

## Assimilation vs. Multiculturalism: Views from a Community in France

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*A recent American survey of attitudes toward societal multiculturalism vs. assimilation has found surprisingly widespread support for maintaining heritage cultures not only among immigrant minority groups but also among most subsamples of majority "host" groups, black and white. Working-class whites are the one exception. This pilot study explores the same attitude domain in a contrasting European setting. Randomly selected samples of middle- and working-class families (a mother, father, and teenage son or daughter) from a small city in France were interviewed. As a group, they were neutral to slightly favorable to immigrants maintaining heritage cultures and languages rather than losing them through assimilation. On measures of attitudes toward specific immigrant groups, there were marked intergroup differences with "Maghrebians" rated least favorably and Southeast Asians, the "model" immigrants, most favorably. Comparisons of subgroups of respondents who varied in terms of (a) political left-right orientation, (b) social class standing, (c) degree of religiosity, and (d) generational level provide the base for a more general discussion of cultural assimilation and multiculturalism.*

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### INTRODUCTION

In the United States and Canada, the vast majority of people can truthfully say "we are all immigrants," unless they happen to be American Indians or

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Inuit. Consequently, the issue of immigrants and their "integration" into the main society is commonplace and meaningful, and is as salient today as it ever has been, because the United States and Canada are still very active immigrant-receiving nations. Even though immigration is often thought of as a natural and potentially enriching process for the nation involved, many North Americans are preoccupied with the various kinds of societal strains associated with the process (see Lambert and Taylor, 1990).

Underlying this preoccupation are concerns about attitudes and policies toward immigrants and established ethnic minorities. Two contrasting ideological positions dominate: *assimilation*, the belief that cultural minorities should give up their so-called "heritage" cultures and take on the "American" (or "Canadian") way of life, vs. *multiculturalism*, the view that these groups should maintain their heritage cultures as much as possible while establishing themselves in North America. This policy debate is an ancient one in the United States and Canada because both countries were initially settled by diverse national and lingual groups. The same debate is still a highly active focus of research in the behavioral sciences in both societies (e.g., Gordon, 1981; Lambert et al., 1986; Moghaddam and Taylor, 1987; Moghaddam et al., 1987, 1989; Lambert and Taylor, 1988, 1990). A current approach is to solicit the views of various immigrant groups about immigration and to compare these with the views of long-term residents. A brief review of recent U.S. findings will make evident why one might be interested in gathering comparable data from other national settings.

The study of Lambert and Taylor (1988, 1990) was conducted with parents in a multiethnic urban center in the United States. The results indicated (1) strong cross-group support for the option of culture and language maintenance as compared to assimilation, not only among ethnolinguistic minorities, but also among most subgroups of host residents, i.e., black and white established Americans; (2) support for the multicultural option among certain subgroups of immigrants who have resided in the United States for over 25 years (e.g., Polish- and Mexican-Americans); (3) support for bilingualism for their children among all subgroups (immigrant or host); and (4) endorsement by all ethnolinguistic immigrant groups of public school involvement in teaching the history of heritage *cultures*, an idea also supported by black and middle-class white Americans. *Working-class* whites were distinctively out of line with all others, reflecting a set of attitudes and values that were negative toward multiculturalism as well as racist in makeup.

One conclusion drawn from this research is that some members of ethnic minority groups in the contemporary United States are evolving a new perspective on immigration. Rather than choosing between heritage and adopted cultures, the option is to develop full *bicultural* and *bilingual*, with the American culture and its language as the second component. Newcomers, in

other words, often appear to want two cultural identities rather than relinquishing one for another, and they seem confident that they and their children can perfect the cultural and linguistic juggling act that this requires. Surprisingly, they may also be able to count on support in their efforts from large subgroups of long-established Americans, both blacks and middle-class whites.

In the Canadian context, the multicultural option has also received moderate support from majority groups (Berry *et al.*, 1977) and strong support from Greek-Canadians, the first ethnic minority so far surveyed (Lambert *et al.*, 1986). Studies of visible minority groups are being brought into the research program, i.e., South Asians (Moghaddam and Taylor, 1987), Haitians (Moghaddam *et al.*, 1989), and newly arrived Iranians (Moghaddam *et al.*, 1987).

New questions are now emerging: Are the outcomes obtained peculiarly American in nature or would they hold cross-nationally? Might there be a universal change in perspective about the migration of peoples, about one's rightful place in a shrinking world, about the "sentiments" that link peoples to places, and about the natural birthrights of citizenship?

In this pilot study conducted in a small city in France, attention is restricted to the attitudes of the host group only—a sample of French parents and their teenage sons or daughters. It does not include immigrant groups, nor were there many contacts with immigrants in the daily lives of the respondents.

Why France? The history of France reflects an open-door policy for visitors and refugees who become sojourners in a country that has for centuries been a mecca for artists, writers, and philosophers. France has also welcomed ethnic groups who work as miners (e.g., Polish) or in construction (e.g., Italians), but it is not an immigrant-receiving nation comparable to the United States or Canada where substantial numbers of newcomers resettle and become naturalized citizens. Nonetheless, contemporary France is experiencing a sharp division of opinions about immigrants, with one non-negligible political party, headed by Jean-Marie LePen, campaigning on a fear of immigration as a threat to national unity and solvency. Examining these divisions could be instructive.

