1 Overview

1.1 Introduction

The riots which rocked France in November 2005 were the most serious civil disturbances experienced by the nation in almost forty years. They took place in urban areas known as the banlieues, now a by-word for disadvantaged neighborhoods containing dense concentrations of minority ethnic populations. The disorders were blamed by some on the supposed incompatibility between mainstream French society and recently settled immigrant minorities, above all those of Muslim heritage. Similar anxieties and suspicions had manifested themselves in widespread public support for a 2004 law banning the wearing of Islamic headscarves in French state schools. Feelings of insecurity fueling support for the new law had also been at work in the 2002 presidential elections, in which extreme right-wing leader Jean-Marie Le Pen scored a shock first-round result by beating Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin and finishing second only to centre-right incumbent Jacques Chirac.

These events were the latest in a long series of convulsions which during the last quarter of a century have surrounded relations between France's majority and minority ethnic populations. Yet beneath the sound and fury which have so often held the headlines, divisions between majority and minority groups are less radical than is often thought. On the minority ethnic side, second- and third-generation members of recently settled immigrant groups, including those of Muslim heritage, have acculturated overwhelmingly to the cultural norms dominant in France. Those who took to the streets in 2005 were motivated not by any desire to build an Islamic alternative to French consumer society but rather by anger at their exclusion from that society, whose secular values they largely share.

On the majority ethnic side, reactions to the riots of 2005 demonstrated that attitudes had changed considerably compared with those prevalent ten or twenty years earlier. During the 1980s and 1990s, it was commonplace to blame the failures of French 'integration' policy on the alleged unwillingness of immigrant minorities to adjust to the cultural norms dominant in France. In 2005, those who advanced such arguments were relatively isolated voices. Except for Jean-Marie Le Pen's extreme right-wing Front National and a smattering of politicians in other parties, most politicians rejected suggestions that the riots were rooted in

Islamic culture or politics. This was also true of most of the mainstream media, including right-of-centre newspapers such as *Le Figaro*, which in the past had peddled Islamophobic misrepresentations of the banlieues. While some, such as Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy, blamed the riots on criminality – in doing so, Sarkozy outraged many in the banlieues by describing disruptive youths there as *racaille* (scum) – there was widespread concurrence with the findings of the Renseignements Généraux (France's domestic intelligence services), according to which the disorders were a consequence of social inequality and exclusion (*Le Parisien*, 7 Dec. 2005). In other words, the disturbances in the banlieues arose not from some alien cultural force preying on France from without but from failings within the fabric of French society itself, for which the responsibility lay to a very considerable extent on the majority ethnic side. In particular, as President Chirac told his fellow-citizens: 'Nothing lasting can be built in our society without combating the poison of discrimination' (Chirac 2005). Thus while the problems laid bare by the riots were far from easy to solve, the nature of those problems was at last being recognized with greater clarity than in the past.

In the 1980s France had been to a large extent a nation in denial, with many refusing to believe that immigrant minorities originating in former colonies in Africa and elsewhere could be incorporated into French society. Symptomatic of this conceptual blockage was the refusal to use terms which might appear to give recognition or legitimacy to immigrant minorities as structural parts of French society. Terms such as 'minority', 'ethnicity', 'race relations', 'multiculturalism' and 'affirmative action', widely used in the English-speaking world, were taboo in France (Lloyd 1991; de Rudder and Goodwin 1993; Hargreaves 1997b), except among a number of academics, particularly in urban sociology and anthropology who, inspired in many cases by the Chicago School of sociology (which pioneered the study of relations between blacks and whites in the United States), were adapting the Anglo-American problematics of 'race' and more particularly 'ethnic relations' to their own field of study (Balibar and Wallerstein 1988; de Rudder 1990; Battegay 1992). A key reason for the general rejection of such terms lay in the fear of giving even verbal recognition to the settlement of people seen as enduringly different from the indigenous majority. Fearful that the use of such terms might encourage the entrenchment of ethnic differentiation within French society, social scientists such as Schnapper (1990: 88–92) argued that the notion of 'ethnic groups' was an unacceptable Americanism. Like most of France's intellectual and political elite, she preferred to speak of 'integration', a term adopted in French public policy as a means of designating the incorporation within French society of people originating outside it. As such, the notion of 'integration' has served as the functional equivalent in France of 'race' or 'ethnic relations' in Britain or the US. Whereas the concept of 'race relations' appears to imply the recognition of permanently distinct groups, 'integration' has been predicated on the assumption that social differentiation is or should be in the process of being reduced (Weil and Crowley 1994: 113–20). Thus even when the social heterogeneity resulting from immigration has been implicitly recognized, as in the discourse of integration, the terms of that recognition have presupposed its actual or future effacement.

Only in very recent years has the legitimacy of cultural difference been recognized through the adoption of the now fashionable notion of 'diversity'.

Although the 1990s brought growing recognition that recently settled immigrant minorities were in France to stay, policy-makers still refused to speak of 'ethnic minorities' and remained almost unanimous in insisting that 'multiculturalism' was fundamentally incompatible with France's 'republican' model of integration. If the notion of 'integration' betokened acceptance of immigrants and their descendants, as commonly used it also implied that they would be absorbed into French society in such a way as to make them virtually indistinct from the majority ethnic population. Yet even while pursuing steps designed to facilitate that absorption, centre-right governments introduced other measures, such as the nationality law reform of 1993 and the anti-headscarf law of 2004, which had the effect of stigmatizing immigrant minorities. Crucially, almost nothing was done to curb everyday acts of discrimination by members of the majority ethnic population against citizens of minority ethnic origin. Because of discrimination of that kind, the high levels of unemployment prevailing in France since the late 1970s impacted disproportionately on minority ethnic youths, many of whom felt permanently excluded from the labor market and the wider social opportunities to which this gave access. The seething resentment resulting from this exclusion erupted periodically in riots in the banlieues. By the late 1990s, politicians on both the right and the left had understood that if they were to stem such disturbances they would have to be seen to be taking steps to curb discrimination. Since then, policy-makers, journalists and others have begun to break through some of the verbal taboos by which they had previously been constrained. While 'ethnicity' and 'multiculturalism' still remain largely off limits, it has become increasingly common to speak of 'visible minorities' and even of *discrimination positive* (a French equivalent of 'affirmative action'). Yet even while changing their discourse in ways which previously seemed inconceivable, policy-makers have often appeared half-hearted in their initiatives, leaving minority ethnic youths deeply skeptical as to the seriousness of their intent. The growing frustration and disaffection of those youths erupted in the riots of November 2005, the scale and duration of which far exceeded those of earlier disturbances in the banlieues. The replacement of denial by schizophrenia was a classic case of too little, too late.

1.2 Naming and numbering

The policy debate of over immigration and integration has shaped not only the framework in which majority and minority ethnic populations have interacted but also the terms in which knowledge itself has been constructed. Academics often rely for much of their data on information collected by state agencies such as census authorities. In countries like Britain and the US, it is standard practice to categorize the population into groups defined by racial or ethnic origins. Census and other data collected in this way are used to pinpoint problems requiring public intervention and to monitor the effects of such initiatives. In France, the

state refuses to collect nationwide information of this kind and, through its data protection laws, makes it difficult for others to do so.[1]

France does publish statistics on what are known in migration studies as population flows, i.e. the number of people entering and to a lesser extent those leaving the country over a given period of time, but only fragmentary data are available on migration stocks, i.e. people born outside France and now resident there, and still less information is compiled on their descendants. Deficiencies in records of immigrants who have died or left the country make it impossible to calculate those stocks simply on the basis of recorded inward and outward flows. The body responsible for conducting censuses, the Institut National de la Statistique et des Études Économiques (INSEE), does record the birthplace of every resident. However, until very recently little of the census data released by INSEE made any reference to place of birth, and no information at all was collected on the birthplace of people's parents. For most practical purposes, the closest one could get to official information on the ethnic origins of the population – and it was a very rough approximation indeed – was through data published on the nationality status of residents.

The 'common sense' equation which is often drawn between foreigners and immigrants is seriously flawed. Not all immigrants are foreigners; nor are all foreigners immigrants; significant numbers of people are neither foreigners nor immigrants, but are often perceived and treated as such. By focusing on nationality to the exclusion of immigration status or ethnic origins, official data have made it extremely difficult to conduct reliable analyses of the impact of immigration on French society at large. The statistical lacunae generated by the state reflect a long-standing unwillingness at the highest level officially to recognize immigrants and their descendants as structurally identifiable groups within French society.

It is true that most immigrants are foreigners. As non-citizens, foreigners stand, by definition, outside the national community and are formally identifiable on this basis. However, foreigners who fulfil certain residence requirements may apply for citizenship through a procedure known as naturalization, which grants formal admission into the community of French nationals. Others become entitled to citizenship if they marry a French national. All those who acquire French nationality disappear from the official ranks of the foreign population. Censuses do record the previous nationalities of people officially classified as *Français par acquisition*, i.e. individuals born without French nationality who have since acquired it, but published information of this kind is seldom sufficiently disaggregated to facilitate detailed socio-economic or spatial analyses. Most of the children born to immigrants automatically become French nationals on reaching adulthood or in some cases at birth without having to go through any formal application procedures. The grandchildren of immigrants are all automatically French from birth. Strictly speaking, children of foreign birth who become French nationals on reaching the age of majority are *Français par acquisition*; in practice, the majority are declared in census returns as having been born French (Tribalat 1991: 28). By the same token, they, like all the children and grandchildren of immigrants born with French nationality, have in statistical terms been lost almost without trace.

Thus in the official mind of the state, the formal integration of immigrants and their descendants has until recently gone hand in hand with their obliteration as a distinct component of French society.

During the last ten years, significant changes have been taking place in this official mindset. Beginning in the early 1990s, a number of French social scientists began to press for greater recognition of immigration and ethnicity in the collection and analysis of census and other data. Foremost among them was Michèle Tribalat, who made a breakthrough when she persuaded INSEE to collaborate with the Institut National d'Études Démographiques (INED) in what in effect was the first major state-sponsored survey of minority ethnic groups in France, though the word 'ethnicity' was played down. The research project was officially entitled 'Mobilité Géographique et Insertion Sociale' (Geographical Mobility and Social Incorporation – MGIS) and the principal publications arising from it referred to their subject matter not as ethnic minorities but as 'les immigrés et leurs enfants' (immigrants and their children) and 'les populations d'origine étrangère' (populations of foreign origin) (Tribalat 1995, 1996). Although Tribalat's approach provoked fierce resistance from more conservative researchers at INED (Le Bras 1998), the publications of both INED and INSEE gradually began to make growing use of the category of 'immigrants' – defined as people living in France who were born abroad without French nationality – where previously that of 'foreigners' had predominated. The trend was very apparent in connection with the 1999 census where, in contrast with the previous census in 1990, a significant part of the data published by INSEE focused on the distinction between immigrants and non-immigrants rather than on the criterion of nationality (INSEE 2002a, 2005).

