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French or Muslim? "Rooted" French Perceptions of the Muslim Community in France

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FRENCH OR MUSLIM? “ROOTED” FRENCH PERCEPTIONS OF THE MUSLIM
COMMUNITY IN FRANCE

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to identify and understand the “rooted” (French citizens with no immediate foreign decent) French perception of the Muslim community in France. In France, there is a mounting tension between the rooted French population and the Muslim community, as demonstrated by the growing number of French citizens leaving to fight for ISIS, the success of the National Front, and the terrorist attacks in Paris. I will first examine what constitutes French identity by examining the principle of *laïcité*, the French citizenship model, public opinion of French identity, and the National Front as a response to the perceived threat of Muslims to French identity. Then, I analyze four studies that provide insight of French attitudes to numerous questions that focus on Islam, Muslims, and integration. Finally, I reveal the results of my questionnaire conducted among forty-eight rooted French. I conclude that while the perception of Muslims is negative due to the rooted French belief that Muslims are refusing to adapt a French identity, the greater issue at hand is that Muslims, as a growing and seemingly dangerous out-group, present a perceived threat because of their perceived lack of adherence to *laïcité*- a central tenet of French identity.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Over the past three years, close to 2,000 French citizens have left to fight in the Middle East on behalf of the Islamic State. These citizens were primarily young Muslim men, the children of first or second-generation immigrants and a middle-class upbringing. Simultaneously, the National Front, an extreme-right political party, whose goal is to expel all Muslims from France, has been gaining momentum in national and local elections. Furthermore, the National Front's leader, Marine Le Pen, is setting her sights on the French presidency in the 2017 election. The January 2015 terrorist attacks on Charlie Hebdo and the November terrorist attacks in northeastern Paris have only added more fuel to Le Pen's anti-Muslim rhetoric and have magnified the growing fear of Islamic radicalization in France. To understand better what is happening in France today, this thesis asks a seemingly simple question: what is the rooted French perception of the Muslim community in France?

Clearly, there is a growing tension in France between the rooted French population and the Muslim community, as demonstrated by the increasing number of French citizens leaving to fight for ISIS, the success of the National Front, and the recent terrorist attacks in Paris. To comprehend the current situation in France, I want to go to the source of the tension - how the rooted French population perceives the Muslim community. While French citizens who sympathize with the National Front or identify with the extreme-left political parties are often the groups that make the most "noise" in the national debate, they do not represent the majority of French citizens. The goal of this thesis is to understand what the "average"¹ French citizen thinks of the Muslim community and why, not vice versa. More specifically, is it possible for

¹ By "average" French citizen, I refer to individuals who have moderate political preferences, are middle class, and are not particularly devout. This thesis focuses on the perception of the "average", "rooted" French population and how they perceive the Muslim community, as opposed to how the Muslim community thinks they are perceived by the French.

Muslims in France to assume a French identity and/or be perceived as “French”² by the French population?

To convey the unique perspective of “average” French citizens throughout this thesis, I will use the term “rooted French”. Translated from the French term Français de souche, this term is often used to describe a demographic category in studies conducted by private organizations or academic journals. While not a legal or administrative term, Français de souche is a common expression used to describe French citizens whose parents and grandparents were born in France or French citizens with no immediate foreign decent. Édouard Marchand was the first to theorize the term Français de souche in his book, “France for the French!” published in 1892, which stigmatized a difference between Jewish and non-Jewish inhabitants in France. Later in the 1900s, Français de souche was used to distinguish French nationals from native inhabitants of France’s colonial empire. In 1991, an INED report used “rooted French” for the first time to describe a demographic category. As the demographer, Michèle Tribalat explained, “the term [rooted French] means to define a person born in France of two parents themselves born in France.”³ Similar to how Tribalat uses the term *Français de souche*, I use the term “rooted French” to narrow down the focus of this thesis to concentrate on the attitudes of a specific group of individuals in France.

My hypothesis is that while the rooted French population may have a neutral view of the Muslim community on the surface, in reality, the average French person has a negative perception of Muslims because they seemingly refuse to assimilate into French culture and assume a French identity. To address and test this hypothesis, my methodology will first examine

² “French” in cultural identity, as well as legal citizenship.

³ Michèle Tribalat, “Cent ans d’immigration, étrangers d’hier Français d’aujourd’hui,” *Apport démographique, dynamique économique et familiale de l’immigration*, (1991): 302, <http://isni.org/isni/0000000043541908>

the three core and interrelated elements at the heart of French identity: laïcité, the French citizenship model, and French public opinion on what constitutes French identity. Next, I will look at the rise of the National Front and its political platform for insight and the potential variation of the rooted French perception of Muslims in France. I will then analyze five different studies in the findings section regarding the French attitude towards immigrants, Muslims, and Islam in France. I will also include data from a questionnaire I constructed and circulated among a select group of forty-five rooted French citizens who represent the “average French individual,” meaning that they are French citizens, Caucasian, and of Catholic or Judaic heritage. From this research and my questionnaire, I ultimately determine an explanation for the rooted French’s negative perception of the Muslim community in France based on why Muslims aren’t perceived as “French” in cultural identity.

II. METHODOLOGY

The method to test my hypothesis that the rooted French population does not perceive the Muslim community in France as culturally “French” because they seemingly refuse to assimilate into French culture and assume a French identity is twofold. In the background section, I will examine French identity by analyzing its three primary elements. These core elements include a historical analysis of French identity through laïcité, an institutional analysis of the French citizenship model composition, and a cultural analysis from political scientist Jean-Francois Caron based on the 2009-2010 “Great Debate on Identity” in France of how public opinion defines French identity. Analyzing in depth what French identity means and represents provides a better basis of what standard the rooted French have for the cultural integration of Muslims and why is it this way. Identifying the cause of tension between the rooted French and Muslim community by evaluating French identity is both a unique method of researching the source of

tensions and also more accurate by going to the possible source of tension, as opposed to looking at the results of these tensions, such as Islamic radicalization and economic disparity. I will then discuss the growing electoral success of the Front National as a response to the Muslim community's perceived failure of embracing French identity and whether the Front National's political ideas can be used as a basis for the overall rooted French perception of Muslims. This analysis of French identity and the response of the National Front allow for a better understanding of how the majority group (the rooted French population) identifies and perceives itself based on cultural norms, values, and expectations represented by laïcité and the French citizenship model. Understanding how the rooted French population perceives itself provides a better idea of how the rooted French then perceives the out-group (the Muslim community) and how the outsiders can become members of French society.

In the findings section, I analyze five different studies conducted between the years of 2009 and 2015 by a variety of surveying and research companies. These studies ask questions about immigration, integration, Islam, and French cultural identity that form an even clearer image of the rooted French perception of Muslims and whether Muslims are seen as "French," not just institutionally in citizenship status, but culturally in identity. These studies also provide a demographic analysis of the responses, allowing for an identification of particular groups, age categories, or political preferences that influence the rooted French opinion of Muslims. Additionally, I conducted my survey among a group of forty-five rooted French citizens, which focused on a series of questions to gauge how the rooted French population - in particular, those of politically moderate views and who are not explicitly or openly Islamophobic- perceive Muslims. These questions will include, 1) Is practicing Islam incompatible with the values of the French Republic and culture? 2) Can a French citizen be both "French" and Muslim culturally?

3) What can immigrants do to become more “French”? 4) Do you think the majority of Muslim immigrants want to be perceived as “French”? and 5) What French political party do you identify with most? The sample of forty-five rooted French citizens’ responses to these questions allows for a comparison of their answers with those of the studies. They also inform the background section, and ultimately led help answer the driving question of the thesis: “What is the rooted French perception of Muslims and what causes this perception?” This is a distinctive approach to answering the research question because no prior research has attempted to understand what is causing tension between the rooted French and Muslim community by looking at French identity and what it means to be perceived as French.

III. BACKGROUND: FRENCH IDENTITY

Is it possible for a Muslim to assume a French identity in the eyes of the rooted French population? I talked to my French grandmother on the phone in early September about my thesis topic, and she said something very thought-provoking. “*Chérie*, the Muslims will never be French, nor do they want to be. Our French culture and Muslims will never be compatible.” Even though I was taken aback by her comments, her political views have always seemed quite moderate for French politics and she finds Marine Le Pen’s National Front party racist and too radical. So, why does she think this way about Muslims in France? And is she typical of the average French citizen?

Overview

When the *Charlie Hebdo* terrorist attacks occurred, I was living in Paris. I was appalled and frightened when seventeen people were killed from the shootings, and the ensuing hostage situation in a kosher supermarket and additional shootings. The Charlie Hebdo attack shocked the French population because it was the first major terrorist attack on French soil. The Muslim

community was already, of course, a growing, distinctive out-group in France that was becoming more visible due to the expanding presence of Islam. In general, the French are well aware there is a problem with how the rooted French population and Muslim community engage and interact, but little is said or done about it due to the taboo nature of discussing ethnic or religious minorities in France – the essence of the concept of *laïcité*. In a sense, France is color-blind to religion and race, which makes it difficult to address the very evident issues that exist between the rooted French population and Muslim community.

The next terrorist attack, and most deadly attack in France since World War II took place on the evening of November 13, 2015 when a series of coordinated terrorist attacks occurred in northeastern Paris. A total of 130 people were killed in various attacks around Place de la République, the Bataclan Theater, and the Stade de France. This attack was an even greater blow to France due to its magnitude and the fact that it occurred only ten months after Charlie Hebdo. Even though the French stood together and proclaimed, “We are not afraid!”⁴ the tension and fear lingering from these attacks cannot be ignored. Now more than ever is the moment for France to talk about the very real issue of Islamic radicalization and how to stimulate productive dialogue between the rooted French and the Muslim community. As my hypothesis proposes, while the rooted French population may have a neutral view of the Muslim community on the surface, in reality, the average French person has a negative perception of Muslims because they seemingly refuse to assimilate into French culture and assume a French identity. Conversely, several studies show that French Muslims believe they are making an effort to assimilate into French society, but that the government and rooted French population are not willing to accommodate or support them. Completely contradicting this feeling is the rooted French belief

⁴ Translated from the popular catch phrase after the November 13th attacks, “*On n’a pas peur!*”

that France is very welcoming to Muslims and wishes them to assimilate. This is the disconnect that exists between the rooted French and Muslim community.

French identity is a multifaceted and intangible concept that is hard to label, and yet has a tremendous influence on French society and governance, including the notion that the rooted French population has a negative perception of the Muslim community. In this section, I will break down French identity into three sections: *laïcité*, the French citizenship model, and French public opinion of self-identification. *Laïcité* is important to understanding French identity because it can be considered as the civil religion of France and has a large influence over French governance and society. The French citizenship model states the legal requirements of being French in addition to the cultural expectations of what it means to be a French citizen. Finally, a study conducted by French political scientist Jean-Francois Caron analyzes the public opinion results of the “Great Debate on Identity” from 2009-2010. Since French identity is far from singular, looking at these three areas will provide a comprehensive context of French identity.

Laïcité

Laïcité, which translates as the strict separation of church in state in France, has a long history and is a defining factor in how French society and governance function. Referenced in the 1958 Constitution, *laïcité* is understood in three distinct ways in France: the complete secularization of the government, public education, and the general public sphere- thereby restricting religion to private life. To grasp the important of *laïcité* in French culture and government and why it is at the center of tensions between the rooted French and Muslim community, we must look back at a brief history of the evolution of *laïcité*.