Sociological research in France has uncovered certain correlates of attitudes on social issues that are not usually explored in American research. One is the role played by respondents' positions on a left-to-right political dimension that ranges from various forms of communist inclinations to extreme right-wing allegiances. American researchers have studied in detail the attitudinal and behavioral correlates of authoritarian personality tendencies (e.g., Christie, 1954), ethnocentrism (Levine and Campbell, 1972), dogmatism (e.g., Rokeach, 1960), and right-wing conservatism (Altmeyer, 1981), but since no major political parties in North America explicitly represent extreme left- or right-oriented ideologies, the left-right dimension is often bypassed. In contrast, French research on attitudes reveals the power of political beliefs. For example, Forbes (1985) concludes a review of that literature in the following manner:

It was as if France herself were two warring nations, the left French and the right French and foreigners were judged according to whether they were enemies or allies of these factional nations. Ethnocentrism, as a general dimension, did not exist. (Forbes, 1985:130)

The research of Michelat and Simon (1977) supports the same idea, but goes further because a second powerful factor is brought into play, namely, religious attachment or devotion. It also has a surprisingly pervasive influence on social attitudes in France. For instance, Brulé (1966) demonstrated that when four variables—religious attachment, social class, age, and sex—were considered conjointly as correlates of voting preferences and attitudes toward social issues, religiosity was by far the strongest associate (see also Isambert, 1972). In a cross-national study, Lijphart (1971) also found religious attachment more powerful than social class as a predictor variable for voting preferences, not only in France but elsewhere in Western Europe, whether the nation was “monoreligious” like France and Italy or “polyreligious” like West Germany, Holland, and Switzerland. At the same time Lijphart (1971) found that in the United States, Great Britain, Sweden, and Norway, social class was clearly more associated with voting preferences than was religious attachment. For France, Michelat and Simon (1977) came to the following conclusion: If religion is a strong force in a French person’s life, it dominates social class influences and moves social attitudes toward the political right. When religion is a weak force and does not “structure thought,” social class becomes the dominant influence, moving social attitudes toward the political left (Michelat and Simon, 1977:464). What is intriguing about these French studies is that the social issues involved in voting preferences or referenda (e.g., pro/con stands on nationalization of particular industries, pro/con extensions of social services) are familiar in the arguments of “liberals” (in contrast to conservatives) in North America, suggesting to us a possible affinity of North American liberals and French socialists or communists, even though the left-leaning party choices are limited to the Democratic Party in the United States or to the National Democratic Party in Canada.

Another interesting correlate of attitudes in France is the definition given to intergroup “social distance.” In a post-World War II study conducted in France (Lambert, 1952), it was shown that on the standard American measure of social distance (e.g., Bogardus, 1925), French respondents placed the distance steps in a different order. The American order from most intimate to least intimate was (1) marriage with, (2) close friends with, (3) have as neighbor, (4) as colleague at work, and (5) to grant citizenship. French respondents gave much greater importance to citizenship, pushing it to position 2, or for certain ethnic groups, position 1, and much less importance to neighbor, moving it to position 5. Although dated, these contrasts suggest that French and American respondents may differ fundamentally on the concept of social distance. Con-

sequently, it was decided to include social distance along with left-right political stance and religiosity as main concerns of the present study.

## METHODOLOGY

### The Research Site

The present investigation is a pilot study of French people living in a moderate-size city of France where small numbers of different ethnic minorities reside in relative social harmony. The study therefore deals only with the reactions of French people who are not threatened by large subgroups of ethnic minorities and immigrants, as might well be the case for those living in urban centers like Paris, Lyon, and Marseille.

The city of Laval, population 50,000, is situated 292 km west-southwest of Paris, toward Brittany. The schools chosen for the study were in the eastern sector of the city where more of the immigrants live. Although Laval has a smaller proportion of foreigners than France as a whole, the ethnic distribution of immigrants in Laval is fairly typical. As of 1982, the total population of France was 54,300,000, of which 3,700,000 (or 6.8%) were foreign-born, although 1,400,000 of these have "derivative" French nationality. The largest groups are, in order: Algerians, Portuguese, Moroccans, Italians, Spanish, and Tunisians. Smaller groups are "other Africans," Turks, and Southeast Asians. Most are congregated in and around Paris (some 36%) and the Rhône-Alps area (12.5%). Some 40% are less than 25 years of age, 8% are over 65 years; and males (57%) outnumber females slightly. As of 1987, Laval registered 1789 foreigners (3.6%), and the largest numbers were Moroccans (603), Algerians (401), Portuguese (315), Tunisians (128), Spanish (52), Turks (25), Italians (22), and in the category of refugees, Cambodians (40) and Vietnamese (32).

### Procedure

Two random samples of families were drawn, representing two social class groups. With the help of school principals and school records, a rough division was made between advantaged families (those with better incomes, better residences, more education, and more occupational specialization, comparable to American indexes of middle-class standing), and less advantaged (those with mainly blue-collar backgrounds, comparable to American indexes of working-class standing).

About 40 middle-class (MC) and 40 working-class (WC) families were selected at random, and separate interviews were conducted with a father,

mother, and a teenage son or daughter in each family. In nearly all cases, the families chosen were intact. Thus our analyses were based on 20 families from each class level: 20 MC mothers, 20 MC fathers, 11 MC girls, and 14 MC boys; there were similar numbers of WC family members.

Respondents were assured of complete anonymity, and in general they gave their reactions without hesitation or reservation. Many asked to have feedback on the overall results. To ensure that differences in reading skill would be minimized, the interviewer read the questions aloud while the respondent followed along on his or her copy. The interviewers were given training on the use of response scales that accompanied each question.

### Materials

The basic interview schedule used in North America (Lambert and Taylor, 1987) was translated into French, using back-translation procedures. Particular questions were added to assess issues specific to the French setting. The exact forms of most questions are incorporated in the data tables that follow.

## RESULTS

### The Debate Issue: Assimilation vs. Culture Maintenance

Each respondent was asked to indicate where he or she stood on the basic debate issue, presented as follows:

There is an important debate in France about cultural and racial minority groups. Some people believe that cultural and racial minority groups in France should *give up* their traditional ways of life and take on the French way of life, while others believe that cultural and racial minority groups should *maintain* their traditional ways of life as much as possible when they come to France. Where do you stand in this debate?