Important methodological problems remained, however. As relatively few data published by INSEE prior to the 1999 census use the distinction between immigrants and non-immigrants, studies of changes over time still rely largely on the criterion of nationality. No less importantly, INSEE has yet to address the need for census data on the descendants of immigrants. In countries such as Britain and the United States, data on second- and third-generation members of minority ethnic groups are routinely collected through census questions either on the birthplace of respondents' parents or on their racial or ethnic affiliations. No such data are collected in France.

While many French officials remained opposed to such a practice, by 2005 the question of ethnic monitoring, i.e. data collection based on ethnic criteria, was nevertheless being taken sufficiently seriously in government circles that the newly appointed Minister for Equal Opportunities, Azouz Begag, decided to commission a survey to ascertain the extent to which ethnic monitoring would be acceptable to the public. The results of the research were no less remarkable than the fact of its commissioning. Contrary to the long-standing assertions of senior officials and politicians including President Chirac himself, according to whom ethnic monitoring would not be tolerated by the general public in France, the vast majority of those interviewed in the survey said they would accept such a practice (Simon and Clément 2006).

1.3 Immigration in French history

The refusal until recently to consider according an explicit role to ethnicity in state-sponsored data collection within metropolitan France was matched by an almost total absence of references to immigration in public monuments and other formal expressions of French national history (Noiriel 1992b). It was not until 2004 that the centre-right government of Jean-Pierre Raffarin announced the creation of a Cité Nationale de l'Histoire de l'Immigration (National Centre for Immigration History), to be inaugurated in 2007 (Raffarin 2004). Interestingly, the site chosen for the new institution had until then been occupied by the Musée National des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie (National Museum of African and Oceanic Arts), which had originally been built to house the Musée des colonies et de la France extérieure (Colonial and Overseas France Museum) as part of the 1931 Colonial Exhibition, widely regarded as the high water mark in public celebrations of the French colonial empire. The painful and humiliating way in which the overseas empire was liquidated, culminating in the independence of Algeria in 1962 after an eight-year military conflict in which France attempted unsuccessfully to resist the global tide of decolonization, helped to make of French colonialism another field of public amnesia (Stora 1991; Aldrich 2005). Until only a few years ago, there were few state-sponsored commemorations of the overseas empire, which many public officials felt it best to forget. The 1931 Colonial Museum was one of many public buildings renamed at the time of decolonization in such a way as to efface their colonial origins. If, in recent years, memories of the colonial period have forced themselves onto the public agenda in France, this is in part because of the settlement of immigrant minorities originating in former colonies. It is those minorities who have been at the centre of the public debates surrounding immigration during the past quarter of a century. The growing recognition that these minorities have suffered high levels of discrimination has alerted policy-makers and the public at large not only to the role of ethnicity as a significant force in French society but also to the legacy of French colonialism, a fundamental aspect of which was institutionalized racial and ethnic discrimination against non-Europeans. While seemingly absent from public policy in metropolitan France, ethnic categories were omnipresent during centuries of French colonial domination overseas (see section 5.5) and echoes of that period remain very much alive today.

Memories of the colonial period echo in contemporary France not only around immigrant minorities of African and Asian origin but also through the presence of significant numbers of former European settlers, known as *pieds-noirs*, who fled to France en masse when Algeria gained independence in 1962. In February 2005, centre-right sympathizers with the *pieds-noirs* voted through Parliament a legal requirement that high school teachers in France instruct their students on the 'positive' role of French colonialism, notably in North Africa. The anguished debate engendered by this and other strands of colonial memory – in 2001, Parliament had voted a law declaring slavery in the French colonial empire to have been 'a crime against humanity' – reached a frenzy in December 2005, with opponents

of the new law on history teaching suggesting that the plight of stigmatized post-colonial minorities, which had been pivotal in fomenting the previous month's riots, was similar in spirit to the treatment accorded to colonized peoples in the overseas empire (Mouvement des Indigènes de la République 2006; Moulier Boutang 2005). The reluctant but growing recognition of the role of ethnicity within French society has thus gone hand in hand with increased awareness that France is also traversed by a colonial legacy that remains highly salient almost half a century after the formal end of empire (Bowen 2006a).

The founding myths of the French state were created over many hundreds of years under the centralizing monarchical system which prevailed until the end of the eighteenth century, when they were recast by the French Revolution into the modern forms associated with the ideal of a unified nation-state. The central myths of national identity were thus in place before the rise of large-scale immigration into France during the nineteenth century. Entranced by the spell of those myths, historians in France paid little attention until recently to the contribution of immigrants to the national experience even when, by the middle of the twentieth century, sustained migratory inflows had for several generations been an integral part of French society. By contrast, in countries like the United States, immigration and nation-building were intimately intertwined. The overwhelming majority of present-day Americans are descended from immigrants who entered the US after its official establishment as an independent state at the end of the eighteenth century. Immigration is in this sense an integral part of American national identity, and it is recognized as such in American historiography (Noiriel 1988; Green 1991).

It was not until the 1980s that the preoccupation with immigration in contemporary France brought an upsurge of interest in historical studies of this phenomenon over a much longer period (Citron 1987; Noiriel 1988; Lequin 1988; Ogden and White 1989). Such studies were long overdue, for it is an important matter of historical fact that during the greater part of the last two centuries France has received more immigrants than any other country in Europe (Dignan 1981). Indeed, for much of the twentieth century, after the US imposed tight quotas in the 1920s, France was the most important country of immigration in the industrialized world. By 1930, foreigners accounted for a larger share of the population in France than they did in the US (Noiriel 1988: 21).

As formally defined by INSEE and other agencies of the French state, immigrants are people who, irrespective of their current citizenship status, were born abroad without the nationality of the country in which they now live. Thus defined, the number of immigrants in France rose to a little over four million for the first time in the census of 1982 and neared five million early in the new century.[2] At the time of the 1991 census, 31 per cent had acquired French nationality; the proportion stood at 40 per cent a decade later. In addition, Tribalat estimated in 1991 that about five million people (the great majority of whom were French nationals) were the children of immigrants, and that a similar number had at least one immigrant grandparent. Thus in all, about fourteen million people living in France – a quarter of the national population of nearly fifty-seven million in 1990

– were either immigrants or the children or grandchildren of immigrants (Tribalat 1991: 43, 65–71).

In explaining migratory flows, a distinction is usually drawn between 'push' and 'pull' factors. Industrialization, combined with the country's relatively low rates of natural population growth compared with most of her neighbors, were the principal 'pull' factors inclining France to accept and in some cases actively recruit inflows of foreigners. Heavy population losses suffered during the First World War and to a lesser extent during the Second World War gave an additional impetus to pro-immigration policies. Those who migrated to France felt 'pushed' from their home countries by a variety of factors. Most commonly, these were of an economic nature. When they compared their present circumstances with those they hoped to find elsewhere, migrants motivated by economic considerations calculated that, by moving to another country, they would have a higher chance of improved living standards. In some cases, political pressures weighed more heavily than purely economic concerns. State persecution of individuals or groups, pursued sometimes to the point of genocide, induced many of those targeted in this way to seek refuge elsewhere. Ever since the revolution of 1789, France has cultivated an international reputation as a country committed to the defense of human rights, making it a natural destination for would-be refugees (Noiriel 1991).

Three further general points should be made concerning the pattern of migratory flows. First, it would be a mistake to view those flows as a mechanical outcome of impersonal forces. While substantial numbers of people have sometimes been forcibly transported from one country to another (as slaves or convicts, for example), most international migrants have themselves made the decision to move. Often, of course, the choice has been made in circumstances in which they would have preferred not to find themselves (such as poverty or persecution), but in each case the decision to migrate has nevertheless depended on an act of personal volition, without which 'push' and 'pull' factors would have been no more than analytical abstractions. One place does not push or pull against or towards another. Places have the power to attract or repel only to the extent that they are perceived positively or negatively within the personal projects constructed by individual human beings (Begag 1989).

Second, the relative weight of push and pull factors may be perceived differently in the sending and receiving states. If unemployment or inter-ethnic tensions rise in a receiving country, voters and politicians may seek to halt or even reverse migratory flows. If, at the same time, the situation worsens or simply remains stable within a sending country where people already consider their lot to be intolerable, they may seek to enter the other country in spite of the barriers placed in their way. Contradictions of this kind have become increasingly visible since the mid-1970s, when most west European states declared a formal halt to inward labor migration. As living standards and political conditions have stagnated or worsened in many African and Asian countries since then, would-be migrants have turned increasingly to illegal modes of entry into European labor markets.

Third, the choice of a particular destination on the part of an individual migrant is always conditioned by a complex set of calculations in which immediate

opportunities and constraints are weighed against the chances of securing long-term objectives. Thus countries with less than ideal conditions but relatively low barriers may pull in more migrants than states which are perceived as highly attractive but to which access is tightly policed. Geographical proximity, transport systems and social networks based on friends or relatives who have already migrated may also play a role.

During a large part of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, French perceptions of the need for immigrants, and more particularly immigrant workers, dovetailed more or less closely with the calculations made by would-be or actual migrants in nearby countries. There have, however, been important exceptions to this pattern. An economic downturn in the late nineteenth century was marked by growing antagonism towards foreign workers in some sections of French society, particularly those who feared for their jobs. Anti-Italian sentiments became especially strong in southern France, where a number of violent attacks took place. The most serious of these occurred in 1893 at Aigues-Mortes, where at least eight Italians were killed and dozens more injured. During the slump of the 1930s, the French authorities organized the forcible repatriation of trainloads of Poles (Ponty 1988: 309–18).

Until the First World War, France exercised only weak immigration controls, effectively leaving most population movements to the free play of market forces. Even after official controls were instituted,[3] these were often circumvented with the more or less open connivance of the state. For example, the majority of immigrant workers who entered the French labor market during the economic boom of the 1960s did so illegally, but the state was happy to 'regularize' their situation *ex post facto* by issuing residence and work permits to foreigners who, by taking up jobs, were helping to ease labor shortages. Even today, when the state appears to be more earnest in its opposition to illegal immigrants, many find jobs (usually of a precarious and poorly paid nature) because their employers calculate that their own interests are well served by the recruitment of undocumented workers. In this way, employers bypass and yet at the same time benefit from the regulatory intervention of the state, for the fear of deportation prevents undocumented workers from complaining about poor wages or working conditions.

