Cultural Barriers: Integration of North African Immigrants in France

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Outline

• Background
• Research Question and Hypothesis
• Historical Context
• Evidence
  o Geographic
  o Social
  o Economic
• Conclusion and Implications
Riots of 2005

- Worst levels of urban violence in decades
- Second and third generation North African immigrants protested social and economic marginalization
  - Unemployment over 30 percent
- Burned thousands of cars and government offices
- State of Emergency
Significance

- Studied in Aix-en-Provence, France
- Proximity to Marseille
  - Second largest city in France
  - 1 in 6 residents is of Moroccan or Algerian descent
  - Known as 49th province of Algeria.
- Lived with Moroccan host mother
What are the causes of barriers that North African immigrants experience when integrating to life in France?
Research

• Scholarly debates examined a variety of factors that explain immigrant isolation
  o Education level
  o Economic function
  o Religious differences
  o Cultural differences, social norms
  o Historical context

• Thesis: Religion and historical context are the two most significant factors of both geographic and social isolation in France
Historical Context

• First waves of immigrants were European
  o Sought temporary laborers
  o “Culturally Compatible”

• Collapse of control over North African colonies
  o 1950’s-1960’s lead to increase in immigration from the region
  o 6.6 percent of population by 1970
  o 2.7 million North Africans by 2000

• Economic growth in Europe decreased European migrants laborers
  o Forced France to turn to ex-colonies for labor influx
Geographic Isolation

• “Banlieue” – roughly translates to “suburb”
  o Subsidized, large scale, apartment complexes
  o Located on the periphery of major cities
  o Origins of 2005 riots
Geographic Isolation

- 1960’s housing policy
  - Made it easier for residents to buy houses
  - Left immigrants and low income families in complexes
- “Banlieue” became associated with physical equality to new immigrants
  - Undesirable place to live
- Classified as “sensitive urban zones” by government due to high crime and unemployment
  - 36 percent of individuals live below the poverty line
  - Non-resident population, mostly Moroccan and Algerian
Social Norms

• “Laicite” – concept of separation of religion from public affairs

• Highly value secularism in society

• Majority of North African immigrants are Muslim
  o Public display of religion is looked down upon
  o Lead to “headscarf controversy”
Social Norms

- “Fraternite” – concept of brotherhood
  - French national motto
  - Supportive of monocultural society
  - Emphasizes importance of French culture

- 45 percent of North African immigrants feel rejected from French society
Institutionalized Racism

• 43 percent of North African immigrants report racism directed at them.
  o Only 10 percent of European immigrants report any racism

• Economic indicators of racism
  o Second or third generation Muslim job applicants are 2.5 times less likely to get the same job opportunity as an individual of another religion
Conclusion

- Immigrant isolation in France cannot be explained by a single defining factor.
- Social norms and historical context best explain the isolation.

- French culture is a Zero-Sum Game
  o Concept of dual loyalty is not possible in France, maintaining ties to home nation is seen as betrayal to France
  o Religious and cultural ties with home nation isolate immigrants
Implications

• Social reform is necessary
• France is unique in the severity of the problem
• Younger generations place less value on secularism
• Immigration policy will not resolve the problem
  o Social, not political issue
Bibliography


• Adida, Claire and David Laitin. “Identifying Barriers to Muslim Integration in France.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (May 2010)