

French Xenophobia and Immigrant Contact: Public Attitudes toward Immigration

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Prepared for the Annual Conference of the American Political Science Association
Boston, MA

28-31 August 2008

Abstract: How does the presence of immigrants or minorities in a local community affect racial and xenophobic attitudes? Further, how do elite cues shape public attitudes regarding minorities and immigrants? Synthesizing public opinion, economic, and demographic data from France, we explore these questions. By taking advantage of cross-sectional variation in minority populations and elite xenophobic rhetoric, we develop and test hypotheses concerning the causal relationships among the presence of immigrant populations, elite cues, and xenophobic sentiments. We find that larger immigrant populations dampen xenophobic attitudes, supportive of the contact theory. In clarifying this relationship, we contribute to ongoing debates over contact theory and add to the growing literature on elite cueing or manipulation of ethnic differences for political gains.

Introduction

As birth rates stagnate throughout the European Union, policymakers realize the need for population growth to sustain economic expansion. At the same time, European publics seem increasingly suspicious of immigrant populations (Barber 2007). This paradoxical reality poses a challenge for democratic leaders as well as an opportunity for political entrepreneurs to seize on voters' insecurities to achieve electoral gains. Yet the manner in which changing demographics and entrepreneurial elites affect public attitudes toward immigrants and other races are not well understood. In this paper, therefore, we explore how increased interaction with immigrant populations shapes these attitudes.

In particular, we consider the contact theory, and its theoretical rival, as the starting point for understanding the dynamic between increasing immigrant populations and public opinion. According to Allport's contact theory, increased contact with immigrants ought to undermine xenophobic sentiment. From the perspective of Forbes' alternative theory, however, growing immigrant populations might create a more salient target for entrepreneurial politicians to exploit, thereby increasing xenophobic or racist attitudes. Unfortunately, though, much of the research on the European context does not adequately test these theories, as it focuses either on the state as unit of analysis, thereby ignoring intra-national variation in immigrants, or individual-level analysis, thereby ignoring the context altogether.

To advance this research program, we focus our initial analysis on France, which has a dynamic ongoing debate concerning immigration. The *Front National* (FN), France's predominant radical right-wing political party, has long been known for its xenophobic and anti-establishment platforms and the rhetoric of its leader, Jean-Marie Le Pen. Since its inception, the FN has focused its electoral appeals on immigration and its supposed dangers to French national

identity, framing the foreign-born population as a primary cause of rising unemployment, crime rates, and other social woes (Mayer 1995, 96). The FN's electoral success and emphatic position has shifted the debate within and between the mainstream parties as well. Thus, France presents a useful arena to test the impact of elite rhetoric, or cues, on the public opinion of the party supporters.

Using public opinion data from the French National Election Study (FNES), economic data from Eurostat, and immigration figures from the 1999 French national census, we explore the extent to which the presence of immigrant populations, at the *département* level,¹ and the elite cues regarding multiculturalism, especially the FN,² shape public opinion and the expression of xenophobic attitudes. By focusing on individuals nested within relatively small units of analysis, therefore, we can more directly test the competing contact hypotheses. More generally, identifying how contact with immigrant populations combines with radical right-wing xenophobia to shape public opinion, especially racist or xenophobic attitudes, is essential to understanding radical right-wing strategy in France and elsewhere in western Europe.

Contact Theory

By engaging these questions, we follow a well-established research tradition that began with social psychologist Gordon Allport's study of what has come to be called "contact theory."

¹ France's administration is organized into 26 regions subdivided into 100 departments. Departments are further divided into arrondissements, then cantons, and then communes.

² The French radical right wing consists of three parties, the *Front National* (FN), led by Jean-Marie Le Pen, the *Mouvement National Républicain* (MNR), a FN splinter group led by Bruno Mégret, and – to a lesser extent – the *Mouvement pour la France* (MPF), led by Philippe de Villiers. Running for president in 2002, Mégret received 2.33% of the first-round votes cast. In 2007, Mégret did not run and endorsed Le Pen. The MPF did not enter a presidential candidate in 2002 and is thus not represented in this analysis; de Villiers ran in the 2007 election. Given the similar origins and platforms of the FN and MNR parties, our analysis combines the two parties and refers to them jointly as "the radical right wing."