During the nineteenth century, labor shortages in France's expanding industrial sector induced considerable internal migration from rural to urban areas. However, these internal population flows proved insufficient to meet the demand for labor, and foreign workers came in increasing numbers. Census data on the foreign population were first collected in 1851. Figure 1.1 shows the number of foreigners, expressed as a percentage of the total population, at every census conducted since then. It shows a steady rise in the foreign population from 1 per cent of the national total in 1851 to almost 3 per cent in the 1880s, when economic circumstances entered a more difficult phase. The figure remained fairly stable until after the First World War, then quickly doubled to 6 per cent by the time of the 1931 census. The economic slump of the 1930s saw a sizeable fall in the foreign population, though it remained at a higher level than that seen prior to the First World War. The strong growth rates achieved during what the French

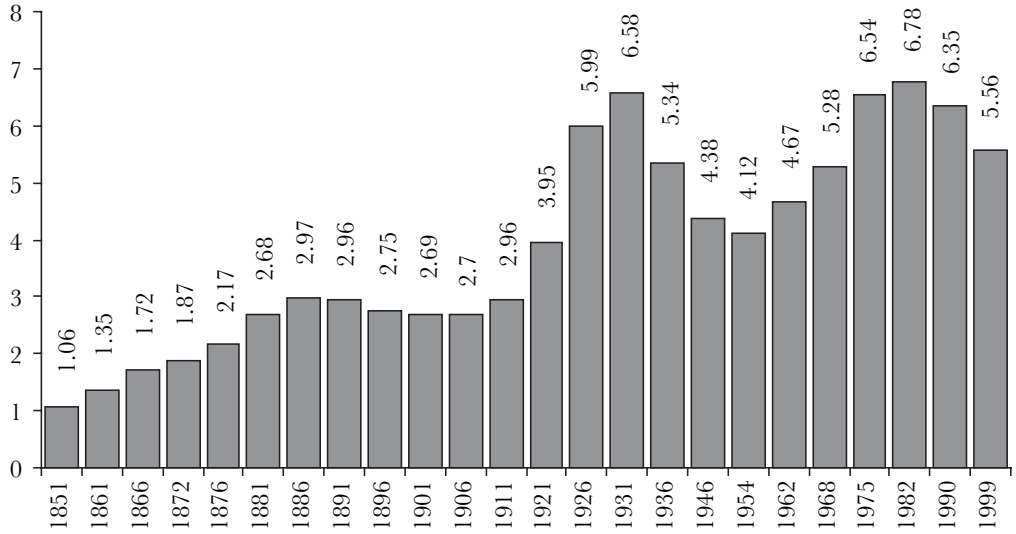


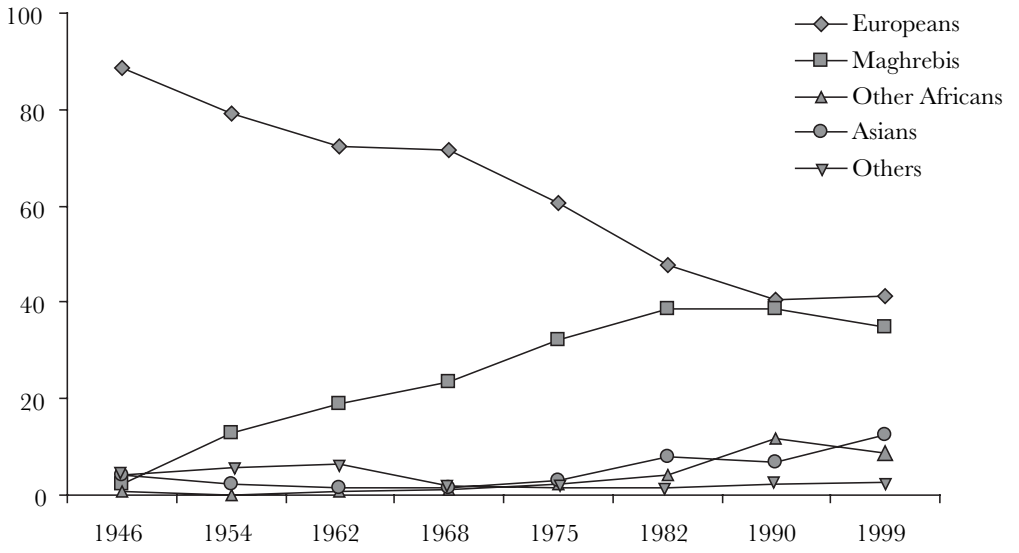
Figure 1.1 Foreigners as percentage of the total population of France, 1851–1999

Source: INSEE 1992a: tables R2, R3; 2005: table 1.6).

call *les trente glorieuses*, i.e. the thirty years immediately following the Second World War, brought the figure back up to above 6 per cent, where it has remained since the mid-1970s despite the much weaker economic growth and higher rates of unemployment which have prevailed since then.[4]

Until the post-war period, non-Europeans accounted for only a tiny fraction of France's foreign population. Beginning in the 1950s, their numbers grew rapidly. By the time of the 1982 census, Europeans represented less than half of the foreign population although, as a proportion of the immigrant population (including naturalized immigrants as well as immigrants who remained foreign nationals), Europeans remained in the majority until as recently as the 1990 census (Figures 1.2 and 1.3). Up to and including the 1968 census, the majority of the foreign population in France came from directly neighboring countries. Prior to the 1920s, Belgium and Italy alone accounted for over half of all foreign residents. Belgians, attracted by job opportunities in the coal, steel and textile industries just over the border in north-east France, outnumbered Italians until the beginning of the twentieth century. Italians, who were traditionally concentrated in unskilled jobs in south-eastern France, then took over as the single largest national group, which they remained until being overtaken by the Spaniards when their numbers peaked in 1968. Spanish immigrants were particularly numerous in south-western France, where many worked as agricultural laborers (Dreyfus and Milza 1987; *Cahier de l'Observatoire de l'intégration* 1994).

Between the wars, a large Polish community had also developed. Most Polish immigrants took jobs on the land or in the mines. They quickly became the largest expatriate community originating in a country without a shared border with France, and second only in size to that of the Italians. By 1931, they accounted for half of all foreign workers in the mining industry. The slump hit this sector particularly hard, forcing tens of thousands of Poles to return home. Up to 100,000 more



	1946	1954	1962	1968	1975	1982	1990	1999
Europeans	88.7	79.1	72.2	71.6	60.7	47.6	40.6	41.3
Maghrebis	2.3	12.9	18.9	23.6	32.3	38.8	38.7	34.8
Other Africans	0.8	0.1	0.8	1.2	2.3	4.2	11.8	8.7
Asians	4.0	2.3	1.7	1.7	3.0	7.8	6.7	12.5
Others	4.2	5.6	6.4	1.9	1.7	1.6	2.2	2.7
All	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

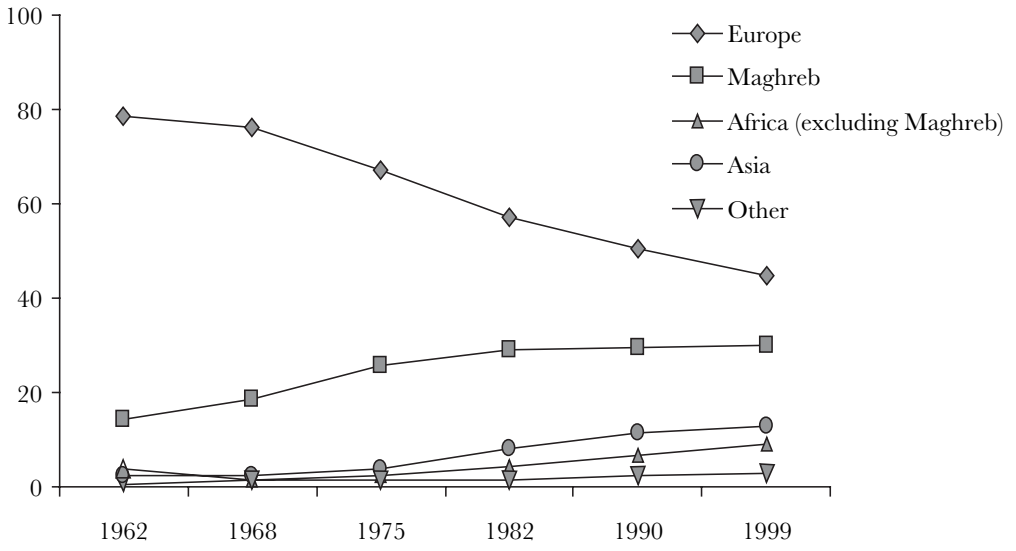
Figure 1.2 Main nationality groups as percentage of France's foreign population, 1946–99

Sources: INSEE 1992a: table R6; 2002a: table P6B.
Note
As defined by INSEE, Asians include Turks.

followed them immediately after the Second World War. When the Iron Curtain sealed Poland's borders shortly afterwards, the remaining community in France stagnated and then declined rapidly in importance (Ponty 1988).

While economic motives were to the fore among the four main national communities which dominated migratory flows to France until the middle of the twentieth century, political factors also played a significant role in two of them. Throughout the nineteenth century, political exiles from Italy had found a refuge in France, and their numbers were swollen following Mussolini's accession to power in 1922. Political refugees began leaving Spain almost as soon as the Civil War began in 1936. When it ended three years later with the defeat of the Republicans, almost half a million Spaniards crossed into France; though many later returned home, at least half of them stayed.

A number of smaller immigrant communities were formed mainly as a result of political persecution. Armenians, for example, regrouped in France during the 1920s after fleeing a campaign of genocide instigated by Turkey. At about the same time, more than 100,000 Russians hostile to the Bolshevik Revolution settled in France, mainly in the Paris area. Before the First World War, about 40,000 Jews had fled to France from the Russian Empire, where they were threatened



	1962	1968	1975	1982	1990	1999
Europe	78.7	76.4	67.1	57.3	50.4	45.0
Maghreb	14.2	18.5	25.6	28.9	29.3	30.2
Africa (excluding Maghreb)	0.7	1.4	2.4	4.3	6.6	9.1
Asia	2.4	2.5	3.6	7.9	11.4	12.7
Other	4.0	1.2	1.3	1.6	2.3	3.0
All	100	100	100	100	100	100

Figure 1.3 Main regions of origin as percentage of France's immigrant population, 1962–99

Source: INSEE 2005: table 1.8.1.
Note
As defined by INSEE, Asia includes Turkey.

by widespread pogroms. With the rise of fascism during the 1930s, well over 100,000 Jews from Germany and eastern Europe sought refuge in France. During the Second World War foreigners – particularly those who had come to France because of political persecution – were to play a vigorous role in the Resistance, thereby contributing to the liberation from Nazi occupation (Courtois 1989).