Religious History and the Evolution of Laïcité in France

Like many European countries, France has a long and tumultuous history with religion. Catholicism was historically the state religion of France for many centuries, and French kings maintained a close relationship with the Pope going back to the Frankish tribes under Clovis I, who converted to Catholicism on Christmas Day in 496.⁵ However, over the years, a substantial Protestant population emerged in France. These French Protestants, known as Huguenots, were heavily prosecuted by the state throughout the 16th century and resulted in decades of violence and war. The French Wars of Religion (1562-1598) came to a climax in 1572 with the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre when Catholic mobs and assassins killed thousands of Huguenots after King Charles IX's sister Margaret married Protestant Henry III of Navarre.⁶ Despite this tremendous loss for the Huguenot political movement in France, once Henry IV became king of France in 1589 he signed the Edict of Nantes, which granted the Huguenots full civil rights and the right to public worship in the Catholic French state.⁷ What is noteworthy about the Edit of Nantes is that it separated civil from religious unity, the first movement of its kind in France. This was revolutionary for Europe at the time and would later set the stage for the implementation of *laïcité*.

The French Revolution, in 1789, was one of the most monumental historical events that drastically changed the perception and practice religion in French society. The revolution abolished the tithe (a tax of annual earning to the church and clergy), nationalized church property, and unleashed violent bouts of anticlericalism and Robespierre's Terror that resulted in

⁵ John Moorhead, "Clovis' motives for becoming a Catholic Christian," *Journal of Religious History* 13, no. 4 (1985): 329-339, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-9809.1985.tb00440.x/pdf>

⁶ James Westfall Thompson, *The Wars of Religion in France, 1559-1576: The Huguenots, Catherine de Medici and Philip II* (University of Chicago Press, 1915), 449-452.

⁷ "Edict of Nantes," Britannica, accessed January 29, 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/event/Edict-of-Nantes>

the death of 2-3,000 clergy and the exile of over 30,000.⁸ Despite the violence and chaos of the revolution, the first reference of secularism in French law came from the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizens. It established, “No one shall be persecuted for his beliefs, even religious, provided that their manifestation does not disturb the public order established by the law.”⁹ Even though Napoleon signed the Concordat of 1801, which recognized Catholicism as the official religion of France and appointed bishops as state employees, the Napoleonic Civil Code of 1804 is based on equality of citizens before the law, regardless of religious preferences.¹⁰ The Civil Code established French society as *laïque*, referencing that marriage and family life were under the influence of the Catholic Church and public civil law was purely based on reason and free from all prejudices.¹¹

The current French legal document upholding *laïcité* is the 1905 Separation of the Churches and State law. This law prohibits the French government from recognizing, providing a salary for, or subsidizing any religion, and declared that religion is a private affair. However, it is important to note that the law did not make any specific reference to the word *laïcité*. As author Michel Troper explains, “The law itself contains neither an explicit reference to such separation, nor the word *laïcité*, but in its first two articles it announces the principle of freedom of

⁸ David Blackbourn, “The Catholic Church in Europe since the French Revolution,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 33, no.4 (1991): 779, doi:10.1017/S0010417500017321

⁹ Declaration on the Rights of Man and the Citizen, Article 10, 1789, <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/Droit-francais/Constitution/Declaration-des-Droits-de-l-Homme-et-du-Citoyen-de-1789>

¹⁰ Blandine Chelini-Pont, “Is Laïcité The Civil Religion of France?” *The George Washington International Law Review* 41, no. 4 (2010): 782.

¹¹ “Napoleonic Code,” Britannica, accessed February 1, 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/topic/Napoleonic-Code>

conscience and the refusal by the state to recognize any religion, from which followed the elimination of the budget for the religions.”¹²

Laïcité was made explicit in French law by the 1946 Constitution. Article 5 states that “No person may suffer prejudice in his work or employment by virtue of his origins, opinions or beliefs.”¹³ Article 13 states that “The Nation guarantees equal access for children and adults to instruction, vocational training and culture. The provision of free, public and secular education at all levels is a duty of the State.”¹⁴ The current French constitution from 1958 declares in Article 1 of the Preamble, “France is an indivisible, secular, democratic and social. It ensures equality before the law for all citizens without distinction of origin, race or religion. It shall respect all beliefs.”¹⁵

Laïcité as the French civil religion

Based on the language stated in the French constitution, it is clear that *laïcité* plays an integral role in French society and governance. Author Blandine Chelini-Pont gives a thoughtful explanation of the significance of *laïcité* in France. Chelini-Pont explains how the great French philosophers Montesquieu, Voltaire, and d’Holbach believed that the free man could not accept being dominated by a religion that imposes itself on him. For the French revolutionaries, secularism represented the freedom of conscience for which they were fighting. Chelini-Pont compares secularism as the French “promised land.” In theory, secularism created a society in France where religion is not a condition of belonging, where equality of the law touches all

¹² Michel Troper, “French Secularism, or *Laïcité*,” *Cardozo Law Review* 21, no. 2 (1999): 1276,

¹³ Constitution of The Fourth French Republic, Preamble, Article 5, 1946, <http://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/conseil-constitutionnel/english/constitution/preamble-to-the-constitution-of-27-october-1946.105306.html>

¹⁴ Constitution of The Fourth French Republic, Preamble, Article 16, 1946.

¹⁵ Constitution of The Fifth Republic, Preamble, Article 1, 1958, <http://www.conseil-general.com/en/national/french-constitutional-council/constitutions/fifteenth-french-constitution.htm#Preamble>

people, and the political authority no longer emanates from God. Given the importance of secularism in French history, governance, and intellectual thought, *laïcité* lives on today as the civil religion of France. According to Robert Bellah, a sociologist of religion, civil religion is a combination of collective rituals that reveal a devotion to the unity of a nation and national mythology made up of a diffusion of beliefs and representations that constitute the dominant mental attitudes of society. This gives a national group the feeling of belonging, attachment, and a common sense of pride.¹⁶ Given Bellah's definition and Chelini-Pont's argument, *laïcité* can be thought of as the collective mesh that holds together all the components of collective French identity. While *laïcité* can be thought of as a component of French identity, it plays a much larger role throughout French society and governance. *Laïcité* is a historical factor of French identity that also lays the ground rules for how French society functions, how the political system governs, and how they interact together. From the perspective of the French, it can then be assumed that the Muslim community in France must embrace *laïcité* if it wants to develop and project a French identity.

If *laïcité* is considered as the civil religion of France, then a problematic situation arises in relation to the Muslim community, or any other religion. In France, *laïcité* represents freedom of religion and the freedom to practice religion in the privacy of your home. For practicing Muslims or for individuals who identify with Islamic culture and tradition, *laïcité* signifies oppression because it prevents the Muslim community from projecting or displaying their religious practices in public spaces. This is because, at least from a Western perspective, Islam is a religion that is heavily involved in almost all components of a person's daily life. The primary issue at hand in France is that there are two very different cultures attempting to co-habitat and

¹⁶ Chelini-Pont, "Is Laïcité The Civil Religion of France?" 765-771.

function together, but they approach religion, a fundamental aspect of life, from very different perspectives. It thus appears that the very fabric of collective French identity, *laïcité*, is what is blocking the Muslim community from completely assimilating and being perceived as French by the rooted French population. Three cases studies provide evidence of this tension.

2004 Law on the Headscarf and the Defense of the Equality of the Sexes

The debate regarding the right for Muslim girls to wear the *hijab* (a headscarf that covers the head and chest of girls past the age of puberty) in French public schools was brewing for almost fifteen years before the law outlawing it in public passed in 2004. The media portrayed the enemy as Muslim religious fanaticism invading Republican space while the victims were oppressed Muslim girls.¹⁷ Yet a heated public dialogue centered on the defense of *laïcité* and Republican values. The majority of the schools where members of the French Muslim community advocated the right the wear the *hijab* involved were Catholic. In response, the education ministry pushed for the integration of Catholic schools and non-religious affiliated schools into a unified secular public system. Even though the 1958 French constitution pronounced France as a “*République laïque*,”¹⁸ *laïcité* was rarely mentioned in public discourse until the 1990s when Muslim interest groups began demanding the right for Muslim girls to wear their hijab to French public schools.¹⁹ Political researcher Martine Barthélémy makes an important observation that,

The history of *laïcité* made it of value of the left, associated with anticlericalism, if not a frank hostility towards religion. It constituted the lynchpin of the attitudinal systems of left wing militants, detached from Catholicism, particularly among teachers. These militants intend to protect the public schools from any religious influence, to cultivate

¹⁷ Ibid., 784.

¹⁸ Constitution of The Fifth Republic, Preamble, Article 1, 1958, <http://www.conseil-general.com/en/national/french-constitutional-council/constitutions/fifteenth-french-constitution.htm#Preamble>

¹⁹ Chelini-Pont, “Is Laïcité The Civil Religion of France?” 785.

values of public service and to emphasize above all the primacy of the role of the State in social change.²⁰

From this interpretation, *laïcité* can also be interpreted as a political tool in addition to the collective mesh that embodies French society. *Laïcité* remained inconspicuous in French politics from post-WWII through the 1980s until the fear of a unified Islam in France brought the discussion of *laïcité* to the public forum. From that point on, French public political and social debate evolved into a debate over the compatibility of Islam with *laïcité*. Baubérot argues that since the 1990s, *laïcité*, invoked by both the political left and right, played the role of a French ‘civil republican religion.’²¹ As author Bowen explains, “[The] hearings and the media coverage of the issue depicted grave dangers to French society and its tradition of [*laïcité*] presented by Islamic radicalism, a trend toward “communalism,” and the oppression of women in the poor suburbs.”²²

After over a decade of debate, on February 10, 2004, the National Assembly approved, by 494 votes to 36 with 31 abstentions, the first reading of a law that prohibited the wearing by pupils in any public school of any conspicuous sign of religious affiliation.²³ Muslim groups denounce the 2003 law because, from their perception, it violates their right to express religious beliefs. While the French government saw the law as a solution to integration problems since it makes schools a religion-free zone for everyone, the Muslim community saw it as an effort of the French government to block their ability to assimilate into French society. This analysis is

²⁰ Martine Barthélémy & Françoise Subileau, *Le militantisme laïque: Deux cas d'école*, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2002), 76, <https://www.cairn.info/revue-francaise-de-science-politique-2007-5-page-649.htm>

²¹ Jean Baubérot, “Laïcité and the Challenge of 'Republicanism',” *Modern and Contemporary France* 17, no. 2 (2009): 196-197, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09639480902827603>

²² John Bowen, *Can Islam be French? Pluralism and Pragmatism in a Secularist State*, (Princeton University Press, 2010), 1.

²³ Harry Judge, “The Muslim Headscarf and French Schools,” *American Journal of Education* 111, no. 1 (2004): 2, <http://jstor.org/stable/10.1086/424718>.

not meant to take away from the importance of *laïcité* as the French civil religion, but rather highlight how *laïcité*'s function in public debate has evolved since WWII and the increase in Muslim immigration to France. In sum, *laïcité* is not a mere political tool, but rather a concept representative of the French experience and history, and as a result, it is additionally used as political tool to defend French identity from the presence of Islam in France.

2010 “Burqa Ban”

In 2010, another controversial French law seemingly directed at Muslims passed as an act of parliament using the justification of *laïcité*. This law placed restrictions on what a person may wear in the “public space,” as opposed to the 2004 law whose restrictions were limited to government regulated establishments, such as public schools and government institutions.²⁴ “The Act Prohibiting Concealment of the Face in Public Space,” or more popularly referred to as the “Burqa Ban,” instated a ban on the wearing of face-covering headgear, including masks, helmets, balaclava, niqabs, burqas, and other veil coverings in public spaces.²⁵ The French legislature defines public space as “public roads and places open to the public or used for a public service,” and includes buses, museums, cafes, and even while walking down the street.²⁶ Violation of this law can result in a fine of 150 euros and/or participation in citizenship education while forcing or threatening another individual to cover their face can result in up to two years in prison.²⁷ While this penalty depicts how serious the French government is about upholding gender equality, from

²⁴ Lina Powell, “The Constitutionality of France’s Ban on the Burqa in Light of The European Convention’s Arslan v. Turkey Decision on Religious Freedom,” *Wisconsin International Law Journal* 31, no. 1 (2013): 120, http://hosted.law.wisc.edu/wordpress/wilj/files/2014/01/Ragep-Powell_final.pdf

²⁵ Law no. 524, National Assembly of The Fifth French Republic, 13 July 2010, <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/13/ta/ta0524.asp>

²⁶ Powell, “The Constitutionality of France’s Ban on the Burqa in Light of The European Convention’s Arslan v. Turkey Decision on Religious Freedom,” 120.

