

National Identity in Paris: The Story of Algerian-French in the Capitol

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Abstract

Immigration in France, as in the U.S., is a burning issue of late. With controversy over everything from political platforms to school dress codes, immigration has been a common denominator in the on-going quest for a cohesive national identity, a quest intricately connected to the country's history of imperialism, especially as concerns Algeria. This project will explore the connection between France's history of immigration and how that has helped form national identity today. To do this, the scope of this project will focus on the history between the people of France and Algeria, and particularly how that history has played out on the stage of Paris, the political and cultural synecdoche for France as a whole. With Algerian independence in 1962, the identity of Algerians living in France who had been French citizens was thrown into flux. That uncertainty continues today, shaping French national identity as a whole.

Significance of Project

The issue of national identity is one facing every nation. The importance of national identity is not unique to the humanities or even social sciences but is an issue for every discipline seeking to act on the international stage. France's particular experience with immigration in a post-colonial world shares important similarities with the conflicts over national identity found in many nations, not the least of which is the United States. This is a question important to how people conceive of each other on a basic level, and how people see the similarities and differences amongst themselves.

This is an issue also well-grounded in past scholarship. Below is an annotated bibliography containing some of the sources important to the questions within this project.

David A. Bell. *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism, 1680-1800*. Harvard University Press, 2001.

With a particular emphasis on Paris, Bell traces the birth of national identity in France to before the Revolution, arguing that nationalism in France (as well as Europe in general) was formed as distinct from other countries; in other words, the identity a nation creates is based on how it differs from other nations. Bell supports this contention by arguing that cultural factors such as language and religion are at the base of French national identity, which will be useful in discussing affairs in France today.

Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. New York: Verso, 1983.

Anderson explores how national identity is formed and why nationalism is so powerful in the minds of those who participate in the socially-constructed community of the nation. The work deals specifically with the role of nationalism in both colonial conquest and freedom movements, as well as the cultural signifiers used to create these communities.

Fernand Braudel. *The Identity of France in Three Volumes*. Perennial, 1992.

From the Annales School, Braudel offers a *longue durée* look (from a broad historical perspective) at the issue of French identity. In the second and third volumes, he discusses culture and how it has influenced the development of identity across the historically diverse country.

These sources represent important concepts for the question of national identity, providing the base for more recent scholarly criticism that will also be useful in this project.

Statement of Central Objective

Katie Hammitt, BSI 2011

The objective of my project is to explore the impact of the history of French-Algerian relations on the formation of national identity in modern-day France. To do this, I will focus specifically on Paris as the political stage for the nation.

Methods

I will address my question from historical, political, and anthropological viewpoints. To begin, I will analyze the historical relationship between France and Algeria, focusing especially on the war between the two countries in the middle of the 20th century. I will explore how different historians treat this particular event as well as how historians from different perspectives (i.e. Braudel and the *longue durée*) conceive of how national identity has been formed in France as a whole as well as how it evolved in times of increased immigration and international tensions. I will also research how the French-Algerian war is dealt with within France through primary documents such as official governmental publications, history textbooks, memoirs, and monuments within Paris. Some of this research will be done in France before the Butler Summer Institute begins.

From a political perspective, I will look at Paris as a stage for national politics and research the development and popularity of the campaigns of conservatives like Jean-Marie Le Pen and his party the Front National. I will look at how immigration has affected the political landscape of France by looking particularly to Paris and how supporters of the extreme right are situated throughout the city (proximity to high immigration populations, economic status, etc.). I will also look at immigration laws and how and why they were written and accepted.

Finally, I will draw on anthropological theories of how communal identity is formed, propagated, and maintained. These theories, as well as the historical research cited above, will provide an interpretive framework for understanding the role of immigration in the formation of

French identity. Research in the above fields will be crucial to applying these theories to the particular case of immigration in Paris.

Progression of the Project

Prior to the beginning of Butler Summer Institute

I will take the opportunity my upcoming semester in France affords me to travel to Paris and conduct research there. This research will consist of searching for primary sources such as governmental publications including exact rhetoric of immigration legislation, school history textbooks, memoirs, and journalistic accounts from the time period. I will also take history, religion, and political science courses taught by French scholars to widen my base of sources as well as variety of perspectives. Finally, my semester in France will allow me access both to French journals to read and French people with whom to discuss the question of national identity.

Weeks 1-2

I will spend these weeks focusing on the historical dimension of the project. I will review the research from France in addition to primary documents I will find on online databases and research modern-day historical scholarship on the relationship between France and Algeria with particular emphasis on the war between the two states. I will compare these accounts to the primary sources I will have gathered from abroad, and I will note consistent discrepancies between the two types of documents for final consideration later.

Weeks 3-5

I will continue research for this project by focusing on the political perspective. This section will rely heavily on primary accounts found in France and online as well as the platforms and levels of success of various political parties within France in the past few decades. This information

will complement research already done in the historical vein by indicating a more general opinion of the population of France as well as the small population of those with political power.

Weeks 6-7

I will conclude the research portion of my project by gathering sources of anthropological scholarship on identity and its formation. These theories I will apply to the research in the two aforementioned fields to determine how nationalism and national identity might have been affected by immigration and past international conflicts.

Weeks 8-9

The final weeks of the Institute will focus on synthesis, as well as any new questions raised by my research. These questions might concern an additional anthropological theory pertinent to my initial question of national identity or other historical events of note in relation to the focus of my study on Paris in the past century. Above all, these final weeks will be spent composing my findings into an essay to be submitted to academic journals as well as into a presentation to be given at the conclusion of the nine week period.

Feasibility

The materials needed for my research will be limited to documents that can be secured online, on Butler's campus, within Indianapolis, or within driving distance (such as the libraries of nearby universities). I do not foresee any costs related to this research other than perhaps admittance into museums or private libraries either within Indiana or in France, a cost that will be covered or reimbursed with the BSI stipend.

Working on Campus

I do not foresee a need to spend any extended time off campus (overnight) throughout the duration of the program. One possible exception could be caused by travel delays upon returning

from my semester abroad which will conclude only two days before the start of the Butler Summer Institute.

Personal

My interest in the topic of national identity stems from many of the courses I have taken at Butler. My international studies courses have emphasized the importance of understanding how each separate state sees itself in the international community, and classes I have taken in the History and Anthropology departments have reinforced this idea. However, the real beginning of my interest in this particular topic stems from a French course in which we discussed the ongoing conflicts over immigration in France today. I have written several research papers that have touched on this broader issue of French identity, and my participation in the Butler Summer Institute will allow me to focus on the question methodically. The question of national identity is a logical continuation of much of the coursework I have done at Butler, will do in my semester abroad, and hope to continue in graduate school and beyond. By participating in the Butler Summer Institute researching this question, I will gain the skills necessary to be a professional in the field of International Studies: effective methods of gathering information and scholarship, synthesis of scholarship from several disciplines, gathering information abroad, and utilizing research written in another language. Also, I will be able to share my research experience with other scholars of varied interest, a skill important to participation in an academic community for interdisciplinary studies.

Presentation

I will present my project to the Butler Summer Institute as well as at the Butler Undergraduate Research Conference. Additionally, I will seek to present at the Mid-East Honors Association Convention to be held in the spring of 2012. This project will also contribute to my Honors thesis

for 2012, and may also be presented to the National Society of Collegiate Scholars, the *Journal of Undergraduate International Studies*, or other pertinent organizations.