After the war, plans drawn up by the French government foresaw a need for substantial numbers of immigrants to assist in reconstruction work and to compensate for the country's weak demographic growth. In the debate over the orientation of immigration policy, there were two main camps: economists such as Jean Monnet, who were mainly concerned to remedy immediate labor shortages, and demographers such as Alfred Sauvy and Georges Mauco, who favored permanent immigration by families to compensate for France's low population growth. There was also considerable debate over whether or not to impose ethnic quotas similar to those operated by the United States until 1965. While there was widespread agreement that Africans and Asians were less desirable than Europeans, those whose main concern was the labor market were less anxious to formalize an ethnic hierarchy than were those who saw immigration as vital for France's demographic future. A compromise eventually emerged when the

foundations of France's post-war immigration policy were laid in a government ordinance issued on 2 November 1945 (Weil 1991: 53–62).

One of the most important aspects of the regulations laid out in this ordinance was the separation of residence and work permits. Although it was expected that most immigrants would in the first instance be foreign workers, the right to live in France was not made conditional on being in employment. Thus while labor recruitment quickly outpaced demographic considerations as the dominant concern shaping immigration policy (Tapinos 1975), the regulatory framework readily permitted family settlement, and would later make it difficult for the state to subordinate residence rights to narrowly economic criteria.

No ethnic quotas were laid down in the 1945 ordinance, but in implementing these formal regulations, successive governments sought as far as possible to encourage European rather than African or Asian immigrants. Thus the Office National d'Immigration (ONI),[5] a state-run agency established under the 1945 ordinance with the task of regulating migratory inflows, immediately opened recruiting offices in Italy while leaving other countries untouched. The pattern of inflows which subsequently developed was, however, very different from what had been expected. Italians and other Europeans were less attracted to France than had been hoped. The fastest growing groups originated in the Maghreb, i.e. the western part of North Africa, consisting of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. Their share of the foreign population leapt from just 2 per cent in 1946 to 39 per cent in 1982. From the mid-1970s onwards, other non-Europeans – principally South-East Asians, Turks and Africans from south of the Sahara (mainly former French colonies in West and Central Africa) – also grew rapidly in number, further eroding the share of Europeans among the immigrant population. This shift is in part a reflection of the fact that differences in living standards between different parts of western Europe have generally lessened during the post-war period, particularly since the creation of the European Economic Community in 1957, and this has reduced the incentives for intra-European migration. At the same time, the gap in living standards between Europe and formerly colonized regions in Africa and elsewhere has grown, making migration towards the rich North an increasingly attractive prospect to those in the impoverished South.

After the Second World War, France's overseas empire, which until then was second in size only to that of Britain, was gradually decolonized. Independence was granted to French Indochina in 1954 and to French West and Central Africa in 1960. The last major step in this process came with the independence of Algeria in 1962. Until then, Algeria had been officially regarded as an integral part of French territory and all its inhabitants – including those of non-European descent – had the formal status of French nationals. Neighboring Morocco and Tunisia were also under French rule until 1956, but as these states had the juridical status of protectorates (implying a milder type of colonial domination than that obtaining in Algeria), their citizens were not officially classed as French. The formal equality enjoyed by Algerians under a new statute applied to their country in 1947 gave them complete freedom of movement in and out of metropolitan France, i.e. France as commonly understood, as distinct from overseas territories under French

sovereignty, and they retained this right for several years after independence. They were by the same token exempt from the regulatory powers of the ONI. From a mere 22,000 in 1946, their numbers grew to 805,000 in 1982, making Algerians the largest national group among the foreign population in France.

If international migrants are defined without regard for current or past nationality as people living in a country other than that in which they were born, one of the largest groups of international migrants in France consists of people of European descent who left the Maghreb at the time of independence. French citizens from birth and generally indistinguishable in their somatic (i.e. bodily) appearance from the majority of the French population, these 'white' settlers from former colonies are never referred to as immigrants in official or popular discourse, but are instead known as *rapatriés* (repatriated citizens) or, more colloquially, as *pieds-noirs*. France still retains a few overseas possessions, known as the DOM-TOM (Départements d'Outre-Mer et Territoires d'Outre-Mer, i.e. overseas departments and territories). The most important of these possessions are the four Départements d'Outre-Mer: Guadeloupe, Martinique and French Guyana (in the Caribbean) and Réunion (in the Indian Ocean). As French citizens, their inhabitants are exempt from French immigration controls and do not feature in official statistics on the foreign population. However, as they are mainly of African or Asian descent and easily recognizable by virtue of their somatic features as originating outside France, at a popular level they are often treated as 'immigrants' in a way that the *rapatriés* are not.

At the time of the 1999 census, 357,000 people born in the DOM-TOM were living in metropolitan France. If, excluding the *rapatriés*, residents of France who were born elsewhere are classified by their country of origin, irrespective of their nationality status, those originating in the DOM-TOM at present constitute the sixth largest immigrant group in metropolitan France (Figure 1.4). If population groups in France are classified by foreign nationality alone, the DOM-TOM

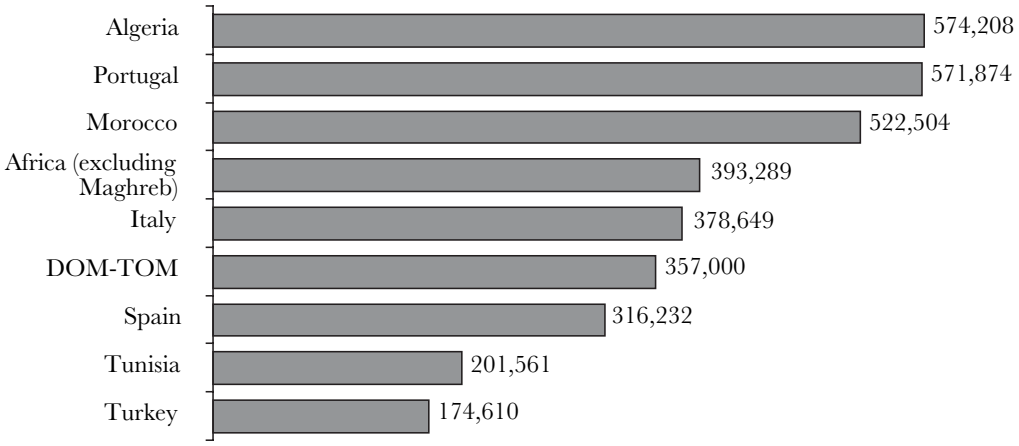


Figure 1.4 Main countries of origin of international migrants (excluding rapatriés) and French citizens born in territories currently of DOM-TOM status living in metropolitan France in 1999

Source: INSEE 2002b; 2005: tables 11, 12.

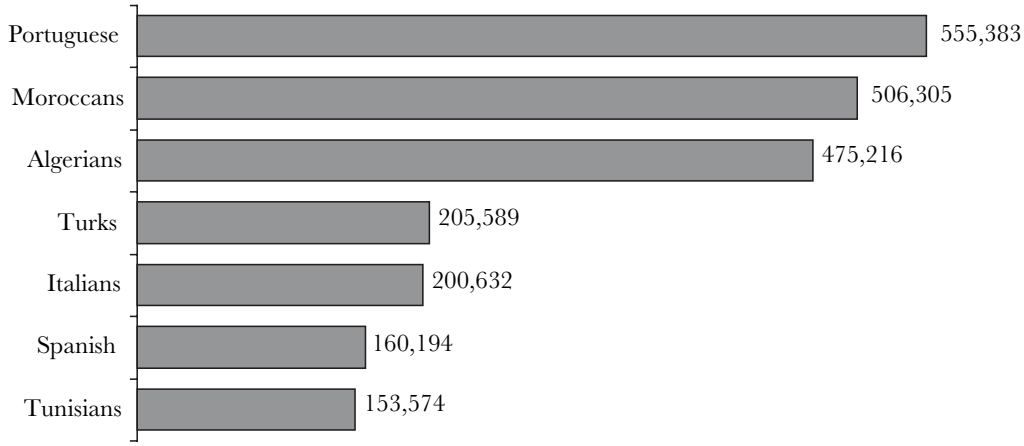


Figure 1.5 Main nationalities among France's foreign population, 1999

Source: INSEE 2002a: table P6B.

group disappears from the picture, and the rank order of the others is modified as a consequence of different rates of naturalization (Figure 1.5).

The Iberian peninsula has provided the only major exception to the post-war decline of Europeans among France's foreign population. The number of Spaniards in France grew from 302,000 in 1946 to a peak of 607,000 in 1968, falling back to 216,000 in 1990. The rise of the Portuguese community was the most rapid of all. During the 1960s, under the dictatorship of Antonio de Oliviera Salazar, Portugal became engaged in a series of wars designed to prevent its African colonies from becoming independent. Rather than fight, hundreds of thousands of young Portuguese men fled the country, and most of them headed for France, where the authorities unofficially waived normal entry regulations (Weil 1991: 68). Unlike the Spanish, they had no previous tradition of mass migration to France. Between the 1962 and 1968 censuses, the number of Portuguese expatriates in France rose from a mere 50,000 to 296,000. By the time of the following census, in 1975, the figure stood at 758,000, the largest for any national group in France.

While the size of the Portuguese population subsequently remained fairly stable, the number of non-Europeans continued to rise. Maghrebis, who were the first non-Europeans to make their presence felt on a significant scale, have since 1982 represented around 30 per cent of the total immigrant population, making them by far the largest non-European minority in France. During the last thirty years rapid rates of growth have been recorded among other Africans (up from 2.4 per cent of the immigrant population in 1975 to 9.1 per cent in 1999) and Asians (up from 3.6 to 12.7 per cent during the same period). Non-Europeans have thus been by far the most dynamic components in recent migratory inflows.

Before the Second World War, when most of these countries were under colonial rule, relatively few of their inhabitants migrated to France. During the First World War over half a million 'native' troops were enlisted in the French armed forces and more than 200,000 'colonial workers', mainly from the Maghreb and Indochina, were brought over to ease civilian labor shortages in France, but

as there was a deliberate policy of repatriation as soon as the conflict ended only about 6,000 remained by 1920 (*Hommes et migrations* 1991b). Small numbers of Algerians had begun migrating to France before the First World War, and these flows resumed during the inter-war period. Unlike European migrants, many of whom settled permanently in France with their families, the overwhelming majority of Maghrebis came to France alone, worked there for a few years and then returned to their families in their country of origin. Often, they were replaced by a relative or sometimes a neighbor from the same village, in what became known as the 'rotation' system. In all, it is estimated that as many as 500,000 Algerians may have migrated temporarily to France during the inter-war period, though the number present at any one time was very much smaller than this (Gillette and Sayad 1984; MacMaster 1997).