²⁷ Law no. 524, National Assembly of The Fifth French Republic, 2010.

a more critical perspective it also demonstrates how enthusiastically and actively the French government is willing to fight terrorism.

The events leading up to the passing of the law illuminate the rooted French perception that the Muslim community is not doing enough to assimilate into French culture and assume a French identity. In June 2009, a parliamentary commission examined whether fully covered Muslim women undermine France's secularism.²⁸ Later that month, President Nicolas Sarkozy addressed the parliament and stated that face veils "will not be welcome on the territory of the French Republic," and that the purpose of the law "is to protect women from being forced to cover their faces and to uphold France's secular values."²⁹ In December 2009, France's immigration minister, Eric Besson, participated in a hearing in front of the parliamentary commission inquiring into veils in France and stated that he wanted "the wearing of the full veil to be systematically considered as proof of insufficient integration into French society, creating an obstacle to gaining nationality."³⁰ In a public survey conducted by Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project between April 7-May 8, 2010, the French public overwhelmingly endorsed this measure by 82%. Comparatively, 71% of surveyed Germans approved, 62% of surveyed English approved, and just 28% of surveyed Americans approved of such bans.

In July 2014, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), by a majority of 15 judges to two, held in *S.A.S. v France* that the 2010 French criminal law ban on face coverings in all public places did not violate the ECHR.³¹ The decision was very controversial because *S.A.S.* relied heavily on a concept largely unheard of in human rights language: 'living together'.

²⁸ Powell, 127.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 127.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 128.

³¹ Jill Marshall, "S.A.S. v France: Burqa Bans and the Control or Empowerment of Identities," *Oxford Human Rights Law Review* 12, no. 2 (2015): 2, <http://hrlr.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2015/04/15/hrlr.ngv003.full.pdf+html>

S.A.S. argued that the French law violated her rights under ECHR Articles 3, 8-11 and 14. While the ECHR ruled that the ban interferes with Article 8 and Article 9 rights, it was judged as serving a legitimate aim that was deemed “necessary in a democratic society.”³² As Marshall explains, “The ECHR found that under certain conditions, like those in this case, the ‘respect for the minimum requirements of life in society’ referred to by the French government, or of ‘living together’ as stated in the explanatory memorandum accompanying the Bill, can be linked to the legitimate aim of the ‘protection of the rights and freedoms of others.’”³³

Both the 2010 French law and 2014 ECHR received a great deal of international criticism for violating freedom of religious expression. From the official French perspective, the law was an effort to preserve *laïcité* and uphold the French cultural norm of keeping religion a private affair. To state it differently, France’s actions were a defense of national culture, identity, and values against a populous out-group (the Muslim community) that was not assimilating into French society. The question is, why did France see the need to defend its national culture, identity, and values? I argue that the French perceive Islamic culture as a threat to the livelihood and continuation of French culture. The 82% French approval of the 2010 “Burqa Ban” along with the visible national determination to uphold *laïcité* as a norm in French society, with no exceptions for Muslims or people of Muslim heritage, is a powerful illustration of how the French perceive their culture and identity and desire to defend them. From the French perception, the 2010 “Burqa Ban” promotes rooted French identity and culture and the desire to eliminate undesirable foreign influence. This example supports my hypothesis that while the rooted French population may have a neutral view of the Muslim community on the surface, in reality, the

³² Marshall, “*S.A.S. v France: Burqa Bans and the Control or Empowerment of Identities*,” 2.

³³ Marshall, 2.

average French person has a negative perception of Muslims because they seemingly refuse to assimilate into French culture and assume a French identity.

French Council of the Muslim Faith

Although *laïcité* is an important aspect of French identity and has been supported multiple times by French law, there is a notable exception to this French principle. The creation of the French Council of the Muslim Faith (CFCM) in 2003 was a direct contradiction of *laïcité* by legally recognizing a religious group before a government. The CFCM is the de facto representative of French Muslims to the French national government, even though it has no special legal standing. Jean-Pierre Chevènement, former Minister of the Interior, began the process leading to the creation of the CFCM in 1997 by drafting of a text, largely based on the earlier Charter of the Muslim Religion. This text obliged the French Muslim leaders to, “solemnly declare their attachment to the fundamental principles of the French Republic.” The CFCM was therefore founded on the official recognition of the French state and its laws by Muslim leaders, and not the recognition of the Islam by the French state.³⁴ While the CFCM is unprecedented in regards to *laïcité*, it was only created under the precondition that the Muslim leaders respect French law and its principles.

The CFCM demonstrates how the French state is dealing with integrating Muslims into French society while simultaneously respecting *laïcité*. The CFCM provides French Muslims with national representation and simultaneously removes that burden from the French state. This underscores the ambiguous status of the “Muslim citizen” in France, whose demands are seen by

³⁴ Benjamin Bruce, “Promoting Belonging through Religious Institutionalization? The French Council of the Muslim Faith (CFCM) and the German Islamkonferenz,” *Political Perspectives* 4, no. 2 (2010): 51-56, http://www.academia.edu/1799293/Promoting_Belonging_through_Religious_Institutionalisation_The_French_Council_of_the_Muslim_Faith_CFCM_and_the_German_Islamkonferenz

the French state as those of a “Muslim” first, and a “citizen” second.³⁵ From the example of the CFCM, it appears the French state cannot see French Muslims as both “French” and “Muslim,” but rather as only one or the other. I stipulate that this is because the French government and society have a difficult time perceiving Muslims as French because openly practicing Islam contradicts the values of French identity and the French state.

The creation of the CFCM is a unique solution to the French government’s issue of integrating Muslims by giving this responsibility to a uniquely religious institution, which has a great deal of foreign influence from Algeria and Morocco. In effect, France is outsourcing the religious representative of its Muslims back to the countries of origin for many Muslim immigrants. The CFCM suggests that is it not only the rooted French who have a negative perception of Muslims, but also the French government. In fact, the very actions of the French government to isolate the Muslim community in society and representation only further aggravate tensions between the rooted French and Muslim community. Ultimately, belonging boils down to a feeling of loyalty and common purpose with those in the national community. As French political scientist, Bruce Benjamin states, “Most nation-states have had groups on their territory not considered capable of belonging, and therefore either denied citizenship or alternatively forced to go through a process of cultural assimilation in order to belong.”³⁶ Belonging is determined not only by the individual, but is subject to majority society perception. Therefore, the CFCM’s creation can be seen as a direct result of the French government and society not perceiving French Muslims as “French” because their religious affiliation is not seen as compatible with French identity.

³⁵ Bruce, “Promoting Belonging through Religious Institutionalization? The French Council of the Muslim Faith (CFCM) and the German Islamkonferenz,” 56.

³⁶ Bruce, 50-51.

Summary

In summary, my analysis demonstrates that *laïcité* plays a major role in determining and influencing French identity, but also in the functioning of the French state and society. *Laïcité* symbolizes a revolutionary solution to a long history of religious conflict that finally ended in the strict separation of church and state, avoiding future religious persecution and violence. *Laïcité* can indeed be thought of as the French civil religion; a cultural mesh that represents a shared history and experience among the rooted French population.

Due to its significance and prevalence in French society, *laïcité* is also used as a political tool for passing legislation, such as the 2004 and 2010 laws, that further enforce secularism in the face of a growing Muslim community. However, it is important to note that while *laïcité* may, in theory, promote secularism to create an equal playing field among all religions, that is not necessarily the case in France. Even though France has no official religion, it is a historically Christian country that nationally recognizes and celebrates Christian holidays. The same cannot be said about Islamic, Jewish or other religious holidays. Therefore, *laïcité* is unfairly skewed towards the primary historical religion of France, Catholicism, and disfavors other religions like Islam, but also Judaism. Due to the historical and cultural significance of both Christianity and *laïcité*, I argue that practicing Islam and adhering to Islamic cultural practices is seen as a direct contradiction of *laïcité* in the eyes of the rooted French, and consequentially creates a negative perception of the Muslim community.

French Citizenship Model

The French citizenship model is also critical to the hypothesis. Citizenship can be analyzed in two ways: the legal requirements for acquiring a nationality and the cultural significance of what it means to be the citizens of a certain country. The process to become a

legal French citizen is based on *jus soli*, or “the right of the soil,” meaning that anyone born on French territory automatically becomes a French citizen, and also *jus sanguinis* if the child of a French citizen is born abroad. Additionally, one may become a French citizen through naturalization after having lived in France for more than five continuous years and can provide proof of integration into the French community by speaking French and having a knowledge of French culture and society and the rights and duties of French citizens.³⁷ French citizenship is also possible after four years of marriage to a French citizen as long as the spouse retains his/her French citizenship and a good knowledge of the French language is provable.³⁸

However, there have been efforts to abolish the *jus soli* attribution of citizenship and make naturalization dependent on assimilation to French culture. An example of this effort is the so-called Pasqua Laws. In 1993, the conservative government's interior minister, Charles Pasqua, put forth the goal of "zero immigration" (later qualified to mean zero illegal immigration) and wrote laws that prohibited foreign graduates from accepting in-country employment, increased the waiting period for family reunification from one to two years, and denied residence permits to foreign spouses who had been in France illegally prior to marrying.³⁹ The legislation also enhanced the powers of police to deport foreigners and eliminated opportunities to appeal asylum rejections. When the Socialists won control of the National Assembly in 1997, many of the laws were modified or eliminated to provide highly skilled workers, scholars, and scientists

³⁷ “A guide to French citizenship and permanent residence,” Expatica, Accessed February 2, 2016, http://www.expatica.com/fr/visas-and-permits/A-guide-to-French-citizenship-and-permanent-residence_107626.html

³⁸ “A guide to French citizenship and permanent residence,” Expatica.

³⁹ Kimberly Hamilton, Patrick Simon, and Clara Veniard, *The Challenge of French Diversity*, The Migration Policy Institute, 1 November 2004, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/challenge-french-diversity>.

with a special immigrant status.⁴⁰ These actions are an additional demonstration of the French government's negative attitude toward the increasing number of Muslim immigrants in France.

It is important to note that France has a different model of citizenship and assimilation than many other liberal democracies. As Jennifer Fredette, author of "Constructing Muslims in France" explains, "The French Republican ideal of citizenship envisages a collection of people who regard themselves in public life as individuals, and who are unified by their search for the common good over any particular affiliations or beliefs that may divide them."⁴¹ In other words, French citizenship model expects French citizens to be united in their core beliefs and values before prioritizing any other affiliation, such as religious beliefs. Thus, French Muslims are expected to be "French" first and "Muslim" second. If an individual were to engage in politics as a Muslim rather than as a French citizen, it is seen as a rejection of the fundamental premise of French civic life and a failure of integration.⁴² It is the goal of French citizenship to make immigrants members, culturally and legally, part of the French population. However, in France, the issue appears to be that the rooted French population thinks Muslims are not making enough effort to become "insiders," while the Muslim community believes that the French government and public are discriminating against its religious identity and thus are preventing Muslims from becoming "insiders."

