/97).

S.O.S.-Racisme and Harlem Désir: Leading the race against racism

Defenders of the immigrant population see them not only as a human beings, but
also as the “ultimate members of the proletariat” (Barreau 13). This vision has attracted
the support of leftist political groups, as well as members of the intellectual and artist communities. A 1993 rally, organized by S.O.S. Racisme against the Pasqua Law and other controversial legislation, drew 15,000 to Paris. Present at the rally was author Marguerite Duras who declared that “With these measures, we sully the image of France” (Glazer 10/93). Immigrants are also seen as an opportunity to follow the word of Christ: “I was a stranger and you took me in” -Matthew, 25:35 (Barreau 14). Little material is available on S.O.S.-Racisme and other anti-racist groups, except in the form of methodological critique by more moderate groups.

**Going too far?**

Éric Raoult, Minister of Integration and of the Fight against Exclusion, commends the left for its sincerity and willingness to fight against the *FN*, but criticizes its actions. He asserts that while the Left is correct in fighting against the ideas and propositions of the *Front*, it has neglected to understand and address the reasons and motivations behind racism and support for Le Pen. Their passion and confrontational methods are seen as aggravating the situation. They appeal to very few, and alienate many (121-122)

Barreau contends that these “militant defenders of immigrant rights” push immigrants to oppose the law. For example, in the summer of 1991, families in poor lodging were evicted by the housing inspectors. Anti-racist groups encouraged them to occupy the train tracks in the 13th arrondissement of Paris. One effect of this occupation was to make it more difficult for social workers to help them find new housing, and employment for those who were unemployed. It also had the effect of exasperating the local prefect Christian Sautter who was very sympathetic to immigrant issues. Even the Malian authorities were frustrated by the event, causing the Minister of Foreign Affairs
and Emigration of Mali to say “Tell these militant French people to calm down: they are leading our nationals down dangerous paths,”10 demonstrating the disapproval of strategy by officials who concern themselves directly with immigrant issues. Other activists teach immigrants how to cheat on Social Security or encourage immigrants to apply for political asylum that is inappropriate to their situations (Barreau 14).

These critiques must be taken with a grain of salt, as many come from more conservative sources. However, they present a valid alternative to the confrontational approach taken by both sides of the race debate. They suggest that a more moderate road must be taken toward improved relations among ethnic groups. A more profound change in attitude towards foreigners and greater mutual understanding must be achieved.

**Other Political Parties: The politics of immigration**

Immigration policy poses a dilemma for political right-wing parties. The right wing is generally allied with business interests. These interests want fewer market barriers and regulations and benefit from immigration because it drives the price of wages down. On the other hand, the right faces pressure from extreme right-wing parties that take an anti-immigrant stance. The right risks losing votes to the extreme right if it does not attend to anti-immigrant trends, and is forced to pass legislation (Hollifield 1992: 5). The stance on immigration taken by other parties has increasingly been framed relative to that of the FN. The Rally for the Republic (RPR) and the French Democratic Union (UDF), both parties of the center-right, have responded to the influence of anti-immigrant sentiment by drifting further right on the immigration issue. However, they are unable to compete with a party which has nothing to lose; who is already viewed as extreme but still receives

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10 Barreau 14
support. Le Pen ridicules the efforts of the center-right as being too soft and ineffective. He mocks their unwillingness to take a strong stand, because no matter how far the Right goes, the Front is always able to go two steps farther. The RPR and the UDF, on the other hand, have a great amount to lose from the more moderate portion of their electoral bases. The Socialist and Communist parties believe that new initiatives are merely an attempt to bypass the fundamental principles of the Republic based on human rights in order to appease the extreme right, but they are not immune either to public pressures to control immigration (Papademetriou and Hamilton 32-33).

It is not only in the last couple years that Le Pen has influenced the immigration issue. An opinion survey in Le Monde (Jérome Joffré 4/12/88), showed that voters for Le Pen were disillusioned with the governments of '81 and '86 (socialist and conservative respectively), were critical of both Chirac and Mitterrand, and put immigration directly after unemployment as a priority. These voters also perceived immigration to be a major cause of unemployment. However, despite voting for Le Pen, they wanted a candidate other than Le Pen to actually win! The vote was meant more as a warning to mainstream governments to either address the perceived problems with immigrants or be voted out of office (Frears 1991: 120). As support continues to grow for Le Pen, and problems with racism continue, the mainstream political parties are being forced to adopt stronger immigration policies and can no longer view the FN as a fringe party, but rather must recognize it as a true political competitor.