In *The Nature of Prejudice* (1954), Allport outlines his theory that interaction among disparate groups in the pursuit of common goals “undermines mutual stereotypes” and thereby fosters understanding, integration, and peaceable relations (Byman 1998-1999, 720). According to the theory, interaction reveals inter-group similarities and forges new ones, overcoming the differences and skepticism that engender conflict and violence (Brown and Lopez 2001, 281). Subsequent development of the contact hypothesis focuses less on Allport’s emphasis of groups’ “common humanity” and more on their relative status, authority, and goals (Brown and Lopez 2001, 282). According to the most common variants of the contact hypothesis, convergence among group status and objectives reduces conflict and promotes intergroup cooperation.

Throughout the contact theory literature debate continues as to whether the supposed pacifying effect of recognized similarities operates solely at the individual level. According to this more skeptical account, rather than attenuating conflict, contact at the group level actually increases tension (Forbes 1997; Brown and Lopez 2001, 284). For H.D. Forbes, Allport and his followers’ optimistic conclusion overlooks the countervailing effects that cultural interaction might precipitate (Forbes 1997, 146). Specifically, “[c]ontact which depends upon proximity and incentives reduces cultural differences and leads to assimilation while, at the same time, it produces more efforts to preserve (or even strengthen) intergroup differences and increases ethnocentrism which then reduces contact” (Ross 1998, 393). In his review of Forbes’ effort to develop an alternative to Allport’s thesis, Ross argues that a key – and omitted – variable is how leaders and political institutions draw on perceived intercultural differences to gain advantage, either working to bridge group divisions by emphasizing commonalities or instead stoking their followers’ desires to protect their identity and framing the other group as a danger (Ross 1998,

394). Recent work on ethnic riots in India demonstrates precisely how much political elites can shape and manipulate public attitudes and behavior (Wilkinson 2004).

In earlier studies, conducted primarily in the late 1980s and early 1990s, FN support at the department level correlates to the size of the foreign-born population. Such results seem to contradict the optimistic assertions of contact theory. In these same studies, however, the relationship between foreign-born residents and support for the radical right begins to break down at lower levels of aggregation, offering support for contact theory (Mayer 1995, 102; Kitschelt 1995, 103).

Quillian (1995), however, argues that contact alone does not determine intergroup attitudes. Instead, the state of the economy is a crucial intermediate variable between intergroup contact and the potential for conflict. According to his cross-national study, racial or ethnic prejudice arises when an individual perceives a threat – operationalized as contemporary economic conditions and the relative size of the migrant population – to his in-group (Quillian 1995, 586; see also Weldon 2006, 339 note 13). In her examination of the EU public's attitudes toward new members, and Turkey's candidacy in particular, McLaren (2007) echoes the importance of this causal sequence. She concludes contact with immigrant populations drives hostility toward Turkish and other candidates' accession to the EU (McLaren 2007, 259). In her individual-level analysis, however, McLaren presents a nuanced causal argument to explain the source of this hostility. Rather than "rational economic self-interest" as a response to the threat of economic competition from immigrants, an individual's perception of threat to his group generates hostility, "regardless of the degree of personal vulnerability to job loss or dependence on social security benefits" (McLaren 2007, 258, 272-273). For both Quillian and McLaren,

therefore, it is perceptions of collective threat that drive attitudes toward out-groups, not contact between individuals or their personal economic circumstances.

These interesting findings suggest a number of hypotheses pertaining to contact theory and xenophobic attitudes, many of which we begin to explore below. One limitation to both Quillian and McLaren's important studies, however, is their focus on the state as the level of analysis. As a result, their analyses overlook the meaningful variation in intergroup contact and economic factors at the sub-state level. In other words, even if Allport's mechanism is at work, we may not find evidence at the national level of analysis, as immigrants are not distributed uniformly or randomly. Indeed, in France, the average share of non-EU immigrants in French departments is 9%, with a minimum of 1% (Manche) and maximum of 32% (Seine Saint-Denis). According to Allport's contact theory, increased contact with immigrants ought to undermine xenophobic sentiment and, by extension, support for political appeals premised on ethnocentrism. From the perspective of Forbes' alternative theory, however, growing immigrant populations might create a more salient target for entrepreneurial politicians to exploit. A fair test of these competing hypotheses must account for this geographic variation. In our empirical analysis, we address the contradictory hypotheses that emerge from the various understandings of contact theory and its alternatives, stated here as Hypothesis 1.³

Hypothesis 1. Following the contact theory (Forbes theory), as local immigrant populations increase, xenophobic or racist attitudes will decrease (increase).