French Republican Values

⁴⁰ Hamilton, Simon, and Veniard, "The Challenge of French Diversity."

⁴¹ Jennifer Fredette, "Are French Muslims integrated? Depends on what you mean by integration," *The Washington Post*, 29 July 2014, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2014/07/29/are-french-muslims-integrated-depends-on-what-you-mean-by-integration/>

⁴² Fredette, "Are French Muslims integrated? Depends on what you mean by integration."

But what makes a citizen “French”? French citizenship is heavily based on republican values, which implies that equal rights be granted to all citizens.⁴³ Additionally, universalist neutrality is invoked when confronting multicultural demands, ensuring equal treatment for every citizen. This indivisible universalism of French republican civic values is centered on the equality of the individual citizen, but leaves little space for the expression of cultural group difference within politics due, to French state norms like *laïcité* and not recognizing special religious or ethnic groups.⁴⁴ In comparison with the United States where it is common to utilize citizenship terms like “Irish-American” or “Italian-American”, citizen hyphenation is unheard of and rather taboo in France. This indicates that, at least informally, multiculturalism is not supported in France. The way that Republican values are practiced in France often result in Muslims perceiving French citizenship as discriminatory, which also explains some of the tension between the rooted French and Muslim community. This suggests that Muslims are not perceived by the rooted French society as “French,” even if they are legal French citizens.

French Citizenship and Integration Policy

Integration policy has a significant impact on shaping the members of a community, particularly immigrants to a new country. Membership of a community is a vital element of the democratic polity because it confers legitimacy in the democratic political system and maintains a sense of common purpose by defining and reaffirming shared traits.⁴⁵ Integration policies

⁴³ Cécile Laborde, “The Culture(s) of the Republic: Nationalism and Multiculturalism in French Republican Thought,” *Political Theory* 29, no. 5 (2001): 732, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3072536>. 732

⁴⁴ Charles Tilly, *Citizenship, Identity and Social History*, (Cambridge University Press: 1996), 170.

⁴⁵ Christian Joppke and Ewa Morawska, *Toward Assimilation and Citizenship: Immigrants in Liberal Nation-States*, (Palgrave Macmillan: 2002), 12, <http://www.gbv.de/dms/goettingen/351117717.pdf>

promote “citizen-like” skills, like language proficiency, country knowledge, and cultural appreciation. Participation in the civic policies seeks to yield overall improvements in immigrant integration, but at their core, they are requirements without which status cannot be obtained.⁴⁶ We can distinguish citizenship policy as member-conditioning, which integration policy is member-enabling. In member-conditioning, the immigrant rises to meet the demands of the state, while in member-enabling, the state lowers itself to accommodate, promote, and alter the life changes of the immigrant.⁴⁷ In France, the model is largely member-conditioning. For example, in 2007, the Law on Immigration, Integration, and Asylum introduced the “Reception and Integration Contract,” which is supervised by the National Office for Immigration and Integration. By signing the Reception and Integration Contract all newly arrived immigrants with a legal status commit to learning French and becoming familiar with French laws. The renewal of their residence permit is dependent on their commitment to fulfill this contract.⁴⁸ There are language and education programs for immigrants when they arrive in France; however, these programs are mostly geared at immigrants under the age of eighteen years old. A comparative study conducted in the Netherlands and France explains how unique the French citizenship model is, and whether failing to assimilate to this identity is what is causing the rooted French population’s negative perception of Muslims.

In a qualitative comparison of Muslim group demands in the Netherlands and France, Ruud Koopmans distinguishes between the Muslim group demands for rights in each country in

⁴⁶ Joppke and Morawska, 12.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 12.

⁴⁸ Angeline Escafre-Dublet, “Mainstreaming Immigrant Integration Policy in France: Education, Employment, and Social Cohesion Initiatives,” *Migration Policy Institute Europe* (2014): 3, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/mainstreaming-immigrant-integration-policy-france-education-employment-and-social-cohesion>

addition to the reaction of the state.⁴⁹ On one hand, the Netherlands are very willing to acknowledge other cultural religious pillars within its national political community, using the principle that what is already granted to some groups must, therefore, be extended to all groups. For example, the Union of Moroccan Muslims Organization in the Netherlands successfully advocated for providing imams in the Netherlands with Islamic education programs. Furthermore, the Islamic Broadcasting Foundation has the right to broadcast on Dutch public channels in Arabic as a way to advance the integration of Muslims into Dutch society.⁵⁰ The Dutch government is very accommodating to the requests of the Dutch Muslim community, and thus fosters a multicultural approach to citizenship and integration.

France varies from the Netherlands drastically because, as previously stated, France does not recognize separate ethnic or religious groups. In fact, it is illegal in France to conduct a state census on religion or ethnicity so has not to discriminate and ensure an equal standing for all religious and ethnic groups. Whereas the Dutch actively promote a multicultural model of citizenship, the French republican model strongly resists all group demands for exceptional rights, especially those that are religious in nature.⁵¹ A notable example occurred in 2004 in Grenoble, France when a thousand Muslims demonstrated outside the appeal committee hearing for a student excluded from class for wearing a headscarf during gym. The protest was against “an antireligious laicism that is a threat to social peace,” while others held signs proclaiming that “France is my freedom, my foulard too” and “Muslim, yes, French too.”⁵² In this instance,

⁴⁹ Koopmans, Ruud, *Contested Citizenship: Immigration and Cultural Diversity in Europe*, (University of Minnesota Press: 2005), 167, http://www.islamicstudies.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Contested_citizenship_immigration_and_cultural_diversity_2009.pdf

⁵⁰ Koopmans, *Contested Citizenship: Immigration and Cultural Diversity in Europe*, 167.

⁵¹ Koopmans, 162.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 169.

Muslims were defending what they professed as their group right against the assertive actions of the state authorities, who were enforcing republican principles and the law.

The French citizenship model tells us a great deal about French identity and how the rooted French adhere to the standard of republican values, particularly universal neutralism and equality. In respect and adherence to these values, the French government refuses to make exceptions to the French citizenship model for Muslims group demands because by doing so, it would violate the very principles of French identity and governance. As witnessed since the 1980s in the 2004 and 2010 laws against wearing religious symbols and clothing in public spaces, the Muslim community's demands to be excused from the French citizenship model due to religious grievances creates a negative image for the rooted French population and ultimately results in more social tensions.

Public Opinion of French Identity

After analyzing French identity through *laïcité* and the French citizenship model, I will now discuss French identity from the perspective of public opinion. As more and more immigrants flood into France, there is an increasing desire from the government to define clearly what French identity is. In May 2007, President Nicolas Sarkozy created the Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Co-Development. This ministry was designed to brainstorm solutions to the increasing tension from Muslim immigration to France and promote national identity. The problem was that there was never an officially declared French identity, besides the values of the Republic listed in the French constitution. In November 2009, Minister Eric Besson launched the "Great Debate on National Identity," with the objective of codifying

what it means to be French.⁵³ The highly controversial initiative fostered a series of 350 public meetings during its first three months, and the dedicated website received 58,000 submissions as replies to the question: “For you, what does it mean to be French?”⁵⁴ While the Great Debate was a smart idea, in theory, it ultimately failed to illuminate a single national French identity.

Responses posted by internet users or others who participated in the debate were mainly centered around national symbols, such as the French must honor France, its flag, its great men, its national anthem, its glorious past, and embrace values of generosity and open-mindedness.⁵⁵ The Great Debate ultimately stopped due to political issues, but Sarkozy nevertheless instated having a French flag displayed on top of every school to reinforce “civic education.” This ruling sent a poignant message: keep France “French,” and brings us back to the original question of what is French identity.

The government website was shutdown in February 2010 with no survey content made available to the public. The only remaining source of information regarding this debate is found in work of political researchers Marchand and Ratinaud, who listed a significant part of the 17,940 testimonies on their website. Political scientist, Jean-Francois Caron, wrote an article entitled, “Understanding and interpreting France’s national identity: The meanings of being French,” based on these remaining results of the Great Debate that I will analyze to cognize better what idea of French identity can be extrapolated from this survey. While the responses provide insight into numerous concepts of what it means to be French, it is important to keep in mind only a small fraction of the entire French population gave responses, and this survey cannot

⁵³ Patrick Simon, “French National Identity and Integration: Who Belongs to the National Community?” *Institut national d’etudes demographiques* (2012), <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/TCM-french-national-identity>

⁵⁴ Simon, “French National Identity and Integration.”

⁵⁵ Pascal Blanchard, “France needs a real debate on identity,” *The Guardian*, 14 January 2010, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/jan/14/french-identity-eric-besson>

be deemed as accurately representative of the entire French population. Additionally, there is no way to crosscheck the age, socio-economic background, and race of the individuals who responded. Regardless, Caron's research identifies four types of responses by the participants: the ethno-symbolic sense of attachment, the ethnic conception of nationhood, the constitutional patriotism paradigm and, last, the ideal that citizenship is defined by civic contributions and sacrifices.

Ethnosymbolism and belonging to a community

From Caron's research, a civic community is not just supported by citizenship, but rather a shared cultural and historical heritage. Historically, the formation of modern states has been associated with a nation-building process whose objective is to unite the unknown members around the same collective psyche. Many nations have attempted to create patriotism among their citizens via a shared history composed of heroes representing the national virtues, a common language, folklore, a specific mentality, official symbols like a national hymn, national money, postal iconography, flag, floral, or animal symbols. All of these elements used to turn people into citizens are known as ethnosymbolism.

It is challenging for immigrants to develop any real sense of attachment to a France solely based on national symbols when they typically come from an entirely different cultural background. Based upon the 17,940 comments evaluated by Marchand and Ratinaud, this conception of nationhood around symbols is pivotal for a significant number of French citizens, and it seems to condition their sense of attachment toward their country, which is common in many countries. In fact, the approximately 10% of the contributions on the website by the participants focused on ethnosymbolism, specifically references to the history of France as a central aspect of their attachment. For these respondents, being French implies pride in its

history, and more precisely, its heroes who have contributed to France's greatness.⁵⁶ Caron also mentions the work of Edmond Marc Lipiansky, who, after studying more than 40 literary essays (from Alfred Fouillee in 1895 up to Pierre Daninos in 1968), came to the conclusion that the most recurrent element supporting the French spirit among authors was French historical figures. An example of one of the survey responses was,

For me, a national identity implies the desire to claim with pride the culture of one's country. It means to be proud of the great men and women of this country who have marked its history. I am proud to be French when I read Hugo, Proust, Prevert, when I listen to Debussy, Brassens, when I am moved by films of Renoir or Vigo.⁵⁷

Another example of an ethnosymbolic response was, "Being French involves the duty to respect symbols such as the French flag and its national anthem. Yes my friend, we don't listen to the Marseillaise with our hands in our pockets, or while smoking a cigarette!" In summary, the Great Debate responses indicate that ethnosymbolism comprises an important portion of French identity, and, therefore, influences the rooted French perception of the Muslim community.

Therefore, if Muslims, be they immigrants or citizens, in France do not embrace national symbols, history, and culture, do the rooted French still perceive them as "French"? Judging from this, albeit limited, survey the answer is likely no. Many of these national symbols are taught in public school history classes, implanting the idea of French greatness and pride in children from an early age. Since immigrants do not have this specific education, they do not share the same pride for French historical symbols of nationalism with the rooted French.

