

**The journalistic construction of the American and French
immigration public debates: 1973-1994**

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Introduction

Since the 1970s, immigration has become a major issue on the public agenda in the United States and France. The story of demographic and economic transformations, and the ensuing rise of xenophobic social movements and political parties, has been amply recounted by journalists, historians and other social scientists on both sides of the Atlantic. What remains mostly invisible in both cases, however, are the complex ways in which these chroniclers have contributed to the public "chronicle". Since immigration lies at the intersection of discourses about class, race and ethnicity, and national culture, we can learn much about the contours of contemporary politics by examining together both the changing definitions of the immigration problem and the changing structure of cultural fields which have produced these definitions.

Attempts to explain the form and content of public political debates (or to use, another terminology, the "public construction of social problems") tend to align in two major camps. At one extreme are political economy models which view public political debates about "social problems" in general as reflecting economic conditions. Anti-immigration backlashes in particular are often explained as the result of economic recession and rising unemployment (Higham 1988)(Cornelius 1982)(Jalali and Lipset 1992-3), or structural changes in contemporary capitalism (Castles, Booth et al. 1984)(Calavita 1996).

Clearly, economic conditions are among the crucial ingredients in determining the general (but not particular) timing of anti-immigration backlashes. Political economy accounts seem less useful for explaining the particular content of national immigration debates. Calavita (1996) sought to link the recent "fiscal" emphasis (immigrants' supposed abuse of welfare benefits and costs to taxpayers) of anti-immigration discourse in the United States to the shift from a fordist to post-fordist global economy. However, the failure of such a fiscal framing to achieve discursive dominance in many other western nation-states

undergoing similar economic transformations, such as France, demonstrates the limitations of her model.

On the other end are the frequent invocations of national political cultures or traditions which are used to explain ongoing national differences in public political debates and policies (Dobbin 1994)(Brubaker 1992)(Hollifield 1994). Admittedly, states continue to possess significant economic and symbolic resources that tend to preserve national differences in discourses and public policy approaches toward immigration, cultural identity, poverty and related problems (Silver 1993)(Bovenkerk, Miles et al. 1990). But the primary weakness of political culture or even state-centered approaches is their tendency to reify national cultural models and institutional systems that are in fact multivocal and subject to ongoing contestation.

Historical institutionalists in comparative politics have stressed how "enduring socioeconomic and political structures ... mold behavior in distinctive ways in different national contexts" (Thelen and Steinmo 1992 : 1), and some of the more subtle analyses (see, e.g., Favell 1998) highlight the complex interplay between macro-economic conditions, institutional structures and symbolic contestation which under certain conditions may in fact modify or transform the contours of public debate. But even the best historical institutionalist studies have largely failed to examine one of the most powerful political structures, that is, the news media (but see Guiraudon 1997).¹ As Champagne (1991) points out, "social problems tend to have a visible existence only from the moment when the media speaks of them, that is to say, only when they are recognized as such by the press." An institutional -- or "field" -- approach that takes into account the news media's crucial

¹None of the articles in the Steinmo, Thelen and Longstreth edited volume (*Structuring politics: Historical institutionalism in comparative analysis*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) devote any significant attention to the news media. This gap is characteristic of the "new institutionalism" in general, as in this passage from the oft-cited work by Roger Friedland and Robert Alford ("Bringing Society Back In: Symbols, Practices and Institutional Contradictions, in W.W. Powell and P.J. DiMaggio, eds., *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), quoted in Steinmo et al. (p. 8), which lists the "central institutions of the contemporary capitalist West" as the "capitalist market, bureaucratic state, democracy, nuclear family, and Christian religion..."