During the Second World War, hundreds of thousands of 'native' troops were mobilized in support of the liberation of France. Most were repatriated to the colonies after the war and their role was largely forgotten by the general public in France until the release of Rachid Bouchareb's movie *Indigènes* (Natives) in 2006 drew attention to the sacrifices of troops from French North Africa. Immediately after the war the French government had encouraged family immigration from Italy and other European countries (Weil 1991: 63). Family reunification was also rapidly facilitated for the Portuguese migrants who arrived during the 1960s and early 1970s (Rogers 1986: 45; Amar and Milza 1990: 263). A very different attitude was taken towards immigrants from Africa and Asia. In 1956, faced with growing numbers of Algerian migrant workers living in extremely poor housing, the government set up a state-run agency to provide them with hostel accommodation; while the initiative was in some respects clearly beneficial, it was hoped that, as the accommodation was unsuitable for families, this would discourage the wives and children of Algerians from coming to join them in France (Weil 1991: 60). After independence, the authorities in Algeria and other ex-colonies concurred with their counterparts in France in seeking to discourage permanent family settlement, partly because it reduced the flow of remittances sent home by expatriate workers (Weil 1991: 70–1). However, they were to prove increasingly unsuccessful in this.

The trend towards family settlement is clearly visible in Table 1.1. Within the French population, there is a roughly equal balance between the sexes, with the longer life expectancy of women reflected in the slight numerical superiority of females over males. Among foreign nationals, men usually outnumber women. This is because most (but not all) immigrant workers have initially been men; spouses and children have usually joined them at a later stage while some have remained in the country of origin. The current imbalance in favor of females among the Polish community reflects the unusual age pyramid of this group, more than half of whom are aged 65 or over; the longer life expectancy of women consequently weighs particularly heavily here. The general imbalance in favor of men is far less pronounced among Europeans than among Maghrebis. Throughout the post-war period, family settlement has been the norm among Italians and Spaniards. While the few Portuguese in France during the early post-war period were mainly men,

Table 1.1 Females as percentage of selected nationalities in France, 1946–99

	1946	*1954*	*1962*	*1968*	*1975*	*1982*	*1990*	*1999*
French	53.1	52.6	51.9	51.8	51.8	51.8	51.8	51.7
Italians	45.2	42.7	42.7	44.0	43.7	43.0	42.8	43.2
Polish	48.5	47.9	47.8	50.2	54.0	58.5	61.3	61.8
Portuguese	24.8	27.0	30.0	35.5	46.2	46.0	46.8	46.7
Spanish	39.7	42.1	44.1	46.8	47.3	47.3	48.0	49.8
Algerians	2.3	6.5	16.0	26.7	32.0	38.3	41.3	42.8
Moroccans	1.7	9.3	16.2	21.8	26.7	38.9	43.8	45.5
Tunisians	8.5	24.6	31.5	33.3	30.9	38.2	41.1	41.3

Source: INSEE 1986: table 8; 1992a: table 10; 2002a: table N3.

as soon as mass migration began in the mid-1960s families quickly followed and within a decade a gender balance similar to that of other European groups was achieved.

Family reunification was much slower among Maghrebis. Although Algerians far outnumbered the Portuguese during the early post-war decades, it was not until the mid-1960s that a trend towards family settlement began to gather pace among Algerian immigrants. Even today, half a century after the rise of mass Algerian migration, Algerians have still not achieved quite the gender balance attained by the Portuguese in little less than a decade. During the last thirty years, family settlement has nevertheless become the norm among Maghrebis, with a female-to-male ratio close to that of Europeans. A similar pattern is also apparent among other non-Europeans. According to the 1999 census, 46.4 per cent of nationals from former French colonies south of the Sahara were female; among Turks the figure was 47.2 per cent and among South-East Asians 50.1 per cent (INSEE 2002a: table P6).

1.4 Immigration after the 'end' of immigration

In 1974, France officially halted inward migration. This was one of the most important early policy decisions taken under the center-right presidency of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, who was head of state from 1974 to 1981. The halt – formally termed a 'suspension' – of immigration was not all that it seemed. It has in one sense become a classic example of what the French call *le provisoire qui dure* (a lasting temporary measure), for thirty years later the 'suspension' (a seemingly interim arrangement) still has not been lifted. At another level, however, the moratorium was never as sweeping as it appeared. From the start, there were several important gaps in the seemingly blanket interdiction on inward migration; other blindspots later became apparent.

The decision to suspend immigration came in the aftermath of the Middle East War of 1973, when a sharp rise in oil prices sparked widespread fears over the prospects for economic growth throughout western Europe. France, like

other labor-importing countries, decided to close her borders to fresh inflows of immigrant workers because of fears of rising unemployment. As a member of the European Community, however, she was not allowed to impede the entry of EC nationals. Nor did the ban on labor migration apply to asylum-seekers, who were covered by entirely different legal and procedural arrangements. Certain categories of professional and highly skilled personnel were also exempt, and there were provisions for making other exceptions if the need arose in particular sectors of the economy.

If these exceptions did not appear to cut across the principle of a ban on 'immigration', this was in part because of unstated but nonetheless powerful stereotypes attached to that term in everyday discourse. Because of the dominance of the labor market in shaping the basic thrust of migratory flows, *immigrés* (immigrants) had come to be regarded as synonymous with *travailleurs immigrés* (immigrant workers), who were in turn equated with unskilled workers rather than professionally qualified personnel (Sayad 1979). As the victims of political persecution, asylum-seekers and refugees stood outside this economic matrix, and were consequently not associated with popular notions of immigrants. Because most unskilled foreign workers were non-Europeans, immigrants as a whole had come to be seen essentially as people of color, whereas European and other Western residents were more commonly referred to as *étrangers* (foreigners). The degree to which the 1974 ban on immigration was perceived to have taken effect would therefore depend on the extent to which people of non-European origin became less visible to the general public. In the event, exactly the opposite was to happen. Far from tapering off, the presence of non-European immigrants and their descendants became ever more visible in virtually every sphere of French society.

This increased visibility has been partly a consequence of growing numbers, despite the formal ban on immigration. One of the main reasons for this lies in a complex web of domestic and international law which has prevented the state from subordinating the rights of foreigners to the crude dictates of the labor market (Hollifield 1992). A crucial instance was the failure of the government's attempts to impose a ban on family reunifications. Such a ban was announced as part of the 1974 freeze on immigration, but it soon proved unworkable and in 1978 the Conseil d'État, France's highest administrative court, declared it to be unlawful. While procedural obstacles have continued to hamper dependants wishing to join family heads in France, the principle of their right to do so overrides the ban on new labor migrants, and family reunifications have been the single most important element in documented migratory inflows during the last three decades.

This has helped to bring about a major structural change in the population originating outside Europe. Whereas men of working age had been dominant until the early 1970s, families subsequently became the norm. Before family reunification, many immigrant workers had been housed in hostels and other forms of accommodation which kept them apart from the majority of French nationals. The arrival of families led to a much deeper penetration into the mainstream

housing market. At the same time, the children of immigrants were enrolled as a matter of course in French schools. In this way, immigrant groups which had seldom been encountered outside the workplace became visible on a daily basis in a growing number of neighborhoods. Their increased visibility would not, of course, have been so marked had it not been for one other crucial point: far more than earlier generations of immigrants, those originating in Africa and Asia were instantly recognizable because of their skin color and other somatic features.

By 1977, the government had reached the view not only that the temporary suspension of immigration announced three years earlier should become permanent, but also that the existing immigrant population should, if possible, be reduced. This task was entrusted to Lionel Stoléru, Minister of State for Immigrant Workers from 1977 to 1981, who focused his efforts on inducing non-EC, essentially Maghrebi, immigrants to return home. Financial incentives designed to encourage voluntary repatriation under a system known as *l'aide au retour* (repatriation assistance) launched in 1977 met with little success. Most of those who took up the offer were Spanish or Portuguese immigrants who had probably decided to return home in any case, partly because the political climate there had recently improved with the end of the Franco and Salazar dictatorships; very few Maghrebis, at whom the program was primarily aimed, took advantage of it.

In collaboration with the Interior Minister, Christian Bonnet, Stoléru therefore devised a scheme under which immigrant workers and their families could be forcibly repatriated if they were deemed to be surplus to current labor requirements. Such a system would require a radical overhaul of the regulations governing work and residence permits, but legislative proposals brought forward in 1979–80 to facilitate mass expulsions of this kind failed to command the necessary parliamentary majority. The Interior Ministry used discretionary powers to expel as many individual foreigners as possible, but the numbers involved – on average, about 5,000 a year between 1978 and 1981, most of them young Maghrebis – were far smaller than the hundreds of thousands explicitly targeted in Stoléru's mass repatriation plans (Weil 1991: 107–38).

With hindsight, it seems clear that these strong-arm tactics were counter-productive. Precisely because they feared losing access to the French labor market if they returned home – as Maghrebis had traditionally done under the rotation system – many decided to remain in France, and to bring in their families, thereby increasing the population of non-European origin. That population was further swollen in two other main ways: by a rise in the number of asylum-seekers and by inflows of illegal immigrants.

Under the Constitution adopted in 1946, France committed herself to granting asylum, i.e. formal refugee status including full residence rights, to anyone persecuted for acting to uphold liberty. The grounds for entitlement to refugee status were widened by France's signature of the 1951 Geneva Convention (subsequently updated by the New York Protocol of 1967), which applies to people fleeing their country out of a well founded fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinions. The operation of the convention in France is managed by the Office Français de Protection des Réfugiés

et Apatrides (OFPRA). Until the late 1970s, all but a tiny fraction of those granted refugee status by OFPRA were Europeans, most of whom had fled the Soviet bloc. This began to change after the Vietnam war, between the Communist North and a US-backed régime in the South. When the war ended with a Communist victory in 1975, it was followed by an exodus of asylum-seekers who became known as 'boat people' because of the small craft in which many of them fled. Vietnamese exiles were soon joined by Cambodians fleeing the authoritarian régime of Pol Pot and Laotians who feared for their safety because they had assisted the US during the Vietnam war. Most went to the US, but about 100,000 – divided more or less evenly between Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians – entered France, which until 1954 had ruled Indochina as part of its colonial empire; several thousand Chinese nationals, who had a long history of commercial activity in the region, came with them. Most were granted refugee status.