However, this hypothesis does not hold as strongly for second-generation Muslims, who are born

⁵⁶ Jean-François Caron, "Understanding and interpreting France's national identity: The meanings of being French," *National Identities* 15, no. 3 (2013): 225-226. <http://rpucolo.colorado.edu/ebsco-w-a/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=bbb4f004-3cba-4d9c-8be8-54c678a4e173%40sessionmgr4004&vid=3&hid=4201>

⁵⁷ Caron, "Understanding and interpreting France's national identity," 226.

and raised in France because they also attended public school and received the same education as rooted French children. While French Muslims may learn the French historical symbols at school, at home their parents may teach them to identify with another culture, be it Algerian or Moroccan, and, therefore, may not reinforce or support what the children learn at school. Since second- or even third-generation Muslims in France may not share a similar French pride in national symbols and history because of a split-cultural allegiance, the rooted French population may not perceive them as entirely “French” either.

National identity and ethnicity

While civic nationalism and a deep reverence for French historical figures and symbols are prevalent, another way that French citizens identify as “French” is by national identity and ethnicity. For those who support this conception of French nationhood (only a minority of the people who participated in the survey), being French is inextricably linked to skin color or Catholicism. Thus, some answered that, “being French is a matter of historical and ethnic belonging”, “a Frenchman is white, of Judeo-Christian tradition and of Western culture”, and “being French implies three conditions: first of all, be a direct descendant of the Gauls, the Romans and the Franks; secondly, claim a belonging to the Western world; thirdly, to be inspired by our Catholic roots.”

This association of French identity is not compatible with Islamic culture and background. In the words of the former Interior Minister Claude Gueant, “[Muslim tradition] does not have the same ontological value of the Western civilization.” Furthermore, as Caron discusses, certain people have come to believe that France is being “invaded” by Muslims who are trying to recreate, in their welcoming society, their cultural norms, behaviors and values.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Ibid., 226-228.

For many, it is a sign that Muslims are refusing to integrate into France and adapt a French identity, and are therefore potentially self-fueling a negative perception of themselves by the rooted French population. Concerning this perspective, Marine Le Pen, the president of the far-right Front National political party, stated that France needs to, “resist against this new form of occupation,” and that the rooted French have a right to affirm their specificities and their right to difference through their Judeo-Christian heritage.⁵⁹ While only a minority of the respondents answered based on ethnicity and religion, this association of French identity poses a sizable issue for France and its future with a growing Muslim population. If being Caucasian, Catholic, and/or of Gaulois heritage are necessary of having a French identity, then Muslims could never be perceived as French by the rooted French. In fact, this type of French identity would imply that even if Muslims successfully integrated into French society and embraced national French symbols and culture, they would still never be perceived as “French” by the rooted French, who identify as French based on their ethnicity and religion.

France’s sense of belonging and constitutional patriotism

On the other end of the spectrum, many French citizens support a more inclusive definition of nationhood known as constitutional patriotism. It is the idea that members of a political community develop a common political identity by feeling attached to universal political ideals rather than cultural elements or symbols. However, as Caron explains, “In order for those ideas to really engender a sense of attachment, they need to culturally resonate for the individual.” Regardless, it is important to keep in mind that universal values do not carry any real significance unless there is a national tradition and/or culture to uphold and promote such values.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 228-229.

France's universal republican values that generate a sense of belonging to the country are usually associated with the ones in its motto: liberty, equality, and fraternity.⁶⁰

According to Caron's research, "values" was the fifth most-often mentioned work on the website after "French," "France," "country," and "identity". One of the comments included, "Being French is to be loyal to our values: liberty, equality, fraternity. Those are values of humanity and generosity that we must defend every day," and, "Being French means to be able to freely express yourself, to have freedom of opinion, of culture; the equality of everyone and not only to favor certain groups to the detriment of the majority; the fraternity, the help for impoverish individuals and not the enrichment of a few." France has a deep pride in its republican values, born of the Revolution of 1789, and it is these values of liberty, equality, and fraternity that create a deep political pride and national identification. Caron states, "This form of 'rooted cosmopolitanism' rests upon the idea that the flourishing and development of moral finalities of humankind depend largely on a national culture that must universalize itself upon the rest of the world."⁶¹

This form of French identity based on values is undoubtedly the best form by which immigrants can conform to feel a sense of being French. These values ignore differences in religion, ethnicity and cultural upbringing and can foster better perceptions of Muslims by the rooted French. An ethnic sense of attachment is by definition incapable of integrating immigrants to France's collective psyche. A similar argument can be made for someone who has not been socialized into the French school system and thus has not developed any attachment to France's symbols, historical events or the figures of Clovis, Charlemagne or Napoleon. However, especially within the context of the French-Algerian War (1954-1962), French symbols and

⁶⁰ Ibid., 229.

⁶¹ Ibid., 229-230.

values can be perceived as negative and oppressive for Algerians. Overall, a French identity based on core French values does not guarantee a positive French perception of Muslims in France. However, it certainly makes it easier for Muslims to adopt a French identity, and thus possibly creates a friendlier perception by the rooted French population.⁶²

National attachment and personal contributions

The fourth way of identifying as French recognized by Caron is associated with a sense of nationhood and collectivity. The main words that characterize this concept in the survey are *profiter* (taking advantage of), *contribuer* (contribute), *avantage* (advantage), *systeme* (system) and *payer/impot/taxe* (to pay/ taxes). An example from a participant is, “For me, being French is not linked to ethnic origins. Someone is French when he/she is working or actively looking for work and paying taxes in order to allow our institutions (schools, retirement funds) to work correctly.” Multiculturalism is easily associated with this type of imagined community, since it allows for immigrants fully to become French citizens so long as they contribute to France’s prosperity and embrace republican values. Similar to the constitutional patriotism paradigm, this sense of belonging and desire to contribute is ultimately value-based and does not lie upon historical or ethnic premises. It presupposes that the main way of being integrated into a political association is by contributing to it. Nonetheless, it is important to keep in mind that people, no matter the country, need some sort of attachment and loyalty if they are going to contribute to society and the economy. In the case of French Muslims, one would imagine that if they were citizens, particularly second or third generation, then they would have created an attachment to France. Yet, the tensions between the rooted French and Muslim community suggest otherwise.⁶³

⁶² Ibid., 231.

⁶³ Ibid., 232-233.

While a French identity that is comprised of personal contributions to France's economy and society could easily include Muslims, this type of identity poses the issue of economic and social burden to support a population of perceived "outsiders". While the public criticism from the rooted French in regards to Muslims is a backlash against multiculturalism since Muslims are often perceived as a social and economic burden to France. This sentiment is used as the main political argument for the National Front party. Marine Le Pen argues that, "Immigrants are a social burden and that France's generous social system constitutes a "suction pump." In addition, "Being French means primarily to love France and be ready to die for it. It also implies to work and respect its laws, and not taking advantage of its social services." Due to the prevalent belief among the rooted French population that Muslims are a social burden, many newcomers conclude that the only way to be considered full citizens is to participate and be assets to France. As one respondent answered, "I am a Moroccan who has acquired French nationality. For me, being French consist in respecting the laws of the country that welcomed me, to pay my taxes, to work and not to benefit from its social system. If I ever wanted to flee those responsibilities, I might as well go back to my country." Yet, this is not the always the case for immigrants in France.⁶⁴ Despite their efforts to become productive members of society, negative perceptions of Muslims as "economic profiteers" remain very common.

The National Front as a Response to The Perceived Threat of Muslims

When analyzing the rooted French perception of the Muslim community in France, the success of the National Front (FN) over the past two decades demonstrates an extreme response from the rooted French population to increasing Muslim immigration. To provide some background, Jean-Marie Le Pen founded the FN in 1972 to unify all of the various French

⁶⁴ Ibid., 233-234.

national movements at the time. Even though the FN gained momentum throughout the 1980s and 90s, the French people were shocked when Le Pen made it to the second round of the French presidential elections in 2002. This signified that not only was the FN increasing party membership, but that it was also successfully catering to a growing group of French voters who felt their concerns were not heard by the Socialists or Republicans. Le Pen's daughter, Marine Le Pen, became President of the FN in 2011 and is now gaining even more supporters by "normalizing" the FN and steering it away from the radical rhetoric that her father was notorious for spewing. Since Marine Le Pen took the reins, the FN came in third place for the 2012 Presidential elections with 17.9% of the vote, the second-best turnout ever for the FN after the 2002 election. The FN then won several municipal elections in 2014 and took the most seats of any French party in the European Parliamentary elections with 25% of the vote. In the 2015 regional elections, the FN emerged as first place with 6,820,00 votes in the first round of elections.

Some of the biggest policy points for the FN include reducing immigration and leaving the European Union. Le Pen's platform exemplifies a majority population (the rooted French population) feeling threatened by an out-group (the Muslim community in France). On the FN's official website it states,

Immigration is a source of substantial costs; it is used by big business to put downward pressure on wages and deeply destabilize our society and its balance. Assimilation is no longer possible in the context of such massive immigration. Constitutional, legislative and regulatory measures must to be taken quickly to halt both legal and illegal migration.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ "Immigration: Stop Immigration, reinforce French Identity," National Front, accessed February 25, 2016, <http://www.frontnational.com/le-projet-de-marine-le-pen/autorite-de-letat/immigration/>

Le Pen then continues to list the three principle reasons why immigration must be stopped in France. First, immigration is used by big business to put downward pressure on wages and social rights of French workers. Immigration is not a humanist project, as constantly claimed by the MEDEF, the European Commission, and the major CAC 40 companies, but a weapon in the service of big capital. Second, immigration is a significant cost to the national community, estimated at 70 billion euros per year by economist Yves-Marie Laulan. Third, uncontrolled immigration is a source of tension in a Republic that is no longer able to assimilate the new French. Ghettos, inter-ethnic conflicts, community demands and politico-religious provocations are the direct consequences of mass immigration, which is undermining our national identity and is making Islamization increasingly visible. Communitarianism is a poison against national cohesion.⁶⁶

The FN's three reasons of why immigration is hurting France are subjective since there is little data to backup these claims. The third reason discussing how immigration is creating tension in France because immigrants, even once they become citizens, are not assimilating to French society is particularly interesting to analyze, considering my argument that the average French person has a negative perception of Muslims because they seemingly refuse to assimilate into French culture and assume a French identity. Le Pen claims that more immigrants will undermine French identity, especially with Islam becoming increasingly visible in France. Le Pen gets away with saying these inflammatory statements because she is the head of a radical-right political party. Even though only 10-15% of French citizens vote for the FN in elections, I argue that the rise of the FN indicates a greater fear among rooted French citizens of French identity being diluted by an out-group, like the Muslim community. The French are very proud

⁶⁶ "Immigration," National Front, accessed February 25, 2016.

of their identity, Republic, and culture. They are taught in school that being an extemporary French citizen means honoring the values of the Republic before anything else, like religion or cultural affiliations. From the perception of the rooted French, the Muslim community is not honoring this by putting Islam and Islamic culture before the values of the French Republic. By doing so, Muslims are threatening French identity in the eyes of the rooted French, whether they intend to do so or not. However, it must be stated that the French government has not made life easy for Muslims in France either, as seen in the 2004 and 2010 laws restricting Muslims' ability to display their religious affiliation in public. This two-way street of distrust and animosity is the catalyst for tension in France between the rooted French and Muslim community.

Based on the response of the FN along with my analysis of French identity, it appears that not all components of French identity are equally threatened. When looking at the French motto, "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity," the value that receives the most attention when discussing French identity is equality; the desire for all French citizens to be equal and united by their shared republican values, rather than divided by religion. Keeping this in mind, I will now analyze the findings of five different studies that surveyed a sample of French citizens for their opinions on Islam, immigrants, French identity, and integration to test my hypothesis that the rooted French population's perception of the Muslim community is negative due to their belief that Muslims are not willing to assimilate into French society and assume a French identity.

V. FINDINGS

Study # 1: Pew Research Center (2014)

The first study I analyzed was conducted by the Pews Research Center in 2014.⁶⁷ The reports examined public opinion in six European Union countries including France, Spain, the

⁶⁷ See Appendix A for more details.