³ Significantly, both the original contact theory and its rival alternative leave a crucial political question unanswered: how do political entrepreneurs mediate between changing intergroup dynamics and xenophobic attitudes. In other words, do leaders seize upon sentiments of economic and social vulnerability and changing demographics to refocus notions of insecurity as ethnic rivalry and group competition, manipulating group identity for their own electoral advantage (Wilkinson 2004)? Or, do feelings of interethnic rivalry and mutual threat exist already as a result of intergroup contact, providing a pre-established cleavage and sense of vulnerability that define the political landscape in which leaders operate and compete for electoral advantage? In this initial analysis, we only begin to address these questions, but these are crucial questions for understanding the relationship between immigration, the radical right, and xenophobia.

Ethnocentrism in French Politics

In the 2002 presidential election, Le Pen garnered enough support in the first round – for the first and, thus far, only time – to propel him into the second-round runoff. Nationwide he received 4,804,772 votes, placing second to the incumbent and eventual second round victor, Jacques Chirac, and 194,000 votes ahead of Socialist candidate and then-Prime Minister Lionel Jospin (CEVIPOF and CIDSP 2002). Le Pen's first round victory shocked the French political establishment, disrupting the expected runoff battle between the mainstream right- and left-wing parties' candidates and raising cries of concern from governments throughout Europe and around the world (BBC 2002). Though Chirac defeated Le Pen resoundingly in the second round, the 2002 election highlights the radical right's role in the French electoral landscape.

This electoral success provides Le Pen a prominent stage for his political message. Typical of radical right parties in western Europe, a rejection of the established political order, combined with a classically liberal economic program advocating individual rights and less government interventionism, allows the FN to seize on the growing divide between educated, skilled workers and those left behind in post-industrialized societies (Betz 1993, 664, 673).⁴ These issues alone, however, have been insufficient to garner a loyal and reliable electoral coalition. In the French case, the FN has had to compete with the Communists, the Hunter Party,

⁴ Certainly, the French radical right's consistent growth in the polls suggests that its platform has appeal to a broader cross-section of the electorate. Throughout the 2002 electoral campaign, in fact, Jean-Marie Le Pen and FN legislative candidates emphasized a rather populist message, decrying the supposed disconnect between the ruling class and the people. Socioeconomic issues and anti-establishment sentiment have been prevalent concerns of radical right parties and their supporters (Kitschelt 1995, 115). In the case of the FN, its voters tend to be working class and less educated. The steady rise of the radical right in France from the mid-1970s to the early 2000s is attributable in large part to the defection of blue collar voters from the array of left-wing parties. These voters were the largest bloc to move en masse to the FN (Mayer 2005, 5-6). Small business owners and farmers, drawn to the stridently procapitalist and anti-interventionist aspects of the FN platform, have also regularly supported FN candidates (Kitschelt 1995, 112). Moreover, radical right voters tend to express a lower degree of trust in France's cultural and political institutions, save for the military and the police (Mayer 1995, 105).

and extreme-left parties for the support of less educated and working class voters (Mayer 2005, 8). To solidify support among such constituencies, therefore, the FN and its counterparts in the radical right must distinguish themselves from other fringe parties on the right and left of the ideological spectrum.

To do so, radical right parties have found success espousing xenophobic platforms. Safran (1993) argues that xenophobia remains the “principal stock-in-trade of the FN, and its program is most detailed with regard to foreigners and immigrants” (34). It is on the issues of immigration and assimilation of foreigners that the FN distinguishes itself from its competitors and transcends the limited role of a mere protest vote against the mainstream political establishment, thus maintaining a consistent base of support from one election cycle to the next. In a study of ethnocentrism in the 1988 French presidential election, Mayer (1995) finds that FN voters are far more xenophobic than supporters of other right-wing parties.⁵ This strong anti-foreigner opinion distinguishes FN voters from other segments of the electorate more dramatically than any other dimension measured, including social, familial, and economic values, making ethnocentrism the “core value” of FN supporters (Mayer 1995, 98).