"mediating" role in the construction of public political debates, such as immigration, seems an essential step toward accurately capturing the reality of contemporary politics in western societies (see, e.g., Bourdieu 1995, Bourdieu 1998, Champagne 1995, Marchetti 1997, Benson 1999)²

For their part, media scholars have also called for more cross-national comparative research (Schudson 1989)(Blumler, McLeod et al. 1992)(Hilgartner and Bosk 1988)(Hallin and Mancini 1984), but comparative media studies have usually concluded that national media systems ultimately reflect national "political cultures" or, more precisely, political institutional configurations and legal traditions (Blumler, McLeod et al. 1992)(Gerstle, Davis et al. 1991). But as western societies become ever-more media saturated, this insistence on the absolute primacy of the state and the political sphere over the media becomes more difficult to defend. As Cook (1998 : 111) stresses, the "authority of officials, as represented in the news, depends, in no small part, on the ability and willingness of those political actors to fit their activities to the production values of the news." And thus, although the news surely reflects and bolsters official power, "it also provides incentives to act in only particular ways"³ (see also Schudson 1982, Champagne 1991, Edelman 1988, Patterson 1993, Iyengar 1991, Gitlin 1980, Hilgartner and Bosk 1988). State and other political actors increasingly "anticipate" what will make news and craft their statements and policies accordingly.

²See Benson (1999) for an overview and critique of Bourdieu and research associates' research on the mass media, most of which is not yet available in English translation.

³Rooted in single nation-state studies, Cook and others have offered a number of hypotheses of how the media field potentially shapes politics: (1) toward the production of increasingly dramatic even hyperbolic discourses and policies to address public problems; (2) toward the shaping of a negative public image of politics that is more about strategy and tactics than the development of meaningful policies; (3) toward an emphasis on the novel over the enduring condition, reflecting the news media's tendency to frame events "episodically" rather than "thematically," and the news cycle that requires the constant production of new issues and angles lest the public grow bored; and (4) within any given policy area, toward a succession of narratively-appealing "single" policy proposals, producing inconsistent, often counterproductive policies for problems that demand a more comprehensive approach.

Castells (1997 : 312) argues that contemporary politics are forced to take place inside a commercial "media space." Inside this media space, Castells suggests, politics is "structured" by the "logic" of electronic media, a logic defined as involving "the dominance of television, computerized political marketing, instant polling as an instrument of political navigation, [and] character assassination as political strategy." Yet it is not clear from Castell's description what it is about the media that gives it a specific "logic." Is it the technology, the commercial funding structure (in which case, state funding should make a difference), journalistic professional norms and traditions? Media logic, contra Castells, is not a substantive quality but determined relationally -- by a national media field's relative position in the global media system, by its relations with other major fields in the national field of power, and by the relative position of any particular media outlet or journalists within the national media field.⁴

In a recent theoretical account of how the media act as a "political institution," Timothy Cook (1998) suggests that journalists act in response to two sometimes competing imperatives: to report what is *important*, and to report what is *interesting*. In order to meet the importance imperative in a socially legitimated way, journalists rely on official sources. This reliance on official sources allows reporters to claim objectivity. At the same time, via

⁴Castells is right to stress the global context of contemporary journalism. But he seems to want to hold on to some universal (with America as the leading edge) media logic, whose effects are mediated by states and national political cultures, but whose essential characteristics are constant. I want to argue that "media logics" themselves differ, precisely because "logic" like any cultural property or practice is produced relationally and no two media fields occupy the same "social space." In the post-war era of American hegemony (and even before, see Chalaby 1996), French journalism has been far more influenced by the American model than vice-versa, yet for the very same reason of different hierarchical position and the particular historical trajectory and internal national position of the French media field it has retained and will continue to retain distinctive differences from the American system. American journalists also have an impression (if only partially informed) of Europe's "political" media against which they also in part constitute their professional identities, or which media critics such as Ben Bagdikian (1992) draw upon to mount their critiques of American journalism. Thus, various national media systems influence each other both via imitation and mutual antagonism.

these sources, the media field becomes the carrier of outside political power, and in this way reinforces the power status quo.⁵

But journalists also have another imperative, that of finding stories that will attract interest and then writing and packaging them in an *interesting* manner. Herein lies, according to Cook, the greatest measure of journalistic autonomy. The key issue, which Cook overlooks, is interesting to *whom*. If importance imperatives are closely related to dominant political elites' judgments of what is important, *interest* imperatives are related (though not directly, as in economists' models) to what the audiences for each media outlet deem interesting. In the American case, increasingly, advertisers or company stock-holders have become the primary audiences media outlets seek to please, which in turn affects which viewing/reading audiences (young, upwardly-mobile consumers, etc.) or what kind of journalism will be used to attract these viewers/readers (less costly and labor-intensive, e.g. less in-depth investigative, reporting that thus helps maximize shareholder value and "safe" content that offers a friendly environment for advertising content). As I will show, a different economic funding and ownership structure for French news media may help to explain why the French and American journalistic construction of the immigration problem differed.