United Kingdom, Germany, Poland, and Italy. The study involved 7,022 face-to-face and telephone interviews in these EU nations with adults 18 and older from March to April 2014.⁶⁸ It must be noted that in the 2014 Pew survey, the rooted French population was not isolated, so this data does not completely answer my questions. However, these studies do give us a good basis for forming an idea of what the rooted French perception of Muslims may be.

According to the Spring 2014 Global Attitudes survey, 73% of the French surveyed had a favorable view of Muslims in their country while 27% had an unfavorable view. Despite the favorable opinion, France also had the one highest percentages saying the country should have fewer immigrants (57%). When looking at the demographic break down of responses, individuals with college degrees express more positive attitudes toward immigration than those with less education. Additionally, negative views about immigration were more common on the political right than on the left. For example, “In France, 73% of those on the political right want fewer immigrants allowed into the country, compared with 40% among those on the left of the political spectrum.” These attitudes are often linked to the perception that immigrants do not want to assimilate into their new country’s customs and ways of life. In France, 54% believe that immigrants want to be distinct from French society while 44% believe immigrants want to adopt French customs and way of life. Furthermore, 52% of French citizens surveyed think that immigrants are a burden on our country because they take jobs and social benefits. Important to note is that the majority of those who think that immigrants want to be distinct from French society identify or are an economic burden tend to be ideologically right.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Bruce Stokes, “Spring 2014 Global Attitudes Survey,” *Pew Research Center*, (2014): 1, http://www.pewglobal.org/files/2014/05/2014-05-12_Pew-Global-Attitudes-European-Union.pdf

⁶⁹ Stokes, “Spring 2014 Global Attitudes Survey,” 26-31.

In a sense, the 2014 survey gives more questions than answers because while 73% of French citizens surveyed has a favorable opinion of Muslims in France, more than 50% also believe that there should be fewer immigrants in France, that Muslims do not want to integrate into French society, and that Muslims are an economic burden to France. All of these responses are seemingly contradictory compared to the overall favorability, most likely driven by social desirability bias- the tendency of survey respondents to answer questions in a manner that will be viewed favorably by others.⁷⁰

Study #2- Institute for the Study of Labor (2011)

The second survey was conducted in 2009 by social scientists Claire Adida, David Laitin, and Marie-Anne Valfort, in cooperation with the Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA), which involved organized behavioral games in Paris where rooted French interacted with Muslim and Christian immigrants. The study's goal was to understand how anti-Muslim prejudice in Western countries will evolve with Muslim out-group salience over the next decades considering the growing number of Muslim immigrants to European countries, such as France. The researchers begin their paper with an anecdote about Brice Hortefeux, the former French Minister of Interior. In January 2011, Hortefeux was interacting with a young Muslim man at a photo-op who told the Minister that he ate pork and drinks beer. Hortefeux replied that the young man did "not correspond at all to the prototype" and later said, "When there's one [Muslim], that's ok; it's when there's a lot of them that there are problems."⁷¹

Study Setup

⁷⁰ Fisher, Robert J., "Social Desirability Bias and the Validity of Indirect Questioning," *Journal of Consumer Research* 20, no. 2 (1993): 303–15, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2489277>.

⁷¹ Claire Adida, David Laitin, and Marie-Anne Valfort, "One Muslim is enough! Evidence from a field experiment in France," Institute for the Study of Labor, (2011): 1, <http://nbn-resolving.de/>

To test the attitudes of the rooted French towards Muslim immigrants compared to Christian immigrants, the study conducted experimental games in a private school in the 19th arrondissement of Paris over the course of several weekends in March 2009. The social games brought together the “rooted” French and a set of immigrants. These immigrants belonged to two ethno-linguistic groups in Senegal, the Joolas and the Serers, that are divided by religion, with one portion of them being Muslim and another portion being Christian.

The goal of the experiment was to compare the effect of Muslim immigrant out-group salience on rooted French generosity toward Muslims immigrants with the effect of Christian immigrant out-group salience on rooted French generosity toward Christian immigrants. The researchers conducted their survey by organizing a ‘dictator game’, which took place after the participants played a series of trust games, such as a speed-chatting games. By the start of the dictator game, all ten players already knew a good deal of information about one another and were placed in the same room together, ensuring the activation of group salience effects.⁷²

All players (referred to as donors) were shown the same set of six partners (referred to as recipients) on a large screen revealing only their faces and first names, which the researchers strategically altered. Among the six recipients, two were apparent rooted French, two were ambiguous with alter-rootedly Muslim and Christian names, and two were apparent black Africans. For the first half of the games, the players viewed one of the ambiguous recipients and one of the Senegalese recipients with a Christian name, and the other ambiguous recipient as well as the other Senegalese recipient with a Muslim name. During the second half of the same,

⁷² Adida, Laitin, Valfort, “One Muslim is enough! Evidence from a field experiment in France,” 11.

the order was reversed. By doing so, the rooted French donors saw the same Senegalese face with alternated religious identities (one Christian, the other Muslim).⁷³

To introduce the dictator game, the researchers explained that one of the donors in the group would be chosen at random as the “model”. This was a lie allowing the researchers always to choose a rooted French donor without priming the subjects to the ethnicity of the model. Players were then told to guess the amount the donor had allocated to each of the recipients in the dictator game. They were also told that the player who guessed most closely to the actual decisions of the model would receive a prize of 30 euros and an algorithm calculated the results.⁷⁴ The study then tested for the Horthefeux effect with the dictator game by comparing the impact of increasing the number of Muslim immigrant players on the amount given by rooted French donors to Muslim immigrant recipients with the impact of increasing numbers of Christian immigrant players on the amount given by rooted donors to Christian immigrant recipients.

The Results

The results of the dictator game revealed that rooted French generosity toward Muslims is significantly decreased when Muslim-immigrant out-group salience increased in a way that was not matched by the impact of Christian-immigrant out-group salience. Moreover, the study found that the rooted French correctly believed that the impact of Muslim-immigrant out-group salience on their generosity toward Muslim-immigrant recipients is significantly more negative than the impact of Christian-immigrant out-group salience. This suggests that the appearance of rooted French discriminatory behavior toward Muslims with increasing Muslim out-group

⁷³ Adida, Laitin, Valfort, 12.

⁷⁴ See Appendix B for more details on the study.

salience is common knowledge among rooted French, thereby confirming the Horteveux effect.⁷⁵ Moreover, this suggests that assuming a French identity by embracing *laïcité* may not be the only factor influencing the rooted French perception of Muslims.

Understanding the Horteveux Effect

So what accounts for the decrease in rooted French generosity toward Muslims when the number of Muslims increases? Understanding and explaining the Horteveux effect constituted the second objective of the study. To test this effect, the researchers developed a rational model augmented with other-regarding preferences that experimental economists have shown to be key determinants of individual behavior. This model found that the decrease in rooted French generosity toward Muslims when Muslim numbers increase results from changes in rooted French preferences, notably from the activation of rooted French taste-based discrimination against Muslims when rooted French are surrounded by Muslims, known as group threat theory discrimination.⁷⁶ Group threat theory states that the size of a given minority has a direct bearing on anti-immigrant attitudes amongst the majority.⁷⁷ In this case, the rooted French feel threatened from another by an out-group, the Muslim community, as its size and prominence increases. This fear is born from the fear that the growing Muslim out-group in France is diluting and disregarding French identity and its values, thereby breeding discrimination and more fear. Since Islamic culture is very different from French culture, it is easy for the rooted French to stereotype and make assumptions about the Muslim community and their intentions to assimilate.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 2-3.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 3-4.

⁷⁷ Mikael Hjerm, "Do Numbers Really Count? Group Threat Theory Revisited," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 33, no. 8 (2007): 1253, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13691830701614056>

In sum, Adida, Laitin, Valfort's study discovers that the generosity of rooted French toward Muslims significantly decreased with the increase of Muslims and demonstrates that these results are driven by the activation of rooted French taste-based discrimination against Muslims when Muslim numbers increase. This finding is in line with a study that Silke Schneider published in 2008 based on the European Social Survey entitled, "Anti-Immigrant Attitudes in Europe: Outgoing Size and Perceived Ethnic Threat". Schneider argues that the perception by Europeans of a symbolic, rather than actual threat, accounts for the increase in Europeans' anti-immigrant attitudes when the relative size of the immigrant community increases.⁷⁸ This symbolic threat can range widely, but can also be attributed to the fear of losing national identity and/or cultural values and norms. Therefore, the taste-based discrimination of the rooted French can be attributed to the fear of Muslims diluting and changing French national identity.

Study #3- IFOP pour Le Figaro (2012)

The most comprehensive survey was published in *Le Figaro*, a right-wing newspaper, in October 2012. The French survey company IFOP conducted the survey, through an interview questionnaire, entitled, "L'image de l'Islam en France"⁷⁹ from a sample of 1,736 people, representative of France's adult population based on representative quotas of sex, age, and profession based on regional demographics. IFOP's Director Jérôme Fourquet said to *Le Figaro*, "Our poll demonstrates a hardening of French views towards this religion and a strengthening of

⁷⁸ Silke L. Schneider, "Anti-Immigrant Attitudes in Europe: Outgroup Size and Perceived Ethnic Threat," *European Sociological Review* 24, no. 1 (2008): 53-67, <http://esr.oxfordjournals.org/content/24/1/53.full.pdf>

⁷⁹ "L'image de l'Islam en France," IFOP pour *Le Figaro*, October 2012, <http://www.lefigaro.fr/assets/pdf/sondage-ipsos-islam-france.pdf>

a negative perception of Islam.”⁸⁰ However, IFOP does not indicate the race, origin, or citizenship details of the participants, so whether the opinions expressed in this survey are representative of the rooted French perception is not certain.

The first question asked “How would you describe the presence of the Muslim community in France?” According to the survey, 43% see the Muslim community as a “threat” to national identity. Only 17% of respondents believe that Islam “enriches” France’s culture and 40% said it was neither a threat to French national identity nor of benefit to its culture. To get a better understanding of the French perception of Muslims, one must look at a breakdown of demographics. Given the social norms of different age groups, one might assume more people over 35 years old would consider the Muslim community a menace to French identity than compared to younger individuals who tend to be more liberal and favorable of multiculturalism. Respondents under the age of 35, 41% saw Islam as a threat to French identity, 20% think of Islam as a cultural enrichment to France, and 39% were indifferent. Revealingly, there was only a two percentage point increase for people over 35 (43%) for those who have a negative perception of the Muslim community compared to those under 35 (41%). This dispels the hypothesis that younger individuals in France have a more favorable view of Muslims compared to the older generation that tends to be more conservative. Rather, both age categories perceive the Muslim community as a menace approximately the same amount with this particular response being the most cited, if the demographic representation of this survey is accurate.

When looking at the breakdown for political beliefs, of those who perceive Islam as a menace to French identity, 21% identify as left-leaning, 23% identify as moderate, and an

⁸⁰ Jean-Marie Guénois, “L’image de l’islam se dégrade fortement en France,” *Le Figaro*, 25 October 2012, <http://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/2012/10/24/01016-20121024ARTFIG00700-l-image-de-l-islam-se-degrade-fortement-en-france.php>

overwhelming 66% identify as right-leaning. Not surprisingly, of all the individuals identifying as Front National, 84% saw Islam as a menace to French identity. Clearly, political preferences have a strong influence as to whether an individual has a positive or negative perception of the Muslim community, unlike age. However, it can also be said that disliking the presence of Islam in France makes an individual more likely to vote on the right or for the FN. In sum, over a third of the survey participants (representing the entire French population) see the Muslim community as a menace to French identity. While this does not necessarily denote that the French perceive Muslims themselves as a menace, it does indicate they perceive the Muslim community as a threat to French identity.