According to the Commission Nationale Consultative de Droits de L’Homme, 21% of those interviewed believed that the government, without regard to political party, has the ability to profoundly resolve integration problems, and 29% believe it capable of
improving essential aspects (49). These numbers display a great amount of faith in the government and its power and effectiveness in improving immigration problems.

Perhaps people are beginning to lose patience with the power of the center to directly address immigration problems. The blunt, simplistic rhetoric of Le Pen promises results. Whether or not the solutions he poses are realistic seems to be irrelevant to his supporters.

In an attempt to appease anti-immigrant groups and to slow the growth of the extreme right's rapidly expanding electoral base, the parties in power have put forth immigration policy that has become successively severe and arguably racist. Most recently, in February of 1997, a new policy was passed focusing on illegal immigrants. The most controversial aspect of the “Debré Law,” named after Interior Minister Debré, requires that citizens who house immigrants report when immigrants move out, and when they overstay their visas. A shocking parallel has been drawn between the Debré Law and an ordinance passed by the Vichy Government in 1941. One can almost replace the word “Jew” with the word “immigrant” in the Vichy document to produce the new policy. This law has triggered huge responses including a petition signed by more than 10,000 writers, filmmakers, doctors, lawyers, and other professionals who have called on citizens to adopt civil disobedience and to refuse compliance with the new policies, as well as calling for a protest march (Chaddock 2/20/97).

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11 Extract of the Debré Law, Article I: “Every person having signed a certificate of hébergement and harbors a foreign national in the realm of a private visit in the sense of the present article, must inform the mayor’s office of the town in which he lives of the depart of the foreigner.”

 Ordinance of 12/10/1941 (Vichy Government): “Jewish people or non-Jewish people who harbor Jews in any manner must make a special declaration to the police department. This declaration should be made twenty-four hours in advance of the arrival of the Jew.”


 *Translation by author
The government is put in an even more difficult position by Le Pen, who once again played the role of the extreme right as no one else can in the following remarks:

“Put forward by the Juppé government much more to fight the FN than to control immigration, the Debré Law will come back like a boomerang to strike its authors.”

“The government’s cowardice and its incoherence won’t allow it to face up to the privileged of “show-biz” and the new-comers of the ‘Caviar left.’ Once more, our weak government will yield to the buffoonery of petitions. The only way to fight immigration is to enforce the program of the National Front.” (Chaddock 2/20/97)

As the government reacts to the opposition groups to amend the laws and find some kind of compromise, it does so at risk of fulfilling these criticisms by Le Pen. It finds itself in a Catch-22 and between violently opposed groups. The offending Vichy-esque passage was subsequently removed, but not without setting a precedent of arguably racist wording in an official government policy. It leaves us with several questions: “Will this type of policy succeed in the future if Le Pen gains enough support? Will policies continue down a racist path? Where is this all leading?” Perhaps these questions raise possibilities we would rather not - but certainly must - entertain.
Part V:

The Future of Immigration in France

French Immigration in the context of the European Union: The Schengen Agreement

A further element of the debate concerns France's membership in the European Union and as a signatory of the Schengen Agreement of June 1990. The Schengen Agreement allows for free movement among European countries, in an attempt to abolish border controls at shared frontiers. The ramifications of this Agreement are that an immigrant, once gaining access to a European country, will now have access to all others, regardless of differing immigration policies. A harmonization of refugee policy among the signatories became necessary.

Article 29 of the Agreement stipulates that only one nation shall be responsible for processing an application for asylum. The state that grants a visa to enter Europe is solely responsible for the case of the individual. Whichever country the immigrant initially enters is also responsible for that applicant. Additionally, if one signatory state has already made a final rejection of an applicant’s claim, and the refugee submits a new application, the state that processed the original application is responsible for the new request as well. Therefore, once an immigrant or asylum-seeker enters one country and is refused, he is not allowed to reapply in a different country (Boyd 1996:262). As if the matter were not complicated enough, immigration laws will increasingly be formed internationally in order to provide uniformity. As the Union expands to less
industrialized countries in Eastern Europe, the flow of large numbers of the economically
disadvantaged may reach an unprecedented scale.