Public political debates are thus not shaped by amorphous, unchanging political cultures nor by media "logics," but by the complex interaction among the ensemble of fields -- politics, social sciences and journalism -- which compete to "impos[e] ... the legitimate vision of the social world" (Bourdieu 1995). The news media's "mediating" role -- its unique mandate to enter into and explore other fields, and then publicly share its findings -- allows it to actively influence the relations of power throughout contemporary societies. Public debate over public policy issues such as immigration can thus be seen as the result of the

⁵The previous generation of media research that stressed the news media's "hegemonic" function effectively stressed this "importance" imperative. Against naive theories that journalists' accounts simply "mirrored" reality, hegemony models attempted to show how the media agenda mirrored the configuration of dominant societal power (see, e.g., Stuart Hall, Todd Gitlin).

journalistic negotiation with other political and cultural actors over what is important and what is interesting, and how these two combine to produce the "political spectacle" (Edelman 1988).

Media and immigration in the United States and France

France and the United States have produced markedly different public immigration debates. They also represent nearly opposite "ideal-types" in terms of the structure and relations between their journalistic, academic, state and economic fields. Unlike some other nation-states in which national tabloids have clearly played a role in fomenting openly racist and xenophobic public discourse, such as Britain and Germany (see, e.g, (Allen and Macey 1990)), anti-immigration backlashes in France and the United States have occurred in the absence of such (large-scale) explicitly anti-immigrant media outlets. Via a "field" analysis, I thus seek to "bring the media back in" to a "historical institutionalist" analysis of the immigration public debates in France and the United States, two cases though much studied in isolation (Noiriel 1996)(Silverman 1992)(Weil 1991)(Fuchs 1990), or in the case of France in relation to other European nation-states (Favell 1998)(Freeman 1979)(Ireland 1994), have not often been systematically compared with each other (but see, e.g., Horowitz 1992, Body-Gendrot 1995).⁶

Analyses of the media field's role in national immigration debates have heretofore suffered from weak theoretical models, usually added ad hoc to general historical accounts, or generated out of specifically political projects, usually to construct and defend particular ethnic/racial identities, occasionally to criticize the valorization of these identities (see, e.g.,

⁶The lack of very many comparative studies of French and American immigration seems to be due in part to disciplinary definitions and boundaries. Most of the American studies of France are generated by political scientists specializing in comparative politics, which in order to distinguish itself clearly from domestic politics, effectively excludes comparisons with the United States. American sociology is dominated by domestic researchers, with only a small, though growing, wing of international comparativists.

Skerry 1993), or to defend unlimited immigration.⁷ For example, much of the existing research begins with the question of whether particular identities are appropriately represented in the media, taking these identities as pre-given and unproblematic. And thus works such as *Minorities in the Media: Diversity and the End of Mass Communication* (Wilson and Gutiérrez 1985) or *U.S. News Coverage of Racial Minorities* (Salwen and Soruco 1997), typical of the genre, are hampered by being caught up in the intellectual and political project to construct politics as a matter of racial rather than class (or for that matter, gender) conflict. Categories like "Hispanic" and "Asian" are themselves stereotypes, socially-constructed categories that bring together diverse national-origin groups under a single umbrella in an effort to extend the black civil rights paradigm and ensuing affirmative action government benefits to the "non-white" population (Skerry 1993).⁸ Similarly, Hargreaves and Perotti (1993), drawing on the British model of race relations, examine the "representation" of "ethnic minorities" on French television, thus imposing a British national field of vision on to the French situation rather than seeking to understand the particular French understanding of immigration, in which the notion of "ethnic minority" is virtually meaningless.