The next question asked in the IFOP survey was “Would you say today that Muslims or people of Muslim origin are well integrated into French society?” Of all the respondents, 67% answered “No”. Similar to the first question’s demographics breakdown, there is no notable difference between the responses of those aged 18-34 years old and 35 years or more. However, there was a distinction between how rural communities, provincial urban communities, and the Paris urban area answered the question about integration. The answers suggest that if an individual lives in a more rural area, then he or she is more likely to think that Muslims or people of Muslim origin are not well integrated into French society, which is peculiar considering the majority of France’s Muslim population lives in urban areas, specifically Paris and Marseille. Some 71% of the rural communities, 67% of the provincial urban communities, and 58% of the Parisian urban area answered “No”. This data suggests that people who live in the Parisian urban area, roughly 12.5 million people making up ~20% of the French population, tend to perceive Muslims as better integrated into French society compared to those in rural communities.

Comparatively, this is similar to the United States where people in rural communities tend to be more conservative than people living in cities.

Political preferences also played a large role in answer choices. Of the individuals who identify as left-leaning, 51% thought that Muslims were not well integrated into French society, compared to 59% of moderates and 83% of those right-leaning. Noteworthy to remark of this data, especially when compared with the first question of how individuals describe the presence of the Muslim community in France, is that while a minority of the population (43%) perceive Islam as a “threat” to national French identity, two-thirds of the individuals who took the survey (67%) believe Muslims or people of Muslim origin are not well integrated into French society. This suggests that while the majority of the French population may not have a negative perception of the Muslim community, they do believe that Muslims are not well integrated into French society.

The third question was “Among the following reasons, what are the two that you think best explain why Muslims and people of Muslim origin are poorly integrated into French society?” This question builds off the second questions by asking the 67% of respondents who answered “No” to the second question to specify why Muslims or people of Muslim origin are not well integrated into French society. Among them, 68% blamed this lack of integration on Muslims’ refusal to integrate, 52% said they believed it was a result of insurmountable cultural differences, 47% blamed the fact that people of Muslim origin are regrouped in specific neighborhoods and schools, 25% said it was because of economic difficulties and unemployment, 21% said it was because of racism and the lack of openness among certain French people, and 3% blamed it on the insufficient actions and budget of the government (this total is greater than 100 because the participants chose two reasons each). When looking at the

demographic breakdown, age and political preference had similar affects as the previous questions.⁸¹⁸² These statistics give a strong indication that the main reason why French people do not think Muslims are integrated into society is because the Muslims themselves refuse to integrate.

The fourth question asked “Would you say that French society is sufficiently open and welcoming to Muslims?” A whopping 69% answered “Yes”. When looking at by demographics, the only category with any distinction was political preferences, with 55% of left-leaning, 58% of moderate, and 80% of right-leaning respondents believing that France is welcoming to Muslims into French society. Judging by the results, those who identify more as right-leaning in political preference tend to think that France is more welcoming to Muslims into French society than those with left-leaning political preferences. Refereeing from all the responses thus far, it appears that even though over a third of all French people see the Muslim community as a threat to French identity, the majority of French people tend to think that they are welcoming to Muslims.

The IFOP survey then tested how the French perceive Islam with the question “From the following words, which are the three that give the best idea of how you perceive Islam?” “The rejection of western values” was chosen as first in 28% of all answers and was cited in 68% of all responses. The next most selected was “Fanaticism” at 19%, then “Submission” at 18%. Other cited words were “Violence”, “Tolerance”, “Liberty”, and “Justice”. The demographics were difficult to break down for this particular question because of considerable variation.

⁸¹ 31% of those aged 18-35 years old answered that racism and a lack of openness from certain French people was a primary reason why Muslims or people of Muslim origin are not well integrated into French society; 17% of those age 35 years or more answered the same way.

⁸² For political preferences, 79% of right-leaning respondents, 54% of moderates, and 53% of left-leaning individuals believe that Muslims refuse to integrate into French society.

However, it is clear that the words most chosen (not provided by the survey) depict Islam overwhelming negatively from a French perspective.

The following question asked “Would you say the influence and visibility of Islam in France today are...?” Of all respondents, 60% answered “Too important” while 35% answered “Not too important nor not important enough” and only 5% answered “Not important enough.” Once again, political preference was a major role.⁸³ While a sizable majority of the French population thinks that Islam’s influence and visibility in France today is too big, an even larger majority of those who believe this have right-leaning political beliefs.

The next questions focused on the visibility of Islam in France. In regards to whether respondents were “favorable, opposed, or indifferent to the building of mosques in France when they are asked for by Muslims” 43% of respondents were opposed.⁸⁴ From the demographic breakdown, it also appeared that individuals aged under 35 years old tend to be slightly more opposed to the building of mosques, which could be because the younger generations in France tend to be less religious than older generations.⁸⁵ For the question, “Are you in favor, opposed, or indifferent of Muslims wearing a veil or hijab if they want to 1) in the street? 2) In public school classrooms?” The vast majority of respondents (89%) were much more opposed to allowing veil or head-scarves in public schools in addition to on the street (63%). Once again, the only possible indicator of preference was political affiliation, with those on the right of the political

⁸³ 78% of those right-leaning, 52% of those moderate, and 40% of those left-leaning answered that the influence of Islam was “Too important” in France. On the other hand, only 19% of those right-leaning answered that Islam was “neither too important nor not important” while 52% of those left-leaning answered the same way.

⁸⁴ For the question “Are you favorable, opposed, or indifferent to the building of mosques in France when they are asked for by Muslims?” 43% of respondents were opposed, 34% were indifferent, 18% were favorable, and 5% did not know.

⁸⁵ Of all respondents aged 18-34 years old, 17% were favorable, 46% were opposed and 31% were indifferent. Of all respondents aged 35+ years old, 18% were favorable, 42% were opposed and 35% were indifferent.

spectrum being more opposed in both the public school and street while those on the left were more tolerant. This demonstrates a wide support by the French public to respect and uphold the concept of *laïcité*, which restricts any religious symbols in public spaces, such as public schools.

In relation to the representation of Islam in the political field, one of the most telling questions proposed “Are you hostile or not regarding the existence of political parties or unions that reference Islam? Are you hostile or not regarding the election of a mayor of Muslim origin in the community where you live?”, with 68% of respondents being hostile. As for the election of a mayor of Muslim origin in the community where one lived, only 45% were hostile. This is one of the most striking responses because of the varied answers to two seemingly similar questions. The first thing to note was that there is no significant variance among demographics for the answers to whether people are hostile regarding the existence of political parties or unions that reference Islam. However, in regards to the election of a Muslim mayor, both age and political affiliation played a role. 38% of all participants under the age of 35 were hostile to the election of a Muslim mayor or mayor of Muslim heritage while 48% of those older than 35 years were hostile. As for political affiliation, 61% of those right-leaning were hostile to the election of a Muslim mayor or mayor of Muslim heritage.

In sum, this survey by IFOP is quite telling of the French perception of Muslims. The first thing to acknowledge is that while this survey is meant to be representative of the entire French population, the demographic focus of this thesis is the rooted French population, meaning French citizens whose parents and grandparents were born in France and are not Muslim or of Muslim heritage. This particular study does not isolate the rooted French, so it does not provide a clear answer to the research question. However, this survey does provide a good foundation for what the rooted French population’s perception of Muslims may be. Judging from the results of

the survey, it seems that while the French population does not dislike Muslims, they overwhelmingly perceive them as a threat to French identity and do not want Islam to interfere with French identity and values. The survey also indicates the widespread opinion that Muslims are not well-integrated into French society because they simply do not want to integrate. It can also be said that the majority of French people do not want Islam to interfere with French laws and practices like *laïcité*, as indicated by the a large majority of participants being opposed to allowing hijabs in public schools and political parties that reference Islam. Perhaps, the underlying issue is that the Muslim community is perceived as a threat because the French think the Muslim community is imposing their own Islamic-based culture onto French values and customs.

Study #4- IPSOS pour *Le Monde* (2013)

The fourth survey was conducted in January 2013 by the polling institute IPSOS in collaboration with the Jean-Jaures Foundation and published in the French newspaper *Le Monde*.⁸⁶ The study surveyed 1016 individual constituting a representative sample of the French population aged 18 and older. The subjects were interviewed online through the IPSOS Panel based on the quotas of sex, age, occupation, geographical region, and size of town. Some highlights from the IPSOS poll that grabbed national attention were that 70% of the French population (if they survey is truly representative) believed there were too many foreigners living in France and 74% believe Islam is not compatible with French society.⁸⁷ It must be noted that, like the IFOP survey, this survey does not isolate the rooted French category of those who are

⁸⁶ Ben McPartland, “Too many foreigners in France, French Say,” *The Local*, 23 January 2013, <http://www.thelocal.fr/20130125/too-many-foreigners-in-france-french-say>

⁸⁷ “France 2013: les nouvelles fractures,” *IPSOS*, (2013): <http://www.ipsos.fr/decrypter-societe/2013-01-24-france-2013-nouvelles-fractures>

Caucasian, French citizens, and of Catholic or Jewish heritage, so certainty about French perceptions is beyond its reach

Some interesting data that relates to the rooted French perception of Muslims included that 51% of participants think that the decline of France is inevitable, 63% think that French cultural influence has declined, and 61% see globalization as menace to France. This paints a rather bleak outlook of the French people regarding the future of France and its influence. In regards to tolerance, a question asked participants to rank what offenses were most serious. While slightly over half thought that “making racist remarks” was “very serious”, 70% of the French population believe that there are too many foreigners living in France and 74% believe Islam is not compatible with French society.

I focused on the section entitled, “Xenophobia”. The first question asked, “Thinking of the immigrants who settled in France over the last thirty years, would you say that...” 39% answered “One half is well integrated and the other half is poorly integrated”, 33% said, “The vast majority are poorly integrated and only a small minority is well integrated”, and 29% said, “The vast majority are well integrated and only a small minority is poorly integrated”. Not surprisingly, political preference played a role in dictating how the French perceive Islam, with most right-leaning respondents thinking Muslims are not well integrated compared to those left-leaning

Another question listed nine sets of two opposite opinions and asked for respondents to indicate the ones with which they most agreed. The opinion questions found that 72% of participants think that “it is not normal for school cafeterias to serve different food dishes due to the students’ religious convictions”, 70% think that “there are too many foreigners in France”, 57% think that “anti-white racism is a phenomenon quite common in France”, 55% think that “in

general, immigrants don't make an effort to integrate in France", 55% think that "it is not difficult for an immigrant to integrate in France", and only 30% think that, "immigrants are taking the jobs of the French". These responses make French opinion seem slightly contradictory. While on one hand the general opinion is that immigrants are not taking jobs from French people, on the other hand the French seem to think there are too many immigrants in France, that they are not making enough effort to integrate, and that anti-white racism is an issue in France. So what accounts for this negative opinion of immigrants if they are not taking the jobs of the French?