Whether it is because the FN has never had to assemble a governing coalition or because its leaders refuse hold an unshakeable ideological position, it has not moderated its strident xenophobia, thus maintaining credibility with its core constituencies while still garnering some support from voters drawn to its economic liberalism. As a result, the FN has consistently found an audience that is sympathetic – or at least not repulsed – by its strident xenophobia. Because of its decades of steady support, the radical right wing has become an established component of French politics, where its anti-foreigner message has become part of the electoral discourse.

⁵ This point is by no means resolved. Kitschelt (1995), for instance, reports that FN voters are only marginally more racist than other right-wing party supporters (111-112).

Rather than immigration in itself, then, voters respond to the physical and socioeconomic insecurity they perceive foreign-born populations to entail (Perrineau 1985; Rey and Roy 1986). Mayer argues this heightened xenophobia is not a result of greater contact with immigrant groups; instead it is a product of the prospect of greater immigration and an ignorance of its effects (Mayer 1995, 102). It is precisely this insecurity that is heightened by the Front National's elite rhetoric. But the FN is not the only set of elites expressing attitudes about immigration and multiculturalism, though it is an outlier among parties. To test the effects of elite cueing generally, then, we match a voter to her preferred party and its elite attitude towards multiculturalism. We expect that as respondents' favored elites espouse xenophobic sentiments, they are more likely to follow suit. This discussion yields this paper's second main hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2. As elite cues reflect more hostility toward immigrants, xenophobic attitudes should increase.

Data

We compiled our dataset from three main sources: the first wave of the 2002 French National Election Survey (CEVIPOF and CIDSP 2002), the 1999 French National Census (INSEE 1999), and the Eurostat Regio database (Eurostat 2008). The French National Election Survey (FNES), a panel survey conducted in three waves before and after the 2002 presidential and legislative elections, furnishes the public opinion data with which we construct indicators of xenophobia – our dependent variable – as well as various socioeconomic control variables. The survey polled 4,107 registered voters, drawing from a representative sample of gender, age, profession, and geographic region. We use the FNES first wave, which questioned respondents

in a series of face-to-face interviews during the two weeks leading up to the first round of the presidential election on 21 April 2002.

Dependent Variable(s)

Using the FNES public opinion and demographic data, we construct instruments to measure political and social attitudes as well as a variety of demographic and socioeconomic control variables. To gauge xenophobia, we draw from the FNES' battery of questions about social attitudes. We focus on variables that can be interpreted as an estimation of attitudes toward immigrants and national identity, providing us with proximate measures of xenophobia to serve as dependent variables; variable names are in parentheses.⁶ In this analysis, we focus on three questions that tap into xenophobia and/or racism: whether there are too many immigrants (toomanyimmigrants), whether immigrants are not a source of cultural enrichment (immigculturalenrich) and whether some races are less talented (racelesstalent). These variables are coded so that higher scores are more xenophobic (e.g., for the first dependent variable, higher score means that the respondent strongly agrees that there are too many immigrants), and the variables range from one to four.⁷ For all three operationalizations of the dependent variable, our hypotheses yield the same predictions and we predict similar results in each regression model.

While furnishing a rather broad set of public opinion and political behavior measures, the structure of the FNES does pose some concerns for our analysis. Specifically, the face-to-face interview methodology employed in the pre-election survey could reasonably be expected to

⁶ In addition to these two questions, the FNES asks respondents to express their opinions as to their attitudes toward Islam (islam), whether blacks or African immigrants are treated as second-class citizens (blacksecondclass), and a variable measuring respondents' sense of national identity (exclusive), namely whether they consider themselves exclusively French, as opposed to European or something else. We welcome comments on which of these questions are the most appropriate measures for our concepts and/or how to synthesize these 6 questions, such as forming an index or using factor analysis.

⁷ For reference, the specific wording of the survey questions and coding are included in the appendix.

suppress expressions of ethnocentric and xenophobic attitudes. This potential bias, however, would work against our theory, diminishing the prevalence of xenophobia. Therefore, although it makes it difficult to gauge the full extent of the relationship we seek to identify, it should not falsely inflate its significance.