Cultural and racial minority groups should *give up* their traditional ways of life and take on the French way of life when they come to France. (1)

Cultural and racial minority groups should *maintain* their traditional ways of life as much as possible when they come to France. (7)

(Give Up) 1    2    3    4    5    6    7 (Maintain)

The overall trends (Fig. 1) indicate that the mean for the total adult sample falls just above the neutral point ( $M = 4.20$ ). The French respondents' stand on the debate issue is slightly more neutral than that of either white (4.64) or black (4.80) American parents, but overall the French parents had basically the same general attitude on the assimilation issue as did our samples of American parents. This similarity, however, has to be interpreted with a recognition of

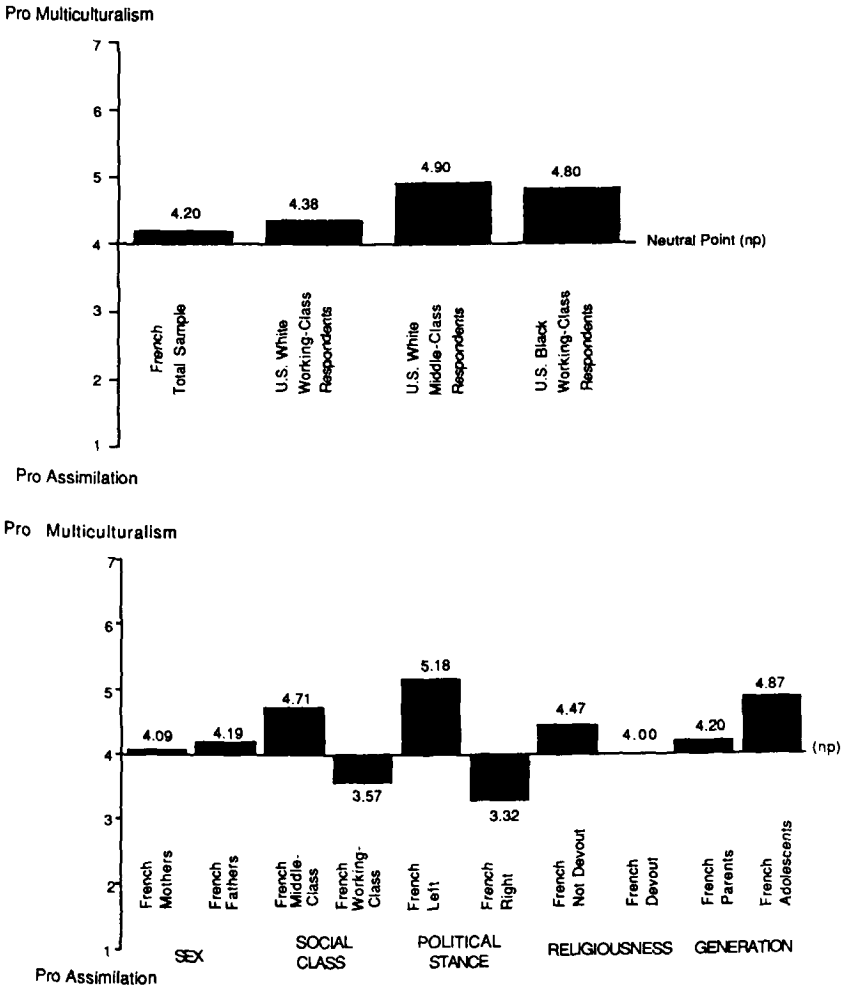


Fig. 1. French response to the debate question: cross-national and subgroup comparisons.

the vast differences in the ethnic makeup of the sites – an American urban center where whites are a numerical minority vs. a small French city where non-French are a rarity.

Analyses of subgroup differences showed that those with political leanings to the left favor cultural maintenance over assimilation ( $M = 5.18$ ), while the right leaners favor the assimilation option (3.32). Furthermore, the MC subsample was more favorable to the multicultural option than the WC subsample

(4.71 vs. 3.57). The direction of this social class contrast is parallel to that of the MC and WC American white subgroups. In the American study, however, there was no instance where a subsample fell below the neutral point (see Lambert and Taylor, 1988) whereas in France we have two such examples.

There are other less pronounced associations in Fig. 1: The French adolescents were somewhat more favorable toward multiculturalism than the parents (4.87 vs. 4.20), and the less religiously devout parents were somewhat more favorable than the more devout (4.47 vs. 4.00). These differences, however, are small compared to those associated with political and social class differences. There was no difference between women and men respondents (4.09 vs. 4.19).

### Testing the Consistency of the Stand Taken in the Debate

A series of follow-up questions were put to each respondent to examine the consistency of the stand taken. Table I presents the responses to commonly used arguments pro and con the options of immigrants *giving up* their traditional ways of life once they reside in France. (Parallel questions were asked with respect to immigrants *maintaining* their traditional ways of life; tables of relevant data are available from the authors on request.)

As a group, the French adults rejected the following ideas: (a) that all French people would have a common base for understanding one another if cultural minority groups were to *abandon* their cultural ways, (b) that in such a case there would be a more uniform linguistic and cultural standard for France, or (c) that France would be more united and cohesive. At the same time, they agreed that giving up one's heritage culture through social pressure would be a loss of something precious, and that this deprivation would engender hostility. They also agreed, although not strongly (4.88), that the abandonment of heritage cultures means that France would stand to lose the best that different cultural/racial groups have to offer.

The profile of attitudes is much sharper when the option is changed to cultural minority groups *maintaining* their traditional ways. Our sample of French parents did not believe that heritage culture maintenance would detract from a common France-wide base for mutual understanding, even though the maintenance option would mean that France would have to deal with multiple linguistic and cultural standards and that national unity might be jeopardized, although the latter score falls only at the neutral point (4.03). On the other hand, they viewed maintenance as a way of allowing cultural minorities to express an important aspect of themselves, to feel more secure in their cultural identity, and thereby engender intergroup sympathy.