Researchers have also commented on the ways in which television or the "popular" press "sensationalize" the immigration issue and negatively "stereotype" immigrants (Allen and Macey 1990)(Battegay and Boubeker 1993)(Battegay 1992)(Hargreaves 1992). Van Dijk (1991) maintains that racist discourse flows from elites downward toward society and hence media outlets are crucial in the dissemination of this pernicious ideology. Terms like "racism" and "sensationalism" are rarely specified. Setting aside the unproblematized use of

⁷For some reason, perhaps the same reason that social scientists tend not to be conservatives, immigration restrictionists have not contributed to the scholarly literature. Although, as I will discuss below, the equation of immigration restriction or limitation with "right-wing" politics is a relatively recent development, at least in the United States.

⁸The constructed aspect of terms like "Hispanic" or "Latino" is evident from the fact that many Mexican, Cuban, central and south American persons continued to contest, privately and publicly, their inclusion in a common category.

everyday language, these studies also do not help us sort out how and why some media systems are more likely to be sensationalistic, racist, etc.

Comparative research (see, e.g., Guiraudon 1997) suggests that widespread media attention in and of itself, regardless of specific content, is one of the most important pre-conditions for increasing anti-immigration views as reflected in polls and ultimately anti-immigration legislation.⁹ Hargreaves argues that the French press created the conditions for the Front national's rise by simply covering immigration and thus reinforcing the equation "immigration=problem" (Hargreaves 1992). However, immigration is probably not being singled out, since most of the news is about crime and other social problems. It may be, as Guiraudon (1997) suggests, that success in keeping immigrants *out* of the news is an important precondition for the development of policies that treat them humanely and fairly. But since immigration has already become a thriving "social problems industry" (Hilgartner and Bosk 1988) and advocates on all sides of the issue have a stake in seeing the debate, however destructive, perpetuated, immigration's "public" disappearance is not likely to be imminent on either side of the Atlantic.

Given that immigrants, like all marginalized, poor classes of people, will tend to be stereotyped and labeled (Gans 1995), how they are labeled will be the major locus of struggle and debate within the political and social-scientific fields, as mediated by the media. Instead of asking questions such as whether "minorities" or "races" are fairly represented, we should try to understand better why they are labeled in certain ways rather than others, how group identities (usually involving stereotypes or labels) are constructed in the first place and what factors influence the extent to which the media field, in interaction with the political field, certifies as legitimate certain group categories over others (Champagne

⁹As Guiraudon (1997:7) notes, "In France, the rise in negative attitudes towards aliens and the growing non-material motives of prejudice is the consequence of years of passionate political debate on the immigrants. In brief, the self-reinforcing mechanism was at work: politicians who express anti-immigrant feeling were rewarded in the polls and their legitimization of xenophobic views reinforced preexisting negative opinions of aliens."

1991). In the cases of the American and French immigration public debates, one of the central questions this report will address is why debates in both countries initially revolved around the issue of unemployment and jobs, but ended up being about welfare costs in the United States and national cultural identity in France. Anderson (1991) has called attention to the historical role of the press in constructing nation-state "imagined communities". I hope to suggest how the media may also, under certain conditions, serve to break up the national community and foster new kinds of societal divisions.¹⁰

What follows is thus a general and necessarily schematic discussion of the changing magnitude and contours of the immigration public debate in France and United States, focusing on California, as these debates manifested themselves in their respective journalistic fields. California has been the destination of nearly half of all immigrants to the United States since the early 1970s, and because of its large population, high concentration of political consultants, commentators and journalists, and electoral importance for presidential candidates, has been the "tail wagging the dog" of American immigration politics and policy.¹¹ The differences between the French and American media-political field complexes are subtle and involve qualitative differences in "personality" (Schudson 1994) as well as simple quantitative differences in state control, commercial funding, journalistic professionalism, etc. This paper thus aims to tease out only some of these complex differences in the course of narratively reconstructing the evolution of a specific public policy debate as it manifested itself in the news media in each case.

¹⁰Schlesinger (1993) is generally skeptical that the news media will be able to play a major role in fostering a collective European identity in the coming years. It may be that national boundaries have become so naturalized in popular imaginations that the media, without the help of political crises or wars, will not be able to redraw those imagined boundaries. However, *within* national societies, and especially those which are already relatively fragmented, the news media may serve to accentuate and multiply already existing social divisions.