Independent Variables

We also draw from the FNES for a number of key independent variables. To ascertain general political attitudes, we incorporate the respondents' self-placement on a seven-point ideological spectrum (lrideology). For control variables, we include data from the FNES panel on respondents' age (age), gender (female), employment status (unemployed), education level (highschoolplus), income (income), and whether they own a home (homeowner).⁸ In addition, we include the respondent's department level unemployment rate, drawn from the Eurostat Regio database, as a control for sociotropic economic concerns.

From the 1999 French national census, we extract data on the foreign-born population in each department, a key variable for testing our hypothesis related to contact theory. The original data categorizes residents in each department as French-born, from a French acquisition (i.e., an overseas territory or department), immigrants from elsewhere in the European Union, and immigrants from all other countries (INSEE 1999). Given the focus on non-European immigrants in radical right rhetoric, we combine the immigrant share from French territories and all other non-EU countries into one measure (noneushare).⁹

⁸ These controls are dummy variables, except for income which is given in a 9-point scale.

⁹ Unfortunately, French law precludes racial or ethnic identification questions in the census (Chrisafis 2007). More broadly disaggregated data would certainly be quite useful, allowing us to undertake a more detailed and nuanced analysis of racial and ethnic diversity patterns and their effects on the French electorate.

Beyond individual ideology, we also incorporate a party cue variable (party cue) to test *Hypothesis 2*. In earlier work on public opinion, Zaller argued that in a noisy environment, individuals would be more likely to follow the heuristics of elites they trust: “When elites divide, members of the public tend to follow the elites sharing their general ideological or partisan predisposition...” (1992, 9). Various work on support for European integration suggests that party positions affect citizens’ attitudes toward Europe in precisely this manner (Steenbergen and Jones 2002; Brinegar et al. 2004; Brinegar and Jolly, 2005). Using individual voters’ preferred party from the FNES, we constructed a party cue variable from the Comparative Manifesto Project data (Klingemann et al. 2007),¹⁰ such that higher scores mean the party is negative toward multiculturalism. Party scores range from the most negative at 1.92 (FN) to the RPR’s -0.94 or the Socialist’s -1.44. We expect that increased animosity toward multiculturalism at the elite level will spark xenophobia at the individual level.¹¹

A limitation of the FNES is its incomplete geographic scope. France’s primary sub-national administrative unit is the *département*. There are 100 departments, four of which are overseas possessions or territories; we exclude the latter from our sample. Furthermore, there were no survey respondents in sixteen of the 96 domestic departments in the 2002 FNES.¹² Compared with the rest of the sample, these sixteen departments had fewer immigrants (a mean of 2.28%; 4.41% for the remaining departments) and exhibited a slightly lower level of support

¹⁰ Following common *CMP* practice for creating summary variables, we subtract the positive measure for Multiculturalism (per607) from the negative (per608). “Multiculturalism-Positive” is defined as: “Favourable mention of cultural diversity, communalism, cultural plurality, and pillarization; preservation of autonomy of religious, linguistic heritages within the country including special educational provisions.” “Multiculturalism: Negative” is “Enforcement or encouragement of cultural integration; otherwise as 607 but negative” (Klingemann et al. 2007).

¹¹ As in the support for European integration case, the causal direction—whether parties follow their voters or voters follow the cues of their parties—is open for debate. Carrubba, for instance, finds that public opinion drives party positions on European integration rather than parties cueing their supporters, but he does not test whether voters follow the cues of parties (2001: 142).

¹² The sixteen departments reporting no respondents in the 2002 FNES are Alpes-de-Haute-Provence, Ardennes, Cantal, Cher, Creuse, Deux-Sevres, Gers, Haute-Loire, Haute-Saône, Hautes-Alpes, Hautes-Pyrénées, Indre, Lozère, Tarn-et-Garonne, Territoire de Belfort, and Yonne.

for radical right-wing parties (mean support of 18.7% for the missing departments compared to 19.6% for the remainder). This missing data problem renders our analysis incomplete, though not irretrievably so. The missing departments are a truly random sample and do not truncate the variation in our variables in any systematic way. The minimum and maximum values for immigrant population and radical right vote share from the sixteen missing departments fall within the minimum-maximum range of the remaining sample, which suggests that this gap will not undermine our results to any great extent.¹³