**Table 1.** Subgroup Comparisons of Arguments Pro and Con the Debate Issue

	Social class		Political stance		Religiosity		Generation		Correlations <sup>b</sup>		
	Middle	Working	Left	Right	Not devout	Devout	Parents	Adolescents	Stand on debate	Political stance	Religiosity
Now, we would like your opinion on some of the arguments commonly used in this debate:											
if cultural minority groups give up their traditional ways, it means . . .	2.63	3.33	1.79	3.61	2.30	3.40	2.94	2.75	-.57 <sup>e</sup>	.38 <sup>d</sup>	.31 <sup>d</sup>
. . . that all people living in France will have a common base for understanding each other. <sup>a</sup>	3.00	3.29	2.18	3.45	2.87	3.47	3.13	2.87	-.60 <sup>e</sup>	.32 <sup>d</sup>	.20
. . . that the same language and cultural standards will exist for everyone in France.	2.55	2.83	1.64	4.00	1.70	3.55	2.68	2.60	-.49 <sup>e</sup>	.55 <sup>e</sup>	.48 <sup>e</sup>
. . . that France will be united and cohesive, even if people are deprived of a very important part of their personal identity.	5.05	5.60	5.94	5.00	5.17	5.19	5.29	5.43	.31 <sup>d</sup>	-.28 <sup>c</sup>	-.07
. . . that people will have been forced to give up something valuable, and this will make them hostile toward others.	4.75	5.03	5.94	4.09	4.97	4.47	4.88	5.23	.32 <sup>d</sup>	-.38 <sup>e</sup>	-.18
. . . that the nation loses the best that different cultural and racial groups have to offer.											

<sup>a</sup>Definitely disagree = 1; definitely agree = 7.

<sup>b</sup>Pearson correlations of each item with respondents' scores on the debate issue (1 = abandon culture, 7 = maintain culture); the politics scale (1 = left, 7 = right), and the religiosity rating (1 = not devout, 7 = devout).

<sup>c</sup>Statistically significant at the .05 level of confidence.

<sup>d</sup>Significant at the .01 level of confidence.

<sup>e</sup>Significant at the .001 level of confidence.

### *Subgroup Contrasts*

Attitudes toward multiculturalism and heritage culture maintenance are traceable to political belief systems. In nearly all cases, the politically left-oriented respondents were more charitable on the follow-up issues than were the right oriented. Furthermore, in several instances, the left oriented were on the favorable side while the right oriented were neutral or negative. For instance, the left saw a clear national loss if heritage cultures were abandoned while those on the right were not sure (5.94 vs. 4.09, Table I). Similarly, the right believed cultural maintenance would mean the balkanization of France, an idea the left rejected (3.09 vs. 5.00). Political orientation overshadowed social class in the sense that MC and WC subgroups showed no differences in degree of openness toward multiculturalism or toward assimilation on the follow-up questions. Nor were there significant sex, generation, or social class contrasts. The only other factor that played a role was the respondents' religiousness, but its association with the issues was not as consistent as the political factor.

### *The Interrelationships of Factors*

Subgroup comparisons made it evident that political ideology was a powerful generalized associate of attitudes toward multiculturalism and that social class and religiosity also appeared to have particular effects. How related are these sources of influence and which are the more powerful? Respondents' political inclination was definitely related (a) to the stand they took on the debate issue ( $r = .42, p < .001$ ), and (b) to their degree of religiosity ( $r = .50, p < .001$ ). Political inclination, however, was not correlated with social class standing ( $r = .01, ns$ ). In fact, we found similar proportions of politically left- and right-oriented parents at both the WC and MC levels, suggesting that the left oriented are not a negligible minority in France, nor are they only to be found in one social class stratum. Both favorable and unfavorable attitudes on the assimilation/multiculturalism issue will be found at both WC and MC levels of society.

When religiosity was statistically controlled through covariance, the importance of political ideology on this attitude issue was not diminished. When political stand was statistically controlled, however, none of the significant devout-not devout relationships noted in the tables held up, except those dealing with language maintenance. This indicates, in a different manner, how pervasive the influences of political ideology seem to be on the attitudes toward immigrants and minorities within France.

## How Far Should Minority Groups Go to Maintain Cultures and Languages?

Questions about these issues were put to respondents in the form presented in Table II. The options were graduated from culture maintenance within the family, starting with "external" aspects of the culture (like foods, dress, and folk music) to more "internal" aspects (like valued ways of behaving with marital partners or with children), and extending out to the community and finally to the public school system. The same stepwise extension, from family to community to the public domain, was built into a parallel set of questions about heritage language maintenance and usage. (Tables of relevant data are available from the authors on request.)

With respect to *culture* maintenance (Table II), the French parents as a group rejected the idea of no maintenance at all (Step A, 2.54), although in no case (Steps B–F) were they enthusiastic about maintenance attempts. Rather they tolerated some options and rejected others. Keeping cultural styles of foods, dress, and music were acceptable (Step B, 4.52), but there were clear reservations about perpetuating distinctive cultural values (Step C, 3.98). Furthermore, the retention of culture within own-community boundaries (as in community or church-run schools) was seen as tolerable, whereas educating minority youngsters in their history and traditions in public schools (Steps E and F) was not endorsed (3.74 and 3.71).

With respect to *language* maintenance, there was much more enthusiastic support: Step A (never use) was rejected, and within-family use was favorably accepted (Steps C and D, 6.20 and 5.663) even when, in Step D, the option was to use a heritage language for most or all within-family communication. There was also a clear acceptance of community-run schools giving instruction in the heritage language (Step E, 5.05), but the tolerance stopped there: the idea of using heritage languages in public schools was not acceptable (Steps F and G, 3.07 and 2.67). Thus, respondents set some clear limits on what was and was not acceptable behavior on the part of immigrant newcomers.