Because they were clearly perceived as victims of political intolerance and because Vietnamese nationals in particular were held to have valuable entrepreneurial skills (many fled their country following the blanket nationalization of the private sector in 1978), asylum-seekers from South-East Asia aroused relatively little hostility in France. During the 1980s, however, when asylum-seekers from other regions, notably Africa, grew in number, a less welcoming attitude developed. During this period, requests for asylum grew sharply across the whole of western Europe, and there were widespread suspicions that many applicants were really economic migrants attempting to circumvent the ban on labor migration imposed in the mid-1970s. In France, the number of applicants rose from fewer than 20,000 in 1981 to 61,000 in 1989; at the same time, the rate of rejection grew from 22 to 72 per cent (OFPRA 1994), a clear indication that the authorities were increasingly inclined to view claims of political persecution as a cover for economic motives.

Many of those to whom asylum was refused remained in the country illegally, partly because the often lengthy procedures involved in asylum cases were such that, by the time a decision was reached, applicants had in practice become settled in France. By 1990, about 100,000 rejected aslyum-seekers were estimated to be living illegally in France. That year, the government sought to reduce cases of this kind by speeding up decision-making procedures, reducing the average length from three years to six months. This, combined with the high rate of rejections, appears to have acted as a disincentive to new asylum-seekers, for the number of applications each year fell steadily from a peak of 61,000 in 1989 to 17,000 in 1996, but they began to rise again the following year, reaching 52,000 in 2003. In 2005, the total number of OFPRA-recognized refugees living in France stood at 119,000 (excluding children). Almost 53,000 of them were from Asia, 33,000 from Europe and 29,000 from Africa (OFPRA 2006: 64).

For many years prior to the 1974 suspension of labor migration, most foreign workers had technically broken the law by taking up employment without the required residence and work permits. Because of labor shortages, the government had willingly acquiesced in this, issuing the necessary documents *a posteriori* under a procedure known as 'regularization'. When the 1974 suspension was announced, many thousands of undocumented workers found themselves trapped without

papers; others later joined them, often in the belief that the freeze was only a temporary measure. When the left came to power in 1981, it declared an amnesty for illegal immigrants, provided they had entered France before 1 January and provided they had proof of employment. In all, 132,000 illegal immigrants were regularized in this way during the winter of 1981–2 (Marie 1988). The number of undocumented immigrants is estimated to have grown subsequently at the rate of about 30,000 a year, making a total of perhaps 300,000 by the early 1990s (*L'Expansion*, 19 March 1992). Current government estimates put the total at between 200,000 and 400,000 (*Le Monde*, 29 Nov. 2005).

While the numbers and origins of undocumented residents cannot, by definition, be known with certainty, it is likely that most come from outside Europe. This was certainly the case of those regularized in 1981–2, some 61 per cent of whom were Africans, with Maghrebis alone accounting for 46 per cent (Marie 1988). When a partial amnesty for rejected asylum-seekers was declared in 1991, 49,000 came out of clandestinity in the hope of securing residence permits; a similar number are thought to have remained in hiding. Africans and Asians accounted for 90 per cent of the 12,000 whose applications were successful (Lebon 1993: 104).

Besides undocumented additions to France's immigrant population, well over 100,000 foreigners take up residence each year under recognized procedures. In 1992, resident permits were issued to 116,558 newly entering foreigners (Lebon 1993: 85–7). In 2003, the number was 172,096, among whom 52 per cent were Africans, 28 per cent were Europeans (mainly from EU countries) and 13 per cent were Asians (HCI 2004: 22; INSEE 2005: table 2.1.1). Excluding entrants from the EU, only 6,500 came to take up jobs while 9,790 were granted refugee status; almost all the others – over 100,000 in all – were granted residence permits for family reasons. Until recently, most family entrants came under a procedure formally known as *regroupement familial* (family reunification), reuniting family members with foreigners, mainly immigrant workers, living in France. Since the late 1990s there has been a rapid rise in the number of spouses and other family members of foreign nationality granted the right to join French citizens living in France. Many of the sponsoring citizens are naturalized immigrants or descendants of immigrants holding French citizenship. By 2004, the majority of residence permits issued for family reasons went to family members of French citizens, many of whom were sponsoring spouses from their country of origin or that of their parents (Van Eeckhout 2006).

Despite regular inflows of this kind, there has been no change in the proportion of immigrants among the general population, which has remained stable at 7.4 per cent at every census from 1975 through to 1999 while the proportion of foreigners has fallen from a high of 6.8 per cent in 1982 to 5.6 per cent in 1999. The single most important factor contributing to this statistical dip in the foreign population has been the acquisition of French nationality by a steady flow of foreign residents.

Each year over 100,000 foreigners become French (Table 1.2). About half are immigrants who do so by naturalization, a process which requires a formal request for citizenship after five years of residence in France. Most of the others

Table 1.2 Acquisitions of French nationality by foreigners

	1996	*2000*	*2003*
By naturalization	50,730	68,750	67,326
By reintegration	7,368	8,728	9,776
By marriage to French spouse	19,127	26,056	30,921
Automatically at age of majority	–	8,570	4,710
By declaration prior to age of majority	–	35,883	29,419
By 'expression of choice'	29,845	–	–
Other	2,753	2,038	2,488
Total	109,823	150,025	144,640

Source: INSEE 2005: table 1.3.1.

Note
Data do not include children born French of foreign parents.

Table 1.3 Foreigners acquiring French nationality by countries of origin (per cent)

	1995	*2000*	*2003*
Europe	25.0	16.5	14.5
EU	20.0	10.6	8.9
Spain	2.0	0.8	0.6
Italy	2.1	1.1	0.7
Portugal	14.8	7.9	6.9
Africa	53.5	59.6	63.9
Maghreb	43.7	48.4	49.1
Other African countries	9.8	11.3	14.8
Asia	17.7	19.8	16.6
Turkey	5.7	8.6	7.5
South-East Asia*	6.7	5.1	3.1
Other	3.8	4.1	5.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: INSEE 2005: table 1.3.3.

Notes
* ex-French Indochina.
Data do not include children born French of foreign parents.

are divided roughly evenly between foreigners acquiring French citizenship through marriage to a French spouse and children born in France to foreign parents who automatically become French on reaching the age of majority if they have not already exercised their right to French citizenship. More than half of the foreigners acquiring French citizenship are of African origin; Asians are the next largest regional category, followed by Europeans (Table 1.3).

Prior to 1993, automaticity was the norm for the children of immigrants, i.e. they became French on reaching the age of majority without any action being

required on their part. In the early 1990s, around 24,000 young men and women – most of whose parents were of non-European origin – were estimated to be acquiring French nationality in this way each year under Article 44 of the French Nationality Code (CNF). In addition, more than 17,000 children born each year to foreign parents, mainly Algerians and Africans from former French colonies south of the Sahara, were French from birth under Article 23 of the CNF, which conferred French nationality automatically on any one born in France having at least one parent who was also born on French territory. Because Algeria and certain other former colonies, principally in West and Central Africa, were deemed to be part of French territory prior to independence, the children of immigrants originating in those countries were not formally classified among the ranks of foreigners acquiring French nationality, for they were by law French from birth.

In response to claims that French nationality laws were giving citizenship too easily to young people of immigrant origin, the automaticity of Article 44 was abolished by the center-right government elected in 1993. This meant that, during the mid-1990s, children of immigrants acquired French citizenship only if they formally requested it by performing what was called *une manifestation de volonté* (expression of choice). On returning to power in 1997, the left restored automaticity and made it possible for young people of immigrant origin to take French citizenship before reaching the age of majority by making a formal declaration to that effect. Table 1.2 shows that these legal changes made very little difference to the number of second-generation foreigners acquiring French citizenship. In the absence of automaticity, the numbers doing so in 1996 by 'expression of choice' (29,845) were similar to the estimated 24,000 who automatically became French each year prior to the 1993 reform. When the left restored automaticity and opened up the option of acquiring French citizenship by declaration prior to the age of majority, most of the young people concerned exercised that option: 29,419 did so in 2003 while 4,710 acquired citizenship by automaticity.

While the 1993 reform amended Article 23 so that it no longer applied to children born since then to Africans from former French colonies south of the Sahara, it remained valid for the vast majority of children born to Algerian immigrants and for anyone born in metropolitan France or territories still administered by France overseas (i.e. the DOM-TOM), provided at least one of their parents was also born there.

It follows from all this that statistics on nationality provide no more than a very rough guide to the number of immigrants living in France, and they offer an even poorer index of the minority ethnic population, i.e. immigrants together with their descendants. At the time of the 1999 census, some 5.9 million people living in metropolitan France (i.e. France including Corsica, but excluding the DOM-TOM) were born elsewhere (Figure 1.6). Of these, 1.6 million – mainly *rapatriés* and people originating in the DOM-TOM – were French nationals from birth. If we define immigrants as people living in France who were born abroad as foreign nationals, 4.3 million residents of this kind were recorded in the 1999 census. More than a third of these – some 1.6 million – had acquired French nationality. At the same time, there were at least half a million second-generation foreigners

in France who, having been born there, were not immigrants; most were likely to become French on or before the age of majority.[6] As the core of Article 23 of the CNF was not affected by the 1993 reform, the third generation, i.e. children born in France of parents who were themselves born there to immigrants, will all be French from birth.

A similar pattern has been at work throughout the twentieth century. More than nine million people living in France today are either the children or grandchildren of immigrants (Tribalat 2004b). As the vast majority were born in France and have French nationality, all but around half a million of them – immigrant-born children who have not yet acquired French citizenship – appear simply as 'French' in Figure 1.6. As noted earlier, the absorption of people of foreign origin into the national community has left relatively few monuments in the collective memory of France. The seeming invisibility of past generations of immigrants and of those who are today descended from them is often regarded as proof of the success with which they have been incorporated into French society. Immigrants who have settled in France during the post-war period, and more particularly those who have come to the fore during the last thirty years, are often felt to threaten this tradition. It is widely claimed that non-Europeans are much harder to 'integrate' than Europeans. Far from disappearing without trace, they have actually increased in visibility at a time when successive governments have been claiming that immigration has been halted. While there is a marked reluctance to speak of them as ethnic minorities – as if the very use of the term might somehow make a reality of the specter which has come to haunt French public debate – there is a widespread fear that immigration has been leading to the formation of permanently distinct minorities within French society.