Analysis and Results

Significantly, much of the research on xenophobic attitudes focuses on either individuals, ignoring context, or on aggregations at the state level, overlooking individual-level variation. The contact theory predictions hinge on exposure, or contact, to the ‘other.’ National aggregations simply cannot account for this spatial variation. Thus, whereas recent *FT/Harris* polls show that 86% of Germans and 61% of French citizens want immigrants to take citizenship and language courses (Barber 2007), these aggregate numbers cannot differentiate between citizens with actual exposure to immigrants and those who are simply responding to fear, be it fear propagated by Radical Right politicians or fear of economic decline.

To evaluate the influence of immigrant population and elite cues on racial attitudes, we use ordinary least squares regression models.¹⁴ To correct for a lack of independence within units, we run each regression with robust (Huber/White/sandwich) standard errors, clustered by department. This Stata option acknowledges that observations are independent across groups

¹³ Among the included departments, the average number of respondents is 53, with a minimum of 27 respondents (Nievre) and a maximum of 153 (Nord).

¹⁴ Since the dependent variables are 4-point survey questions, we also run ordered logit and attain similar results, including sign and significance of the coefficients. In the next iteration, we will also test the model with hierarchical linear models.

(departments), but not necessarily within groups, and thus improves the reliability of the standard errors.

We report results for each of the two models, with the robust standard errors in parentheses, in Table 1.

Table 1: Regressions of Racial Attitudes

Variable	Model 1 Too many immigrants		Model 2 Immigrants not source of cultural enrichment		Model 3 Some races less talented	
	β	(robust S. E.)	β	(robust S. E.)	β	(robust S. E.)
<i>Individual-level</i>						
Left/Right Ideology	0.156***	(0.013)	0.089***	(0.010)	0.077***	(0.010)
Party Cue	0.018	(0.028)	0.238***	(0.021)	0.151***	(0.027)
Age	-0.003**	(0.001)	0.007***	(0.001)	0.015***	(0.001)
Female	0.122***	(0.028)	0.073**	(0.024)	0.055*	(0.026)
Homeowner	-0.041	(0.029)	0.025	(0.031)	0.002	(0.035)
Income	0.020*	(0.010)	-0.023**	(0.010)	-0.032***	(0.008)
Education > High School	-0.101**	(0.039)	-0.415***	(0.034)	-0.438***	(0.035)
<i>Department-level</i>						
Foreign Population Share	-0.005*	(0.003)	-0.014***	(0.003)	-0.007*	(0.003)
Unemployment Rate	-0.011	(0.007)	0.023**	(0.007)	0.008	(0.011)
Constant	1.947***	(0.119)	2.047***	(0.113)	1.216***	(0.112)
N	4107		4107		4107	
R-squared	0.0688		0.1773		0.2109	

Note: Table entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with robust (Huber/White/sandwich) standard errors, clustered by department (n=78), in parentheses. *p<0.1, **p<0.05, ***p<0.001.

In each version of the model, the primary explanatory variables of interest are “Foreign Population Share in Department,” the proportion of non-EU immigrants in a department; and “Party Cue,” which captures the respondent’s favored party’s views on multiculturalism.

In all three models, the share of foreign population is significant (at least to the 0.1 level) and negative. Perhaps surprisingly, a greater proportion of immigrants in a department seems to

soften, not exacerbate, xenophobia and racial antipathies. This result provides supportive evidence for Allport's contact theory. Further, even if the magnitude of the effect is modest, it is not negative, as many commentators might predict. In other words, at worst, an increased number of immigrants does not exacerbate racial tensions, and may alleviate them.

Also at the departmental level, xenophobia increases as unemployment rates rise, though the variable is only weakly significant. In Models 1 and 3, though, the variable has opposite signs and does not meet even low standards for significance. This result is surprising, given the emphasis on immigrants and unemployment in so much FN rhetoric. But, as with the contact theory generally, perhaps the aggregate level of unemployment misses perceived vulnerability. In the conclusion, we return to this question.