### *Subgroup Comparisons on Culture and Language Retention*

Although no subgroup took a strong position favoring heritage culture maintenance (Table II), there were clear differences in degree. Those less favorable toward culture/tradition maintenance were (a) the politically right, (b) the parent generation, (c) the religiously more devout, and (d) the working class. Subgroup differences on specific issues are noteworthy. On the sensitive question about immigrants maintaining heritage cultural values in France (Step C), the politically left, the younger generation, and the less devout subgroups were

Table II. Subgroup Comparisons of Responses to Questions About the Retention of Heritage Cultures

In your opinion, how far should different cultural/racial groups living in France go in maintaining their cultures and traditions?	Social class				Political stance			Religiosity		Generation		Correlations <sup>b</sup>	
	Middle		Working		Left	Right	Not devout	Devout	Parents	Adolescents	Stand on debate	Political stance	Religiosity
Step A: Since their cultures and traditions are not French, they should not be maintained <sup>a</sup>	2.11	3.05	1.53	3.26	2.07	2.92	2.54	2.34	-.61 <sup>e</sup>	.43 <sup>e</sup>	.27 <sup>e</sup>		
Step B: Keep their own cultural styles of foods, dress, songs, and dances.	4.44	4.61	4.85	4.29	4.63	4.50	4.52	5.42	.47 <sup>e</sup>	.14	-.02		
Step C: Keep their own cultural values such as how children should behave with parents, husbands with wives, dating practices, etc.	3.87	4.11	4.47	3.38	4.33	3.38	3.98	4.89	.42 <sup>e</sup>	-.22 <sup>e</sup>	-.24 <sup>e</sup>		
Step D: Attend courses about their own cultural history and traditions, not in public schools but in church-run or community-run classes.	4.20	4.49	3.76	4.78	4.17	4.28	4.33	4.55	.03	.27 <sup>e</sup>	.03		
Step E: Have courses about their own cultural history and traditions taught in public school.	4.33	3.03	4.71	2.17	4.57	3.23	3.74	3.90	.26 <sup>e</sup>	-.47 <sup>e</sup>	-.28 <sup>e</sup>		
Step F: Have equal time in schools spent on their own cultural history and traditions as on French history and traditions.	3.87	3.53	4.35	2.83	4.03	3.49	3.71	4.67	.22 <sup>e</sup>	-.31 <sup>d</sup>	-.09		

<sup>a</sup>Definitely disagree = 1; definitely agree = 7.

<sup>b</sup>Pearson correlations of each item with respondents' scores on the debate issue (1 = abandon culture, 7 = maintain culture); the politics scale (1 = left, 7 = right), and the religiosity rating (1 = not devout, 7 = devout).

<sup>c</sup>Statistically significant at the .05 level of confidence.

<sup>d</sup>Significant at the .01 level of confidence.

<sup>e</sup>Significant at the .001 level of confidence.

more supportive than were their contrast subgroups. With regard to teaching/learning about heritage cultures, the politically left were relatively less favorable to community classes and more favorable to public school involvement than were the politically right.

When the questioning turned to minority *language* maintenance, there were fewer instances of subgroup differences, due to the much more favorable support given to minority language maintenance by all respondents. There were consistent religiosity differences, however (the more devout being less supportive than the less devout), and all groups unambiguously rejected public school involvement.

### **Bilingualism for Minority Children**

As a follow-up to the questions about language maintenance, each respondent considered various options, described in Table III, about the personal and social consequences of encouraging bilingualism for language minority children. The three options were (a) to develop bilingual skills in a heritage language along with French, (b) to develop skill in the heritage language at the expense of French, or (c) to develop skill in French at the expense of the heritage language. The results are clear: for the minority group child, becoming bilingual (option a) was seen as a great advantage at all levels—personal, family, cultural group, interactional, and even economic. This option was rated far ahead of Option c, mastering French at the expense of the heritage language. Option b, unilingualism in the heritage language without comparable skills in French, was seen as a tremendous handicap to being accepted in France, to getting good grades in school, or to obtaining work. That option would also provoke parental disappointment, reduce pride in the ethnic group represented, provoke prejudicial treatment by the host group, and diminish sympathy from other ethnic groups. The social-class breakdowns became significant on this issue, specifically on Option b, where the MC respondents saw more danger in this possible eventuality than did the WC respondents.

### **Bilingualism for Their Own Children**

When asked about their own children becoming bilingual, respondents were consistent in the sense that they saw many advantages associated with fluency in a second language; it would enhance their children's social well-being with others in the community, garner respect from peers, help in school grades, promote opportunities for work, increase sympathy toward ethnic groups in general, and even reflect personal intelligence. This view was shared by both WC and MC subgroups. Interestingly, the WC parents suggested that thorough

Table III. French Parents' Attitudes Toward Bilingualism for Minority Family Children

	If children from minority families in France spoke French and their language of origin with equal skill . . .			If minority children in France spoke their language of origin well, but were mediocre only in French . . .			If minority children in France spoke French fluently, but were mediocre only in their language of origin . . .		
	All parents	Middle class	Working class	All parents	Middle class	Working class	All parents	Middle class	Working class
...would they...									
...feel accepted in France? <sup>a</sup>	6.08	6.18	5.97	3.22	3.11	3.34	5.54	5.48	5.61
...feel a sense of pride?	6.24	6.35	6.11	3.83	3.98	3.67	4.20	4.27	4.11
...make their parents happy?	6.19	6.16	6.21	3.91	4.15	3.66	3.68	3.20	4.18
...feel open and relaxed with others?	6.48	6.51	6.43	2.84	2.91	2.76	4.77	5.12	4.38
...bring status and respect to their group?	5.92	6.05	5.76	3.90	3.95	3.84	3.45	3.33	3.58
...stand out as different?	4.64	4.75	4.51	4.94	5.50	4.32	4.03	4.14	3.89
...be treated like second-class citizens?	2.95	2.65	3.30	4.45	4.86	4.00	3.41	3.29	3.55
...get good marks in school?	6.07	6.07	6.08	2.35	1.98	2.78	5.04	4.98	5.11
...have a chance for certain jobs others can't get?	5.86	6.28	5.38	2.43	2.07	2.83	4.32	4.34	4.30
...be sympathetic to people from different groups?	5.14	5.22	5.03	3.55	3.51	3.60	3.95	3.81	4.11
...show intelligence?	5.20	5.07	5.37	2.78	2.44	3.21	3.84	3.49	4.29

<sup>a</sup>*Definitely no* = 1; *definitely yes* = 7.