A very telling question asked: "Thinking about how each of the following religions practiced in France, tell me how compatible the following religions are with the values of French society." Of all respondents, 89% of participants think that Catholicism is compatible with the values of French society, 75% think that Judaism is compatible with the values of French society, and only 26% think that Islam is compatible with the values of French society. As expected, political preference played a role in the answers of participants, with more respondents of right-leaning preferences thinking Islam is not compatible with the values of French society than those of left-leaning preferences.⁸⁸

The following three questions were related to the perception of Islam among the French. The first asked, "Thinking about how each of the following religions practiced in France, tell me if you think they seek to impose their mode of functioning on others," with 80% of participants thought that Islam seeks to impose its mode of functioning on others. The follow question inquired, "Thinking about the issue of religious fundamentalism in France, would you say

⁸⁸ 81% of all participants with right-leaning political preferences and 61% of all participants with left-leaning political preferences both think that Islam is not compatible with the values of French society.

that... 1) This is a problem of growing problem which must be addressed seriously, or 2) This is a problem that is exaggerated and that tends to be exploited by some political parties.” A clear majority of 77% of participants thought there is a growing problem regarding religious fundamentalism in France. As expected, political preference influenced both questions’ responses, confirming respondents of right-leaning preferences have a more negative perception of Islam and Muslims than those of left-leaning preferences. The last question then asked, “Would you say... 1) The majority of Muslims in France are fundamentalists, 2) Only some Muslims are fundamentalists in France, 3) A small minority of Muslims in France are fundamentalists, or 4) No Muslims are fundamentalist in France’. 45% answered “a small minority of Muslims in France are fundamentalists”, 44% answered “only some Muslims are fundamentalists in France”, 10% answered “the majority of Muslims in France are fundamentalists”, and 1% answered “no Muslims are fundamentalist in France”. Individuals with right-leaning political preferences were more likely to think the majority or only some Muslims are fundamentalists while those with left-leaning political preferences were more likely to think only some or a small minority of Muslims are fundamentalists.

Both the IPSOS and IFOP are quite similar, demonstrating that a majority of French citizens do not have favorable attitudes towards Muslims for a number of reasons, ranging from the fact that they do not make an effort to integrate, they wish to impose Islamic culture on others, the issue of Muslim fundamentalists, and a rejection of French values. Overall, the studies revealed that a majority (but not all) of French citizens seem to feel threatened by the presence of Islam in France because the Muslim community will not adapt to the cultural norms and values of French society. This is not to say that the French do not like Muslims simply because they are Muslim, but rather what the Muslim community represents to French society: a challenger to

their *façon de vivre* (way of life). All of the studies analyzed provide a great deal of insight into how the French perceive Muslims and Islam in France, however, none of them (with the exception of study #2) make the distinction of all French citizens from just the rooted French population. I have conducted my own survey among a group of 45 rooted French individuals, ages between 18-75, of Caucasian ethnicity, and of Catholic heritage. Keeping in mind the attitudes revealed in the previous four surveys, I will now focus on the perceptions of rooted French population and see if the studies continue to hold weight.

My Questionnaire

I conducted my questionnaire among forty-eight rooted French individuals who are Caucasian, of Catholic or Judaic heritage, and between 18-75 years old. The participants were not randomly selected, but rather chosen from my own network in France as a convenience sample. There were a total five questions: 1) Is practicing Islam incompatible with the values of the French Republic and culture? 2) Can a French citizen be both “French” and Muslim culturally? 3) What can immigrants do to become more “French”? 4) Do you think the majority of Muslim immigrants want to be perceived as “French”? and 5) What French political party do you identify with most? This questionnaire was designed to capture the opinions of average French citizens on what it means to be French and whether Muslims can assume a French identity and be perceived as French.

The answers to all questions were varied, but there was an overarching common theme: republican values and *laïcité*. The first question of “Is practicing Islam compatible with the values and culture of the French Republic?” was the most interesting to analyze due to the nearly identical answers of the respondents. Of the forty-eight respondents, only four said that Islam is not compatible. The reasoning behind these four responses was the same- respondents claimed

that Islam is a totalitarian religion that refuses to adapt to other cultures and imposes its values and “way of life” on French culture while accusing the French of being racist. The other forty-four similar responses stated that practicing Islam is compatible with the values of the French Republic, such as liberty, equality (among men and women), fraternity, as long as these values and *laïcité* are recognized and respected.

For the second question of “Can a French citizen be both “French” and Muslim culturally?” the vast majority of responses said that a French citizen can be both culturally “French” and Muslim. This is because French society is *laïque* and not directly associated with Catholicism (even though 63-66% of France’s population identifies as Catholic⁸⁹), also ensuring that Muslims respect republican values in addition to *laïcité* and treating women as equals. Once again, there were four individuals who disagreed on the basis that French culture is based on Catholicism and has very little in common with Islamic culture. Regarding the third question, “What can immigrants do to become more ‘French’?” the response was very similar to the previous two. If immigrants want to be perceived more as “French”, respondents argued, then they should learn and speak French, embrace the values important to French society more and keep their religion a private matter at home or their Mosque. The responses to the fourth question, “Do you think the majority of Muslim immigrants want to be perceived as ‘French’?” were the most divided and allude heavily to negative perceptions of Muslims. While roughly half (twenty-five) believe that Muslims want to be perceived as French, the other twenty-three respondents said either no or that they were uncertain. For the most part, they believed that the majority of Muslims in France do not want to assimilate to French culture, nor do they make an effort to respect republican values, specifically *laïcité*. The last question asks, “What French

⁸⁹ “France,” The CIA World Factbook, assessed March 20, 2016, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/fr.html>

political party do you identify with most?” to hold political preferences accountable to certain responses, of which there are no correlations.

Overall, the responses to my questionnaire demonstrate that respecting republican values and *laïcité* is extremely important for the rooted French to have a positive perception of the Muslim community. Muslims can indeed be perceived as French by the rooted French, so long as they respect Republican values and *laïcité*. However, it is unclear whether the rooted French perception that Muslims are not respecting republican values and *laïcité* is due to the reality of the situation, or simply an unjustified fear resulting from group threat theory.

VI. CONCLUSION

French identity is a delicate term that has a unique significance to each French citizen. From a broader perspective, my thesis comes to the conclusion that French identity is first and foremost based on the shared republican values of the French motto - liberty, equality, fraternity, and *laïcité*. To be French means putting the French nation and its values above individual identifiers, like religion or race. This resonates with the value of “equality” from the three principle values of the French society, creating an equal playing field for all French citizens. In other words, France is a nation of French citizens above all, and then one of individuals. French society has a deep reverence for the values that constitute the French Republic, and therefore expects Muslims to assimilate to their citizenship model and embrace these values. The tension in France today between the rooted French and Muslim community is a result of *laïcité*, one of the key principles of French society which is closely linked to the value of equality. While the French see *laïcité* as an equalizing force that protects religious freedom, the Muslim community perceives it as a form of discrimination that violates their right to freely practice Islam.

My hypothesis proposed that while the rooted French population may have a neutral view of the Muslim community on the surface, in reality, the average French person has a negative perception of Muslims because they seemingly refuse to assimilate into French culture and assume a French identity. As demonstrated by the studies and my questionnaire, the rooted French population indeed has an initially neutral view of the Muslim community, potentially caused by social desirability bias. However, that perception quickly turns negative when assimilation and respecting French values, specifically *laïcité*, is discussed. Republican values are ingrained in the minds of the French from the moment they attend school to learn about French history and how the French Republic was born. From the perspective of the rooted French, respect and adherence to republican values is what makes them French. This explains how the rooted French perceive their own identity, but also how they view the Muslim community. Theoretically, if the Muslim community embraces *laïcité* and republican values, then the negative attitudes from the rooted French population should be dispelled. However, the solution may not be so simple taken into account the decrease of rooted French generosity to Muslims when their group salience increases, demonstrated by the *Hortefeux Effect*.

We must not assume that respecting French republican values is the only force at play in this situation. The *Hortefeux Effect*, closely related to group threat theory,⁹⁰ also plays a major role in the rooted French perception of Muslims. The Muslim community in France is a growing out-group that is making the rooted French more and more nervous due to its increasing salience. This fear results from the fact that Islamic culture is quite different in its values and lifestyle compared to traditional French culture. Thus, the rooted French are fearful of Muslims diffusing and ultimately diluting French culture as more Muslims immigrate to France and start families.

⁹⁰ Hjern, "Do Numbers Really Count? Group Threat Theory Revisited," 1253.

While group threat theory is not directly associated with Islamophobia, it does insinuate that some of the rooted French negative perceptions of Muslims may be based in an imagined threat or personal biases, rather than a real problem at stake.

Even though this thesis cannot provide a foolproof answer and explanation for the rooted French perception of Muslims, I can conclude that respecting republican values is crucial for the rooted French to have a positive perception of Muslims. However, the fear of Muslims out-group salience compromising *laïcité*, a foundational pillar of French identity and governance, is the bigger issue at hand. If the French government wishes to accurately address the growing tensions between the rooted French population and Muslim community, then they must remove some of the burden on the Muslim community to immediately adopt a French identity and place more emphasis on revising current integration policies to help Muslim immigrants feel more welcome, less marginalized from society, and better understand *laïcité* as a tenet of religious freedom rather than a form of institutionalized discrimination. Improvements to French-Muslim relations in France will only improve when both sides take time to understand the culture, values, and perspectives of each other, rather than making blind assumptions based on fear and prejudice.

APPENDIX A: Pew Research Center (2014)

Below is a graph representation of the data presented by the Pew Research Center:

Anti-Roma, Anti-Muslim Sentiments Common in Several Nations

% unfavorable

	Roma*	Muslims	Jews
	%	%	%
Italy	85	63	24
France	66	27	10
Greece	53	53	47
UK	50	26	7
Poland	49	50	26
Germany	42	33	5
Spain	41	46	18
MEDIAN	50	46	18

*In United Kingdom, asked as "Gypsies or Roma."

Source: Spring 2014 Global Attitudes survey. Q37a-c.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

APPENDIX B: Institute for the Study of Labor (2009)

Below is a logistical description of the study conducted by the Institute for the Study of Labor:

The researchers recruited 27 Senegalese players: 16 self-identified as Muslims (SM) and 11 as Christians (SX) who migrated to France in the same time period. However, as the researchers state in their research paper, "It is important to note that African Muslims are less associated with Islam in the French collective imagination because they are not Arab or Maghrebi and speak little to no Arabic. Levels of discrimination against Maghrebis and Arabs would almost certainly be higher considering they are the center of public debates about Islam in France." The study recruited the FdS players using a stratified (by population density) but not always fully

random recruitment procedure centered on the 21 metro stations in the ethnically diverse setting of the 19th district of Paris. In a fully random protocol, the researchers assigned a weight to each metro station based on the density of the area in which it is located, with the higher density stations getting more cards in our random draw. Additionally, by asking a question that indicated political preference on a left wing-right wing scale, the researchers were able to compare the average political ideology of the FdS sample to that of a random sample of FdS from the 2009 European Social Survey (ESS). Those with left-wing political preferences tend to be more supportive of social change and diversity while those with right-wing political preferences tend to be supportive of preserving traditional values. Since the researchers could not ensure that their FdS sample had one or more grandparents born abroad, they hypothesized that their FdS sample were more open to diversity than a random sample of FdS.⁹¹

The study used the equation: $y = a + b.(FdS \rightarrow SM) + c.(FdS \rightarrow SM).nbSM + d.(FdS \rightarrow SM).nbSX + e.nbSM + f.nbSX + g'.X + h.Face + \varepsilon$. As the researchers explain, y refers to the amount given by the donor to the recipient in the dictator game. The dummy $(FdS \rightarrow SM)$ is equal to 1 if the donor is FdS and the recipient is SM and to 0 if the donor is FdS and the recipient is SX. The variables $nbSM$ and $nbSX$ stand for the number of SM and SX players in the session. As a consequence, coefficient b captures the difference between the amount given by FdS donors to SM recipients and the amount given by FdS donors to SX recipients when there are no SM and no SX in the game session. The impact of one additional SM in the room on FdS donations to SM recipients is given by the sum of coefficients c and e . The impact of one additional SX in the room on FdS donations to SX recipients is captured by coefficient f .

⁹¹ Adida, Laitin, and Valfort, "One Muslim is enough!" (2011): 2-8.

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