¹¹Douglas S. Massey, Remarks to UC-Berkeley Department of Sociology colloquium, Berkeley, CA, April 22, 1999.

Journalistic constructions of the immigration problem

United States

America, it almost goes without saying, is a nation of immigrants, with the major exception of those descended from African slaves and native Americans. Yet immigration has occurred chiefly in three major waves, with the third beginning shortly after World War II and intensifying significantly since the late 1960s.¹² Mexican immigration, the target of most of the current anti-immigration ire, has been an almost constant feature of the American southwest for nearly a century, varying with the state of the Mexican economy and the needs of U.S. businesses (Bilderback 1989).¹³

The immigration "problem" of the last three decades first emerged in the media field during the early 1970s. Figure 1 shows the pattern of "media attention" (Hilgartner and Bosk 1988)¹⁴ to general immigration policy and Mexican immigration from 1973 through 1994.¹⁵

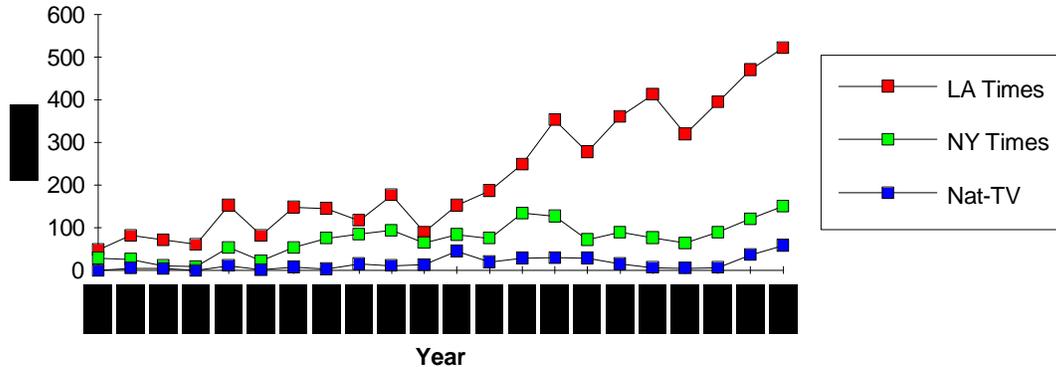
¹²The first wave, primarily northern European, began around 1820 and concluded in the early 1890s. The second wave, primarily southern and Eastern European, began in the early 1900s and ended with the restrictionist national legislation in the 1920s and the Great Depression. See Bilderback (1989: 224:-6) and Thomas (1981).

¹³At certain periods, during the bracero program of the mid-1940s through the mid-1960s, the temporary hiring of low-paid Mexican laborers was legally sanctioned. During most other periods U.S. business hiring of non-citizen Mexican workers has been officially illegal, but the law has only been sporadically enforced.

¹⁴As Hilgartner and Bosk (1988:70) note, "The construction of social problems occurs within the public arenas [such as the media]. The success (or size, or scope) of a social problem is measured by the amount of attention devoted to it in these arenas."

¹⁵Figure 1 and the ensuing analysis refers only to the *Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Times* and national network television news. Data on network television news is from the Vanderbilt Television News Archives database which includes all the stories on the main network evening news broadcasts beginning in 1968. Data on the *New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times* are from Lexis-Nexis (and for the *Los Angeles Times*, for those years prior to 1985 when Lexis-Nexis is not available, from the LA Times Index). The dissertation of which this analysis is a part also examines other local and national media. On immigration and other public policy issues, however, the *Los Angeles Times* saw its competitors as primarily *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and important regional newspapers in Miami and Dallas. For national and state policy-makers on immigration, these two newspapers and the national networks, in addition to the *Washington Post*, were arguably by far the most important. Local television news, for which there is only limited and non-indexed archival copies, has increasingly ignored public policy issues, except when they could be fit into dramatic crime or protest stories.