<sup>b</sup>Statistically significant at the .05 level of confidence.

<sup>c</sup>Significant at the .01 level of confidence.

training in a second language at school would be valuable, as if it were rarely attained in their children's experience. MC parents were of the opinion that conventional courses in a second language provided little help in the world of work that rewards bilingual skills. Thus our interpretation of these data is that French parents are critical of the language programs offered in schools and are well aware of the many advantages of bilingualism for their own children. Perhaps as a consequence they support the attempts of immigrant parents to have their children keep the heritage language strong as they develop nativelike skills in French.

### Opinions About Learning Languages and About Integrated Schooling

Embedded in the interviews were other questions that reopened the language-learning topic and related issues. To a question about "the importance of learning a second language," the overall response of parents was very strong (6.37), with no subgroup differences. There was, however, a statistically significant generation difference—the adolescents were less enthusiastic than the parents. "Learning the *history* of other cultural/racial groups" was considered less important (4.95), and in this case there were social class and sex contrasts: mc parents saw more value in studying foreign histories than did wc parents, as did mothers when compared to fathers.

With respect to "culturally or racially mixed classrooms," there was only moderate support expressed overall (4.88), and on this issue, there was a strong political split: the politically left clearly favored (5.58), while the politically right were only neutral to (3.92), having racially and culturally mixed classrooms. In the Detroit, Michigan, study (Lambert and Taylor, 1987), the white mc sample of American parents scored 5.97 on the same question, but the white wc sample scored only 3.37.

### Social Distance from Other Ethnic Groups

It is one thing to take a consistent, logical stand on the debate about multiculturalism vs. assimilation, but quite another to be ready to accept actual members of immigrant and minority groups. Thus, intergroup attitudes, including attitudes toward one's own group, become the critical feature of intergroup relations at both the community and national levels. In our study, these attitudes were assessed in three ways: (a) measures of social distance, (b) attributions assigned to various groups, and (c) stereotypes held about prominent minorities in France. The findings on the first measure suggest that social distance varies according to the group in question, and it varies as well in terms of the dimen-

sions involved (e.g., marriage, friend, etc.). As would be expected, the French adult sample showed a broad acceptance of "French people" at all steps of distance, from marriage (6.83) to citizenship (6.73). But they placed other ethnic groups at varying distances: Italians were the second most acceptable group, then Portuguese and Vietnamese, then African blacks, and clearly last, Maghrebians Arabs. Of theoretical interest is the retest this study provided for a post-World War II study (Lambert, 1952) in which French respondents placed citizenship very high in the hierarchy and neighbor very low. In the present study, we find similar modifications of the standard American hierarchy: citizenship falls at Position 2, i.e., after marriage and at the same level as close friend, forcing neighbor toward Position 5 for the parent sample, but between Positions 2 and 3 for the adolescent sample. Thus important cross-national value differences are suggested here, even though, for the young French respondents, the question of who one's neighbor is may be taking on "American" characteristics.

The subgroup breakdowns for social distance are consistent. Political ideology was a strong influence: left leaners were decidedly more accepting of immigrants at all five social distance steps than were right leaners. Also, mc respondents were generally more accepting than the wc respondents, and the less devout were more accepting than the more devout. Interestingly, there were no statistically reliable generation differences in the average social distance ratings.

### Evaluative Attributions of Other Ethnic Groups

Similar profiles of underlying intergroup attitudes emerge when respondents were asked to make attributional evaluations of various ethnic groups as well as of their own group (see Table IV). The scores on the attributional scales are listed in Table IV for each ethnic group, along with summary scores based on a subset of scale items that clearly reflect favorable or unfavorable attitudes.

Several general trends emerge: (1) The average evaluations of French parents reflected a harsh, negative stereotype of Maghrebians Arabs, who were seen as the least hardworking, the most aggressive, the least trustworthy, the least law-abiding, and the least likable. (2) Black Africans were evaluated relatively neutrally, and not as harshly as the Maghrebs. (3) In contrast, Italians, Vietnamese, and Portuguese were viewed more favorably on all scales. (4) The own-group views of the French respondents were particularly interesting: "most French people" were rated relatively low on the hardworking scale, high on aggressivity, average on likability, and no less a menace to French culture than any other group. Nonetheless, the French were seen as most law-abiding, trustworthy, and intelligent, but still the average evaluation scores in these cases



Table IV. Attributions Made to Ethnic Groups: Mean Responses of French Parents<sup>a</sup>

How _____ are . . .	Most Italians	Most Blacks	Most Arabs from Maghreb countries	Most Portuguese	Most Vietnamese	Most French people
hardworking	5.53	4.28	3.99	5.86	5.63	5.45
aggressive or violent	3.34	3.27	3.88	3.28	2.78	3.60
much like French people	5.41	4.17	3.25	5.18	4.13	5.88
likely to stick together						
as a group	5.86	6.41	6.56	6.10	6.13	5.34
powerful	3.46	2.96	3.17	3.03	3.15	5.30
similar to me in their						
thinking	3.68	2.63	2.40	3.31	2.82	4.10
intelligent at school	4.76	4.68	4.41	4.49	4.99	5.17
smart with practical						
things	5.37	4.52	4.30	5.18	5.47	5.62
trustworthy	4.29	4.41	3.40	4.65	4.85	5.13
much of a menace to						
French culture	1.92	2.35	2.82	2.14	2.12	2.71
law-abiding (good citizen)	4.50	4.29	3.78	4.86	4.66	5.00
unfairly treated	2.67	4.10	4.42	3.10	3.22	3.14
likable	5.47	5.04	4.18	5.37	5.22	5.44

<sup>a</sup>Mean scores for total parent sample. *Not at all* = 1; *very* = 7.

