

ITP final report

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Period of research: from September 10th2009 through March 31st 2010.

Research theme: Ethnic and race relations and their impact on the integration of immigrants in host societies: the case of Maghreb/Muslim Immigrants in France.

Thesis statement: This research aims at investigating three main points: First, how identity and religion interact with ethnic and race relations which may result in conflicts and instabilities. Second, clarify which definition of race and ethnicity the French society is using and third, to analyze basic notions within the French society and see their implications on the integration of Arab/Muslim immigrant population in France. These notions are “Frenchness”, “laïcité”, citizenship and “public space”. This research also assumes that both British and French models of ‘integration’ have further fostered the segregation and fragmentation of their religious and ethnic minorities including their Muslim population. As far as the French model is concerned, the research assumes that the problem lies in the way this model is deployed and not in the essence of the model itself.

What has been achieved during research period: During the research period at INALCO the literature review on the debate over race, ethnicity, integration and assimilation was initiated as well as part of the field work. This will serve as part of the literature review for my PhD thesis entitled *“Ethnic and race relations and their impact on the integration of immigrants in host societies: The case of North African Arab/Muslim Immigrants in France”*.

Some of the main findings from the literature review are the following:

- Scholars varied widely in their understanding and defining of the term “race”.
- David Mason argues that it’s Primordialism that complicates the nature of the term “race” and hence varies its definitions¹.
- Race for some scholars means “aggregates whose members are objectively distinguished from others by certain gross hereditary phenotypical features”.
- Wallman on the other hand argues that it’s not possible to distinguish the racial as divergent form of identity².

¹ REX, J., & MASON, D. (1986). *“Theories of race and ethnic relations”*. Cambridge [Cambridgeshire], Cambridge University Press.

- Jenkins argues on the contrary that while ethnicity is more generally concerned with self-identification ‘us’; race has best to be perceived as a matter of external classification “them”³.
- The debate over theorizing ethnic and race relations is classified into three main categories; Grand theory, the ‘Mosaic’ approach, and the ‘Pyramid’ approach.
- According to Grand theory the purpose of theorizing is to seek to find the underlying basis, deep structure or central dynamic of human social life.
- The “Mosaic” approach which is “consistent” with an ultimate aspiration for grand theory with agnosticism as to its possibility or desirability and with a commitment to cumulative understanding through the complementary examination of social life from a variety of vantage points”.
- The “Pyramid” approach which clearly argues the complementarity of different strands of race and ethnic relations theory and supports the ultimate goal for grand theory⁴.
- Morris J. MacGregor, Jr defines integration as follows: "levelling of all barriers to association other than those based on ability, taste, and personal preference"⁵ ; i.e. providing equal opportunities.
- Park and E.W Burgess define assimilation as “a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons and groups and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life”⁶.
- Gordon on a later stage came out by another form of assimilation, “structural assimilation”. He defined it as “entrance of the minority group into the social cliques, clubs, and institutions of the core society at the primary group level”⁷.

Some of the primary findings from the field work are the following:

- Physical appearance plays an important role in the integration of immigrants in the French context.

² Wallman, Sandra, “*Ethnicity and the boundary process in context*”, cited in REX, J., & MASON, D. (1986). *Theories of race and ethnic relations*. Cambridge [Cambridgeshire], Cambridge University Press.

³ Jenkins, Richard, “*social anthropological models of inter-ethnic relations*”, cited in REX, J., & MASON, D. (1986). *Theories of race and ethnic relations*. Cambridge [Cambridgeshire], Cambridge University Press.

⁴ REX, J., & MASON, D. (1986). *Theories of race and ethnic relations*. Cambridge [Cambridgeshire], Cambridge University Press.

⁵ Morris J. MacGregor, Jr. (1985), “[*Integration of the Armed Forces 1940-1965*](#)”, Center of Military History, United States Army, Washington D.C.

⁶ Park, R. E. And E. Burgess, 1969, *introduction to the science of sociology*. 1929. Reprint. PP 735. Chicago: university of Chicago press.

⁷ Gordon, M., 1964, *Assimilation in American life*. PP 80-81. New York: oxford university press

- The definitions of the term “French” varied widely according to the interviewed samples.
- Most of the interviewed samples confirmed that they live in a dilemma between the host society, France in this case, and their countries of origin.
- According to the interviewed samples, the French government is looking for assimilation and not integration of their ethnically and religiously minority groups. The term ethnicity doesn’t exist in the French context.
- It’s the French society itself that played a big role in the isolation of the immigrant population in France through many different manifestations.
- The social, economic conditions where the immigrants live further fostered the segregation of these groups.
- Most of the interviewed samples view themselves as already integrated in the society and see no meaning from the government’s attempts in the integration of its immigrant population.

Remaining issues: after conducting the interviews with the samples from both the host society, France and the immigrant population; the questionnaires will then be developed and another field work has to be conducted. The purpose of the second field work is to test and validate the results achieved from the interviews.