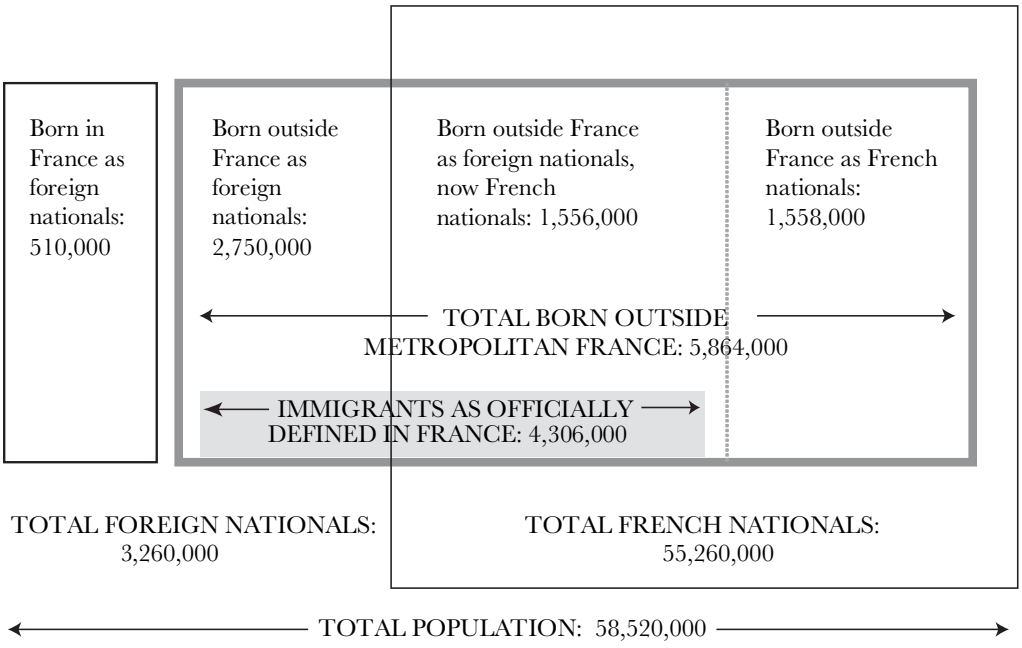


Figure 1.6 Population of metropolitan France in 1999 by place of birth and nationality

Source: Derived from INSEE 2005: tables 1.1, 1.6.

1.5 Ethnicity and integration

Ethnicity and a range of associated concepts play a central role in migration studies in the English-speaking world. They are often mistrusted in France (de Rudder and Goodwin 1993), and it should be said that certain aspects of British and American usage may justify some of these misgivings. The French preference for a discourse of integration has been regarded with equal mistrust in Britain, again often for understandable reasons. It would be a mistake to side uncritically with either camp. No less importantly, it would be foolish to disregard potentially valuable insights derived from one or other approach. Understanding of this kind is possible only if terms are defined and applied with care. Unfortunately, both the discourse of integration and that of ethnicity have been characterized by enormous diversity and not a little confusion.

There is fairly general agreement that the core of ethnicity lies in a sense of group belonging. Theorists and practitioners of ethnic studies disagree, however, over the types of groups involved and the criteria by which belonging is established.[7] Even when – as is the case in the present study – the field of ethnic relations is confined to phenomena associated with international migration, there are many variations in the approaches adopted. A first difficulty concerns the relationship between subjectively felt identities and groups delineated on the basis of empirically observed criteria. Are ethnic groups the subjective creations of social actors, or should they be defined through empirical procedures devised by outside investigators? Bearing in mind that a group of people stigmatized by others may not *ipso facto* share a sense of community, if scholars accept that ethnic groups are the creations of social actors what should be the relative importance accorded to exclusionary as compared with self-inclusionary practices? The specific criteria by which ethnic groups may be subjectively or objectively delineated are very diverse. Three main strands may be usefully distinguished: biological, politico-territorial and cultural. Few if any conceptions of ethnicity rest on just one of these components. Most involve a complex hierarchy of elements.

In the United States, the most common notion of ethnicity has been based on the relatively objective criterion of national origins. A person may be said to belong to a particular ethnic group to the extent that he or she comes from or is descended from someone originating in a particular country. While territorial origins are the prime element in this view of ethnicity, a biological dimension is also involved via the question of ancestry. Biological ancestry is fundamental to another form of inter-group analysis pioneered in the US, that of 'race relations'. Here somatic features, notably skin color, serve to delineate different groups, above all 'blacks' and 'whites'. In recent years the fairly neat distinction between these two approaches has become blurred (Yinger 1985: 153; Lee 1993: 86), partly because it has been recognized that both involve more subjective constructions than may at first meet the eye. For a person whose ancestors come from a variety of countries, there is a large element of subjectivity involved in identifying with one ethnic group rather than with another. Similarly, the seemingly objective fact of somatic difference becomes significant only when human beings make it so in

their social dealings. Bearing in mind that the majority of blacks in the US have at least one white among their ancestors, it is impossible to draw a purely biological line between blacks and whites. 'Blacks' were constructed as such by 'whites' as part of a process of social domination and exclusion.

In British academic and political discourse, which has drawn on and adapted American models, ethnic minorities are conventionally defined as groups subjected to discriminatory behavior by members of the majority population. Because carefully controlled tests have shown that people who are somatically different from the 'white' majority suffer from particularly severe discrimination, until recently they alone were officially recognized as ethnic minorities by bodies such as the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE). As the CRE's name implies, its main purpose is to fight against 'racial' discrimination. The quotation marks are necessary because there is now broad agreement among scholars that the idea of biologically distinct races of human beings has no scientific foundation. 'Racial' categories are not, as the expression may unfortunately be taken to imply, objective facts but products of racialization, i.e. patterns of meaning in which 'social relations between people have been structured by the signification of human biological characteristics in such a way as to define and construct differentiated social collectivities' (Miles 1989: 75). The socially constructed nature of 'racial' differences is regrettably obscured by the British and American habit of talking about 'race relations', a phrase which misleadingly suggests that objectively distinguishable 'races' exist and interrelate.[8] Somatic differences between individuals do of course exist, but the relationships at the heart of 'race relations' are between social actors who view each other through the lenses of invented – and often pernicious – notions of racialized group boundaries.

For scholars working within the race relations paradigm, racial and ethnic minorities are one and the same thing (Jones 1993) and are generically defined by skin color: ethnic minorities are that part of the national population which is not classified as 'white'. In the UK, the only significant exceptions to this are the Irish, who, while classified as 'white', are recognized by the CRE as a group suffering significant levels of discrimination. Within the CRE's classification system, minority groups are subdivided by regions of origin, all of which lie outside the UK. This reflects the fact that the stigmatization of 'non-white' somatic features is a consequence of their association with distant territorial origins: dark skins have served to mark ethnic groups treated by members of the majority population as not belonging fully or legitimately to the national society in which they live. These biological and territorial factors are often implicitly linked in turn with cultural assumptions: people originating outside Britain have often been felt not to 'fit in' because of linguistic, religious or other cultural traditions associated with foreign countries.

A differently structured combination of biological, territorial and cultural criteria characterizes the notion of 'ethnic Germans'. This is the standard English translation of *Volksdeutsche*, and *deutsche Volkszugehörigen*, terms denoting individuals who are formally recognized as belonging to the German people. The legal foundation of this concept is a 1913 law basing German citizenship on

jus sanguinis, i.e. biological descent rather than territorial residence. The law was designed to enable people of German origin living outside Germany, particularly in eastern Europe and what is now the former Soviet Union, to retain German citizenship rights. While the initial driving force behind this system was German self-inclusion, it has at the same time carried important exclusionary implications. Because of their different biological and territorial origins, most immigrants of non-German descent who settle in Germany remain permanently outside the national community, and the same applies to their children and grandchildren.

It would be oversimplistic to see this system as an expression of crude biological racism. Brubaker (1992) has argued that it is ethnocultural rather than ethnoracial in intent, if not in effect. As parents generally attempt to rear their children in the cultural traditions which they themselves have inherited, the transmission of nationality through filiation is the juridical corollary of this cultural transaction. Significantly, when the rights of ethnic Germans in the Soviet bloc were strengthened by additional laws adopted in Germany after the Second World War, evidence of German culture was officially recognized as an acceptable alternative to proof of biological descent for those wishing to exercise these rights.

Rather than focusing on biological or territorial origins, a directly cultural view of ethnicity takes as its starting point participation in a shared system of meaning and values. Thus defined, ethnic minorities are characterized by linguistic, religious or moral codes different from those of the dominant population. The Spanish-speaking population in the US, Hindus in Britain and Muslims in France are examples of groups liable to be categorized in this way. The cultural view of ethnicity involves no biological component. In common with the other approaches already considered, however, it includes a politico-territorial dimension. Minority and majority groups appear as such only when they are positioned within politically structured spaces. Hispanics are not a minority group in Mexico; nor are Hindus in India nor Muslims in Algeria. They appear so only within the confines of a territory which is under the sovereignty of a state dominated by cultural norms of a different order.

Whether the emphasis falls on biological, territorial or cultural criteria, the cardinal feature of ethnic minorities is that they are in some way marked as originating outside the national society within which they now live. The central question to which this gives rise is how far minorities of this kind genuinely stand apart from the majority population. Do the members of minority ethnic groups belong wholly or primarily to their countries of origin, to the national societies in which they live, to separate collectivities in the margins of both, or to wider transnational entities? While the terminology of 'ethnic minorities' is seldom used in France, fundamentally similar questions lie at the heart of the French debate over 'integration'. When academics and politicians talk of a crisis of integration (Wieviorka 1990), they mean there is a danger that people of immigrant origin are being inadequately incorporated into French society.

Unlike their German neighbors, the French have a long tradition of mixing *jus sanguinis*, giving citizenship through filiation, and *jus soli*, through which birth within the national territory brings entitlement to citizenship. An important underlying assumption has always been that both methods of bestowing citizenship were

built on a strong foundation of cultural cohesion. While immigrants from other countries could be naturalized only if they furnished proof of cultural assimilation, it was assumed that their children, socialized from birth in France, would be sufficiently French in outlook to justify the automatic acquisition of citizenship on reaching adulthood. These and many other related assumptions have been called into question in recent years.

Until quite recently, the overwhelming majority of immigrants came from countries which share with France a tradition of Catholicism. Today, large numbers come from countries where the dominant faith is Islam, a religion which until their arrival had virtually no significant history within France.[9] Most Muslim immigrants come from North and West Africa and are visually recognizable as originating outside the country. Because their children display similar somatic features, it is widely (though not always correctly) assumed that they, too, are Muslims. Controversies such as the Islamic headscarf affair, which began in 1989 when three Muslim girls refused to remove their headscarves during school classes, have been symptomatic of widespread anxieties over the compatibility of Islamic culture with French norms. Doubts over the commitment of young people of immigrant origin to the dominant values of French society found their most powerful symbolic expression in the reform of French nationality laws enacted in 1993 so as to require immigrant-born youths to request French nationality instead of receiving it automatically.