France’s Political Crossroads: The Rocky Path to Ethnic Integration and the
Downward Spiral of Racial Discrimination

If recent political events are any indication, the future of immigration as well as the safety
of immigrants are gravely threatened. Although the extremists have been pushed back on
some fronts - for instance, certain wording of policy has been overturned by the Council
of State, or simply by popular pressure - the fact that this wording has reached the level of
policy is significant. The issue is reaching a true crossroads in the 1990s. The Front
National enjoys more support today than ever before, despite its increasingly bold and
racist rhetoric. Le Pen may have his day after all, and what will be the effects? Many
believe that Le Pen will ultimately have little success unless the economy coincidentally
improves. Raoult points to the failure of FN strategies in Saint-Gilles as evidence of its
propensity to intensify, rather than alleviate, problems posed by integration (123). The
outcomes are uncertain and the potential for damage is enormous.

Despite popular movements against immigration, there is a very real need for
continued immigration in order to ensure the economic future of France. Nearly 20% of
the EU population was over 60 years of age as of 1994, and by the year 2010, it is
predicted that more people will be drawing from unemployment and other social
programs than will be paying in if early retirement trends continue. Even former Interior
Minister Charles Pasqua, of the infamous Pasqua Law described above, now admits that
France will need 100,000 foreign workers per year to fill vacant jobs - which may be a
conservative estimation (European Birth Dearth...1994).
It is clear that the problems of immigration, down to the very definition of the issues, are complicated and even contradictory. Racism *does* exist in France. Algerians in particular have been assigned the blame for economic and social disruption. As “immigrants” become more completely targeted and alienated, their exclusion from society will intensify, and consequently their resentment and anger will do the same.

On the other side, even those French people who oppose Le Pen still believe that pride in French citizenship and acceptance and adoption of French culture are necessary components of an immigrant. A secular state should not tolerate too much religious display, but complete suppression of Islam will only increase fanaticism.

Immigration is not going to disappear. Integration and tolerance must improve. Each side must give a little - or a lot. The resolution lies in cooperation, not reactionary behavior. If France expects its immigrants to integrate into French society, which includes the acceptance of the traditional values of equality and unity, it must first uphold these values for *all* citizens. Finally, it must also provide some space for diversity and a offer a true sense of inclusion for all, regardless of race, creed or color.
Appendix: Labor-Market Effects of Migration: A cost benefit analysis

Analysis of Gains and Losses

| Migrants | Gain area a  
| Workers Remaining in Sending Country | Gain area c  
| Sending Country Employers | Lose area c + d  
| Native Receiving Country Workers | Lose area a  
| Receiving Country Employers | Gain area a + b  
| World | Gain b + e  


Explanation of areas:

Area a + b represents the decrease in the amount of wages that employers pay and is a gain to them by decreasing the costs of production. Area a represents the amount of money lost by employees in the receiving country when immigration causes a decrease in wages in immigrant-employing industries. Therefore the benefits represented by area a are transferred from employees to employers in the receiving country.
Area \( c + d \) represents the loss in benefits to employers in the sending country due to an increase in wage rates that they must pay. Since the labor supply decreases, labor is more scarce and thus commands a higher price. Workers who remain in the sending country gain area \( c \) when their wages are increased. This represents a transfer of benefits (area \( c \)) from employers to employees in the sending country.

Area \( d + e \) is the area gained by migrants in increased wages when they migrate from the sending country to the receiving country. Area \( d \) was transferred from employers in the sending country to the migrants.

**Conclusions**

The flow of labor bids wages up in the sending country and brings them down in the receiving country as the labor supply increases. The cost of migrating is represented by the difference in the increased wage rate in the sending country, and the decreased wage rate in the receiving country ($5.00-3.20= 1.80). This cost includes the psychological and economic costs of migrating. If this cost were zero, wages would be equalized between the two countries assuming absolute freedom of movement. Only those who can afford the cost of migrating will do so in order to gain the higher wages of the receiving country (Lindert 551-552).

Notice that after accounting for transfers of benefits between different affected actors, there is a net gain to the world represented by areas \( b + e \). We conclude that the overall losers in the situation will be the sending country employers, and the receiving country employees. The benefits will be enjoyed by the migrants, the employees in the sending country and the employers in the receiving country.
Sources Cited