Table V. French Parents' Stereotypes of Own Group and Selected Immigrants Groups

	People as they are (distance from the French ideal) <sup>c</sup>				People as they should be			
	Most French people (are) . . . .	Most immigrants from Maghreb nations (are) . . . .	Most immigrants from South- East Asia (are) . . . .	Most immigrants from South East Asia (are) . . . .	Most French people should (be) . . . .	Most immigrants from Maghreb nations should (be) . . . .	Most immigrants from South- East Asia should (be) . . . .	Most immigrants from South- East Asia should (be) . . . .
. . . very attached to their family <sup>a,b</sup>	(-0.62) 5.79	(0.28) 6.69	(0.16) 6.57	(0.16) 6.57	6.41	6.60	6.70	
. . . attentive to personal hygiene and cleanliness	(-1.30) 5.22	(-1.93) 4.59	(-0.69) 5.83	(-0.69) 5.83	6.52	6.51	6.63	
. . . live democratically	(-1.15) 5.52	(-2.73) 3.94	(-1.71) 4.96	(-1.71) 4.96	6.67	6.53	6.65	
. . . very competitive at work	(-1.92) 4.64	(-2.99) 3.57	(-0.88) 5.68	(-0.88) 5.68	6.56	5.75	6.21	
. . . respect the right of each person	(-2.15) 4.67	(-3.14) 3.68	(-1.27) 5.55	(-1.27) 5.55	6.82	6.66	6.71	
. . . treat those of the opposite sex with consideration	(-1.98) 4.79	(-4.15) 2.62	(-1.60) 5.17	(-1.60) 5.17	6.77	6.66	6.78	

... very attached to their religion	(-1.00) 3.97	(1.46) 6.43	(0.39) 5.36	4.97	5.40	5.34
... do things according to the rules, not to gain personally	(-2.46) 3.48	(-1.95) 3.99	(-1.00) 4.94	5.94	5.88	6.78
... responsible, especially when in important positions	(-0.84) 5.91	(-1.28) 4.97	(-0.69) 6.06	6.75	6.41	6.60
... devoted to their work	(-1.94) 4.55	(-2.20) 4.19	(-0.46) 5.93	6.39	6.16	6.38
... grateful to France for what it provides them	(-1.30) 4.56	(-1.65) 4.21	(-0.14) 5.72	5.86	6.04	6.04
... place importance on leisure and pleasure	(0.42) 6.30	(-0.95) 4.93	(-1.08) 4.80	5.88	5.56	5.64

<sup>a</sup>Definitely do not agree = 1; definitely agree = 7.

<sup>b</sup>Each set of 3 mean scores was tested with analysis of variance and each was significant at the .001 level of confidence.

<sup>c</sup>Entries in parentheses are difference scores between how each group is seen and how the French should be in the eyes of French respondents. A minus sign indicates that a group goes beyond the ideal, i.e., too attached to family or to leisure activities or not devoted enough to work.

were close to the 5 point only. This sober, realistic view of one's own group suggests a possibly critical feature of contemporary French society—that no one is automatically considered a model citizen just because of birthright. (In our experience, it is rare to find similar examples of own-group criticism among majority group members in the North American setting.)

There are few subgroup differences on these attributional scales, but those that appear are in consistent directions: the politically right compared with the politically left were particularly negative toward Maghrebians and African blacks; the wc respondents were less favorable than the mc respondents, especially toward Italians and Vietnamese; and the more religiously devout were less favorable toward African blacks. In this case, the parents were less favorable than the adolescents toward African blacks. (Tables of relevant data are available from the authors on request.)

### Stereotype Dimensions of Ethnic Groups

The final analysis examined various features of the stereotypes French people hold about themselves and other ethnic groups, e.g., how attached each group is to family, to religion, to democratic ways of living, and how clean, cooperative, reliable, and hardworking each group is (see Table V). Attention was restricted to three groups only, "most French people," "most Maghrebians," and "most immigrants from Southeast Asia." Respondents gave their impressions of how these three groups actually *are* and also how they *should be*. Also indicated in Table V is how close each group is perceived to be to the French "ideal."

Several findings emerge. Immigrants from Maghreb nations were indirectly criticized on all counts: compared to most French people, they were seen as being overattached to family and religion; negligent on personal cleanliness; disrespectful of human rights, especially the rights of the opposite sex; not devoted to work; lacking in competitiveness and responsibility in work settings; lacking gratitude to France; and placing too little attention on leisure and pleasure. Southeast Asians were viewed in a much more favorable light: although they too were seen as being overattached to religion and family and underattentive to leisure pursuits, they were otherwise perceived as exemplary citizens, even more so than "most French people."

This interesting aspect of self- or own-group criticism on the part of the French respondents is brought out clearly in Table V, where closeness to the French ideal is indexed through average difference scores. On all dimensions but two, the French adults indicate that Southeast Asians are closer to the French ideal than are most French people. The exceptions are that French people live somewhat more democratically and they are also closer to the ideal

on leisure pursuits, even though they go too far in that direction. Consistent with earlier findings, the Maghreb Arabs were seen as most distant from the French ideal on nearly all dimensions. The pattern of difference scores suggests that basic comparisons are being made implicitly, and that our French respondents are aware of their own shortcomings as well as those of other ethnic groups. However, they may not fully realize that they perceive the Southeast Asian group as the most exemplary one, even with own group as a reference point. Would those French people treat Southeast Asians accordingly? Or if questioned specifically about "ideal citizens" in France, would they still give Southeast Asians due credit? Could feedback of these results promote (a greater) appreciation of particular immigrant minority groups? These would be valuable questions to incorporate in further research.