Turning to the individual-level variables, higher skilled or educated respondents, as measured by education, are consistently less xenophobic in their attitudes. The education variable is negative and highly significant in both model specifications. These results are consistent with expectations from economic models, such as the Heckscher-Ohlin theory, which suggests that higher skilled citizens believe they have less to fear from more open trade and immigration regimes (Brinegar and Jolly 2005).

Consistent with a similar logic, poorer voters espouse more negative attitudes toward immigrants and racial out-groups, in terms of cultural enrichment and perceptions of talent. The income variable is negative and significant in both Models 2 and 3. Nonetheless, these findings are unsurprising and match our theoretical expectations. Somewhat surprisingly, though, for the economic models, income has a positive relationship with agreeing there are too many immigrants. This surprise is somewhat negated by the modest magnitude of the effect. A similar pattern holds for age, whereby older voters are more likely to think immigrants are not a source

of cultural enrichment and that some races are less talented, but at the same time, older voters do not perceive too many immigrants.

More consistently, those who identify themselves as politically right of center hold less positive attitudes toward immigrants and members of other racial groups. This variable is positive and strongly significant in each of the models, thus echoing well-established findings in the literature on radical right parties.

Perhaps the most surprising result is the level of significance and positive sign for the gender control variable in each of the model specifications. We have no theoretical explanation with respect to gender, though other scholars have found radical right-wing party support to be generally higher among males (Kitschelt 1995, 7, 104). Likewise, in her study of the 2002 French presidential election, Mayer finds strong feminist opposition to the radical right (Mayer 2005, 12). These prior findings make our results rather puzzling, but the magnitude of this variable's effect is quite minimal.

When looking specifically at Model 1, the interpretation of the variables and the magnitude of their effects become clearer. Table 2 provides the average effect of each significant independent variable, as a simple heuristic.¹⁵

Table 2: Magnitude of Effects for Model 1

Variable	β	Mean	Average Effect
Left/Right Ideology	0.156	3.07	0.479
Party Cue	0.184	-0.96	(0.177)
Age	-0.003	47.9	(0.144)
Female	0.122	0.53	0.065
Income	0.020	4.87	0.097
Education > High School	-0.101	0.34	(0.034)
Foreign Population Share	-0.005	9.07	(0.045)
Unemployment Rate	-0.011	8.71	(0.096)

¹⁵ The average effect is simply calculated by multiplying the mean of each independent variable by its coefficient.

For Model 1, the dependent variable ranges from one to four, with four being “strongly agree” to the statement “There are too many immigrants.” The strongest independent variable, in terms of magnitude, is ideology. The further toward the right wing, the more likely a respondent will strongly agree that immigrants do not enrich the national culture.

Party cue is the next strongest independent variable in determining xenophobic attitudes in Model 1. As expected, when the respondent’s preferred party is negative toward multiculturalism, the respondents are more likely to express xenophobic sentiments. This result provides strong evidence for *Hypothesis 2*. As discussed earlier, the causal direction is certainly open for debate and represents fruitful space for future research. In particular, determining whether parties shift their message on multiculturalism to match voter preferences or if these elites cue xenophobia is crucial for policymakers throughout Europe.

Foreign population share is not as strong as these four explanatory variables in terms of magnitude. Nonetheless, this result, with its negative sign, suggests that respondents in departments with large immigration populations are *less* likely to think immigrants are not a source of cultural enrichment. This finding suggests there may be some room for optimism in the intergroup dynamic literature, though clearly we need to conduct more rigorous analysis to validate that finding. In the conclusion, we discuss some of these next steps.

Table 3 provides a similar summary analysis of the average effects of significant independent variables in Model 2. Similar results hold for Model 3, so the discussion will focus on the second dependent variable.

Table 3: Magnitude of Effects for Model 2

Variable	β	Mean	Average Effect
Left/Right Ideology	0.089	3.07	0.273
Party Cue	0.238	-0.96	(0.228)
Age	0.007	47.9	0.335
Female	0.073	0.53	0.039
Income	-0.023	4.87	(0.112)
Education > High School	-0.415	0.34	(0.141)
Foreign Population Share	-0.014	9.07	(0.127)
Unemployment Rate	0.023	8.71	0.200

Recall that the “immigrants are not a source of cultural enrichment” dependent variable ranges from one to four, with four being “strongly agree.” The questions used in Models 2 and 3 are far more culturally charged than the potentially economic focused number of immigrants question; thus, in some ways, the questions present a more interesting challenge for the theories. The strongest independent variable, in terms of magnitude, is age. As voters age, the more likely they are to strongly agree that immigrants are not a source of cultural enrichment, or that races are less talented. The ideology variable is also strong, with right-wing respondents strongly agreeing that immigrants do not enrich the national culture.