The immigrant populations which have been settling in France in recent decades have been doing so in a context of high unemployment, fitful growth and major economic restructuring. The opportunities for effective socio-economic incorporation have therefore been far less plentiful than during earlier periods. It is indeed arguable that the roots of present fears concerning ineffective integration lie far more in socio-economic circumstances than in cultural differences between post-colonial migrants and their European predecessors. As Noiriel (1988: 247–94) has pointed out, bouts of xenophobia similar to that currently directed against non-European immigrants marked the economic downturns of the 1880s and the 1930s, when Italians and Poles were castigated as 'unassimilable', which in the language of the day was equivalent to saying they were impossible to integrate.

Charges of this kind were less a reflection of the cultural differences characterizing immigrants than of an unwillingness among the French themselves to incorporate relative newcomers at a time of economic difficulty. In this respect, the problematic of integration runs closer than it might sometimes appear to that of race relations, for both are concerned (albeit from different perspectives) with patterns of social differentiation marked by discriminatory behavior against people of foreign origin. In France, as in Britain, the somatic features of people of color frequently arouse exclusionary attitudes. Immigrants of African and Asian descent originating in the DOM-TOM often suffer from discrimination of this kind, despite the fact that they are French by nationality and to a large extent by cultural affiliation. Paradoxically, exclusionary reflexes among the French themselves have been tending to create in all but name racially constructed ethnic minorities of precisely the kind that cut across the much vaunted project of integration.

It is doubtful, however, whether it makes sense to import wholesale into France the discourse of race relations. While discriminatory behavior triggered by somatic features may be described in broad terms as racist, there are no 'races' in France (any more than there are in Britain) among whom 'relations' can be said to exist. Even if they are triggered by skin color, many acts of discrimination rest on cultural prejudices against people of foreign origin rather than on theories of biological racism. More fundamentally, the rhetoric of 'racial' or cultural discrimination may be little more than a cloak for the more hard-nosed objective of imposing unfair handicaps on easily targeted groups in the competition for scarce resources such as jobs and housing. To categorize all this as 'race relations' is unhelpful from an analytical point of view, for it carries the risk of reifying epiphenomena instead of looking beyond these to the root causes of social differentiation.

The discourse of integration has its own drawbacks. The most important of these has been a tendency among those who speak of integration to assume that the effacement of differentiation through ever fuller incorporation into the national community is not simply a useful model for analytical purposes but also a self-evidently desirable goal. As Beaud and Noiriel (1991) have pointed out, integration has often been implicitly and uncritically equated with assimilation, i.e. the wholesale elimination of differences through the generalization of pre-existing national norms. A classic exposition of the analytical model of assimilation with particular reference to the US is that of Gordon (1964). In France, the normative equation of integration with assimilation has been championed explicitly by officials such as Barreau (1992). In a milder form, similar presuppositions have structured many governmental and academic analyses in France. In this respect, the discourse of integration has tended to function as part of the project of nationalization (Miles 1993: 175–6, 207–11; Lorcerie 1994a).

In contrast with normative approaches of this kind, functionalist views of integration focus on the social, economic or political participation of people of minority origin without assuming that the end product of this process is, or should necessarily be, their assimilation into pre-existing French norms. Stretched between these normative and functionalist poles, 'integration' has been used in very diverse and often ill-defined ways (Bonnafous 1992; Bastenier and Dassetto 1993). When schematic definitions have been attempted, they have varied from one analyst to another. Lapeyronnie (1993) distinguishes between integration, defined as identification with national cultural norms, and participation, defined as involvement in the processes of socio-economic production and exchange. Dubet (1989) prefers a threefold distinction between socio-economic integration, cultural assimilation and national identification, the latter being associated with political participation. The state-appointed Haut Conseil à l'Intégration (High Council for Integration, HCI) appears to propose a functionalist definition of integration based on the notion of participation in French society (HCI 1991: 18–19), but its reports have implicitly favored a normative approach by claiming to measure the 'progress' of integration by reference to indicators such as crime rates, educational qualifications and mixed marriages (HCI 1991: 38–48).

In view of these difficulties, I will refrain in the present study as far as possible from using the word 'integration'. However, because of its ubiquity until very recently in popular, academic and political discourse in France, the term cannot be avoided altogether. It will be used only when citing statements or arguments advanced by those who use the term in France. When its meaning is clear in the original source, I will explicate it accordingly. As many users leave the word undefined, explication is not always possible, and in such cases the reader is left to infer from the context what may be meant.

The word 'assimilation' will also be avoided, except when referring to the use made of this term by others. In general, I find it more useful to speak of acculturation, meaning the acquisition of pre-existing cultural norms dominant in a particular society. Assimilation tends to imply not only acculturation but also the complete abandonment of minority cultural norms. As will be shown in Chapter 3, this is a rather simplistic way of conceiving of the cultural intercourse generated by international migration. Acculturation does not necessarily imply the obliteration of cultural differences, for it is perfectly possible for people to be simultaneously competent in more than one culture.

One of the most important and least scrutinized aspects of the paradigm of integration lies in the assumption that the framework of social incorporation is, or should be, coterminous with the boundaries of the nation-state. Such an assumption was never wholly valid, and the increasingly global scale on which labor, capital, goods and services circulate is rendering it ever more obsolescent. International migration is itself one of the most tangible expressions of this process. Yet there is an important sense in which immigrants (or rather, certain groups of immigrants), more than others, remain constrained by the power of the nation-state. Since the 1950s, obstacles to intra-European migration have been steadily removed by a growing number of states, at any rate where their own nationals are concerned. To facilitate freedom of movement within the European Union, member states have been increasingly driven to harmonize their entry policies *vis-à-vis* third-country (i.e. non-EU) nationals by creating a common policy on external frontiers. Once inside the EU, however, immigrants from non-member states remain almost entirely subject to the regulatory framework of the particular country to which they have been admitted. Their residence and work permits do not extend beyond the boundaries of that country, and even within it their rights are restricted in ways that do not apply to EU nationals. The horizon of opportunities open to non-EU nationals is in this respect bounded by the state on whose territory they reside. For this reason, it makes sense to analyze their experiences within such a framework.

The fundamental issue with which the present study is concerned is the extent to which recent immigrants and their descendants, when compared with the rest of the population, are characterized by a process of 'differential incorporation' (Rex 1986b: xii) within French society. Incorporation is both a subjective and an objective process. Individuals are incorporated objectively within a society to the extent that they are *de facto* participants in the full range of activities and relationships which characterize the national collectivity. Subjective incorporation depends

both on self-perceptions and the perceptions of others. While immigrants and their descendants may feel a personal identification with the national community or at least characteristic parts of it, members of the majority population may adopt exclusionary attitudes. There is a constant cross-over between subjective and objective processes. How people interact depends in part on their perceptions and aspirations; the manner in which an individual is treated by others affects in turn the way he or she feels and thinks.

For analytical purposes, three main axes of social experience may be distinguished: the economic (concerned with the production and consumption of material resources), the cultural (centered on the construction and communication of meaning and value) and the political (focusing on the acquisition and use of power). Few, if any, experiences are ever mono-dimensional. In practical terms, power cannot be wielded without using cultural instruments, most obviously language. Control over economic resources gives a very real kind of power, even if it is not expressed through the channels of formal politics and public policy-making (elections, state intervention, etc.). Cultural production is impossible without access to certain economic resources, and cultural products may in turn take the form of commodities bought and sold in the marketplace. It is clear that if we wish to measure the breadth and depth of social incorporation, all three axes must be considered, including the ways in which they reinforce or cross-cut each other.

The main emphasis of Chapters 2 and 3 is on the experiences and attitudes of minority groups. Chapters 4 and 5 focus on the majority population. In Chapter 2, we shall consider the extent to which people of immigrant origin occupy a distinctive position in France's socio-economic structure. Chapter 3 asks how far minority and majority groups are separated by different systems of meaning and value. Chapter 4 considers how and why the citizenship rights of immigrants and their descendants have been redefined in recent years. As the key to incorporation into formal politics, citizenship is of major symbolic importance. French politics and public policy have also had enormous practical consequences for the population of immigrant origin. These are examined in Chapter 5.

Should we describe people of immigrant origin as ethnic minorities? To the extent that they originate in territories outside France, there is an objective sense in which they could be classified in this way. The nub of the issue, however, is how far they now belong to the society in which they live. Within the race relations paradigm, their stigmatization by members of the majority population would suffice to label them as ethnic minorities. It would, however, be a mistake for social scientists to model their own concepts on the prejudices of particular social actors. At least as important as the attitude of the majority population is the extent to which immigrants and their descendants feel committed to French society, as well as their *de facto* participation in its structures. To avoid ambiguity, I think it wise to make these important conceptual differences explicit in the present analysis. Accordingly, a tripartite distinction will be made between what I propose to call *ethnic groups*, *ethnicized groups* and *ethnocultural groups*.

In the present context, membership of a minority ethnic group is defined by the objective fact of common origins in a territory outside the state in which the group

now resides, and within which (an)other group(s) occupy/ies a dominant position. Those foreign origins may be direct (in the case of immigrants) or indirect (in the case of their descendants). Whether this territorial and biological legacy is of real social significance depends to a large extent on how it is perceived by different social actors. A minority ethnicized group is one whose members are considered by members of the majority population to be in a significant sense separate from the national community;[10] racialized minority groups (categorized by somatic features such a skin color) are a subtype of ethnicized minorities. An ethnocultural group is one whose members feel united by a shared system of meaning and value associated with common origins.

None of these three types of group is necessarily united by formal organizational structures, though ethnocultural groups are generally more inclined than the others to organize themselves in such a way. Some sociologists of ethnic relations, notably Rex (1986a), prefer to speak of unorganized groups as quasi-groups, but this seems unnecessary provided the use of the word 'group' is carefully defined, as above. The formal organization of minority ethnocultural groups, through associational and community structures, is discussed in Chapter 3.

The boundary lines between ethnic, ethnicized and ethnocultural groups are seldom if ever neatly isomorphic (cf. Mason 1990, 1991). Majority ethnic members of the French population are inclined to talk about anyone with the physical appearance of a Maghrebi as an 'Arab', though many Maghrebis in fact come from Berber- (rather than Arab-) speaking areas. In this respect, 'Arabs' as an ethnicized group are very different from 'Arabs' as defined by shared territorial or cultural origins. Many of the children of Arab immigrants identify only weakly or intermittently with the cultural heritage of their parents; as such, while they are generally perceived by the public at large as part of the ethnicized Arab population, they belong only marginally to the ethnocultural Arab community.

As will be shown in Chapters 3 and 4, if the French are often anxious over what is seen as the threat of ethnocultural minorities, it is in part because they mistake the phantoms created by their own ethnicization of minority ethnic groups for the much more diffuse modes of ethnicity which characterize many people of immigrant origin. Before examining these attitudinal indicators, however, I shall begin by considering in the next chapter some basic data on the position of recent immigrants and their descendants within the socio-economic structure of France.