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study takes the attitudinal pulse of a sample of French people, and as such may prove of interest because it extends to a new cultural setting a methodological approach that has already been tested and found instructive in North America.

The North American research techniques, only slightly adjusted, seem to have worked well in France. On the average, our sample of French parents was very similar to the sample of American parents in attitudes toward assimilation and multiculturalism. It should be emphasized, however, that the French sample was drawn from a community with few immigrants in residence while the American samples came from urban centers of high immigrant density. Neither group was strongly for or against either a policy of assimilation or one of cultural maintenance, but the apparently neutral stand resulted from a combination of specific attitudes toward a number of underlying issues. Thus respondents believed that France stands to gain by what immigrants bring to the nation, but also that cultural and linguistic diversity might lead to national disunity. They accepted cultural and linguistic maintenance within the immigrant's extended family, but questioned the maintenance of culturally distinctive *value* systems (e.g., those that concern child rearing or husband-wife relations). They supported community-run or church-sponsored classes in heritage cultural history and language, but were basically opposed to having public schools involved.

French parents unambiguously supported bilingualism. They thought it appropriate and valuable for immigrant children to be bilingual, and that their bilinguality and biculturality would serve them well not only in establishing a constructive cultural and personal identity, but also in giving them advantages in the world of work. The parents also saw similar advantages for their own

children were they able to actually become bilingual, something they apparently do not expect from public education as presently organized.

These attitudes, similar to those expressed by American majority-group parents, are also similar to the attitudes of *immigrant* parents in American urban settings. Many immigrant minority groups in North America rejected the idea of giving up their heritage cultures and languages in favor of biculturalism and bilingualism for their children and themselves. This we see as a novel, relatively recent, and fairly widespread compromise—two cultures rather than one. Our guess is that the size of particular ethnolinguistic minorities in the United States (e.g., Hispanic Americans) and the growing number of such groups promotes this interesting compromise (see Lambert and Taylor, 1987, 1988). The reaction of *majority* groups to this idea, both in the United States and in France was nonetheless ambivalent—there was an appreciation for the bilingual/bicultural features, which could affect positively their own children, but a hesitation to support heritage culture and language development in public spheres of education.

At the same time, some minorities had concerns about how the “two-cultures” compromise could best be implemented. Visible minority groups, such as South Asians in Canada, worried that a strong endorsement of heritage culture maintenance might enhance ethnic visibility and consequently prejudice directed their way.

The patterns of attitudes uncovered in the present study reveal a consistency between the stand French people take on multiculturalism and their views of minority groups. There is also a consistency in the attitudes they hold toward particular groups, a generally unfavorable attitude toward Maghreb Arabs and, although less strong, toward Black Africans, but a generally favorable attitude toward Portuguese, Italians, and especially Southeast Asians. The attitudes of the French respondents to their own ethnic group revealed an own-group criticism that might prove useful as an avenue for improving general attitudes toward immigrants.

Finally, the study reveals a number of theoretically interesting subgroup differences in attitudes that are traceable to political ideology, social class background, and religiosity. France accepts the expression of extreme left and right political positions, and in this study we find an open liberal attitude toward multiculturalism associated with politically left in contrast to the politically right orientations. Still, in the United States where the two major political parties have clear antisocialist underpinnings, and where few respondents would place themselves very far to the left on a left–right self-rating scale, we nevertheless find equally liberal attitudes on the same issue among black and white American respondents. In the United States the Liberal attitude is associated more with social-class factors (e.g. mc being more liberal than wc) or with ethnicity (e.g. wc American blacks being much more liberal than wc whites). Thus, there

probably exist important ideological links between "French left" and "American liberal" that would be worthwhile to explore in future research.

Future research should also explore the same relation between political orientation and attitudes toward multiculturalism–assimilation among immigrant groups themselves. Some work is underway on this matter (Moghaddam, 1988), e.g., the study of Iranians in Canada. Moghaddam and colleagues (1987) found that Iranian-Canadians who endorsed values generally associated with a left-wing orientation (e.g., "self-improvement through collective community effort") were more favorable to multiculturalism than those who endorsed right-wing values (e.g., "self-improvement through individual effort"). In turn, right-wingers placed more emphasis on assimilation as an integration strategy.

Nonetheless, through this pilot study, France emerges as distinctive because of the power exerted by the left–right contrast that, on its own and in interaction with religiosity, appears to have a pervasive influence on attitudes toward multiculturalism vs. assimilation, and on attitudes toward particular immigrant groups. In this regard, the present study adds support to the contention of Forbes (1985) that France is actually two nations, a "left France" and a "right France," and that attitudes toward foreigners are colored by whether these foreigners are seen as enemies or allies of one of these nations or the other. Our study suggests that one's perception of immigrants and views on immigration policies in France may fit into this left–right paradigm. Even the notion mentioned by Forbes that ethnocentrism is not pronounced in France is indirectly supported by our finding of own-group criticism expressed by our French respondents. But it would be necessary to explore this idea further with data from urban centers in France that have sizable groups of immigrants. The present study may also contribute to the work of Michelat and Simon (1977) in their attempts to document the independent and combined effects on social attitudes of left–right orientation and religious devotion. The importance of religious devotion on social attitudes that emerges in French research suggests to us that North American researchers would profit from giving the religious factor more consideration. The current work of Altemeyer (1981), which attends to religious allegiance in attitudinal research, sets an excellent example.

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