Party cue has a strong effect of attitudes in the latter two models, as well. When the respondents’ preferred elites express anti-multicultural attitudes, the respondents are far more likely to express xenophobic or racist attitudes themselves. This result, in particular, suggests that if elites want to change public attitudes toward immigration, or even European integration generally, they most look to themselves as contributing factors.

Like the party cue variable, foreign population share is an even stronger predictor in the latter two models. Contact with immigrants, as measured by the number of immigrants in the department, actually reduces xenophobia and racist attitudes. This result may be surprising, but it

should also be comforting to policymakers throughout Europe, who continue to struggle with policy issues regarding lowered birth rates and increasing debts.

Discussion

As we continue to try to understand how immigration and elite cues affect voter attitudes toward immigration, we envision three main directions for future research. First, we need to more carefully identify and test for the interactions among our key explanatory variables. In particular, we intend to interact the immigration variable with socioeconomic variables to determine whether large immigration populations affect xenophobic attitudes differently in departments with large working-class populations, where immigrants compete with citizens for jobs, and higher-skill intensive departments, where immigrants provide a much needed boost of labor. Second, we will test whether economically vulnerable citizens respond differently to changing demographic patterns. Real versus perceived economic and cultural threat is crucial to this investigation.

Finally, and longer-term, we intend to move beyond an exclusive focus on the 2002 presidential election. Although a salient and watershed event in radical right-wing politics, it is only a snapshot and is only representative of France; thus, it cannot provide an opportunity to measure trends and longer-term patterns. With these caveats and next steps in mind, these results suggest that contact theory and its optimistic outlook on race relations in an era of demographic change has validity, warranting more attention from academics and policymakers alike.

Appendix: Survey Questions and Variable Coding for Dependent Variables

Model	FNES Question Number	Question Text	Responses	Recoding
1	Q39.2	Would you tell me if you agree completely, agree somewhat, agree a little, or agree not at all? "There are too many immigrants in France."	0. No response; 1. Agree completely; 2. Agree somewhat; 3. Disagree somewhat; 4. Disagree completely	1=Disagree completely; 2=Disagree somewhat; 2.5=No response; 3=Agree somewhat; 4=Agree completely
2	Q39.6	Would you tell me if you agree completely, agree somewhat, agree a little, or agree not at all? "The presence of immigrants in France is a source of cultural enrichment."	0. No response; 1. Agree completely; 2. Agree somewhat; 3. Disagree somewhat; 4. Disagree completely	1=Disagree completely; 2=Disagree somewhat; 2.5=No response; 3=Agree somewhat; 4=Agree completely
3	Q39.7	Would you tell me if you agree completely, agree somewhat, agree a little, or agree not at all? "Some races are less talented than others."	0. No response; 1. Agree completely; 2. Agree somewhat; 3. Disagree somewhat; 4. Disagree completely	1=Disagree completely; 2=Disagree somewhat; 2.5=No response; 3=Agree somewhat; 4=Agree completely
4	Q59.5	Could you tell me if the word "Islam" evokes something very positive, fairly positive, fairly negative, or very negative?	0. No response; 1. Very positive; 2. Fairly positive; 3. Fairly negative; 4. Very negative	1=Very positive; 2=Fairly positive; 2.5=No Response; 3=Fairly negative; 4=Very negative
5	Q62.9	Would you tell me if you absolutely agree, largely agree, largely disagree, or disagree completely? "Blacks and African immigrants are too often treated as second class citizens."	0. No response; 1. Absolutely agree; 2. Largely agree; 3. Largely disagree; 4. Disagree completely	1=Absolutely agree; 2=Largely agree; 2.5=No response; 3=Largely disagree; 4=Disagree completely
6	Q43	Do you personally feel ...	0. No response; 1. Only French; 2. More French than European; 3. As European as French; 4. Other	0=Other; 1=Only French

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