U.S. Media Attention to Mexican Immigration from 1973-1994: Los Angeles Times, The New York Times and National TV Network Evening News



While immigration, both legal and illegal, was high throughout this period, there is no direct relationship between actual immigration and media attention to the problem (INS 1989, 1993)(Thomas 1981). Actual yearly immigration levels, as reported by the INS and other U.S. government agencies, achieved the largest percentage increase from 1966 to 1980. This period coincides with the emergence of immigration as an issue on the media and political agenda, though given low story totals, not as a "major" social problem. Total yearly immigration also jumped significantly from 1986 to 1990, a period that coincided with a slight increase in immigration-related stories in the *Los Angeles Times*, but actually a decline in stories in the *New York Times* and network television news. The biggest jump in media attention to immigration occurred several years after this big increase in yearly immigration levels.

Economic factors also played a role. The early emergence of the immigration issue on the U.S. political and media agenda coincided with the economic recession of the mid-1970s. And likewise, the *Los Angeles Times'* increased attention to immigration during the late 1980s and early 1990s may be linked to California's economic recession during this period. These contextual factors help explain the timing of the emergence of the immigration public debate, but they cannot explain the institutional mechanisms by which

immigration becomes publicly visible and problematic in political and media discourse, nor can they adequately explain the particular framing(s) of the U.S. immigration public debate.

From 1973 onward, we see that the *Los Angeles Times* paid significantly more attention to Mexican immigration than either the *New York Times* or the three national television networks. As Castles and Miller (1993) note, the "most direct impact [of increased migration] will be felt in the expanding 'global cities' like Los Angeles, Paris [etc.]." Precisely because Los Angeles is a major, though geographically peripheral, American city, and Paris is the undisputed political, cultural and economic center of France, immigration has entered into the American and French national political discourse in different ways. To the extent that Los Angeles became the epicenter of the "immigration problem," journalists in Los Angeles became "experts" within the media field and influenced other journalists, even at the national prestige newspapers.¹⁶

That it has been the *Los Angeles Times*, and not some other provincial newspaper, that found itself at the epicenter of the emerging national debate about immigration, has also been significant. Through the 1950s, the *LA Times* had a reputation as a powerful promoter of the southern California dream, with major investments in real estate that stood to benefit from that promotion. It was an openly political newspaper, strongly backing Republican candidates for state and national office. This all changed when the young Otis Chandler took over the newspaper from his father Norman in 1960 and pledged to make the *Los Angeles Times* a world-class newspaper on par with the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*. More importantly, he backed up his pledge with significant resources to hire away some of the most talented national reporters and to dramatically increase the editorial budget (Gottlieb and Wolt 1977)(Hart 1981)(Tunstall and Walker 1981). At the moment when immigration re-entered the national stage as an emerging social problem, the fact that the newspaper closest to the action had become a "national" newspaper served to highlight

¹⁶As Tunstall and Walker (1981) also note, the *Los Angeles Times*' influence is diffused further throughout the United States because of the national news service it shares with the *Washington Post*.

and bring even greater attention to the issue. Equally important, as we will see, has been the *Los Angeles Times*' generalized California boosterism, including the celebration of cultural diversity and multiculturalism (Rieff 1991). Had immigration concentrated in New York, where the *New York Times* has always been more supportive of cultural and political assimilation, the national immigration debate may have taken a different turn.

For any emergent social problem, its general definition and linked causal arguments are at first relatively up for grabs. What kind of problem, exactly, is this? Journalists look to officials, first of all, to provide answers. And in the early 1970s, it was the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service that "discovered" and "promoted" the problem. Beginning in 1971, the INS began reporting an increasing number of apprehensions of "illegal aliens" at the California-Mexican border. From 1968 to 1973, apprehensions had increased three-fold, from 212,000 to 656,000.¹⁷ These figures represent of course only a very rough approximation of the actual border flow. For every border crosser apprehended, according to the INS's own estimates, two to three get through (Thomas 1981)(Massey 1998).¹⁸

In 1971, the first year that *any* stories on Mexican immigration appeared on network television news during this contemporary period, the most prominent Mexican-immigrant related story was about an INS arrest of 36 "illegal aliens" at a factory owned by Mrs. Romana A. Banuelos, President Nixon's nominee for U.S. treasury secretary. This raid prompted the first general examinations of the illegal alien problem, including estimates that more than 800,000 "aliens" were employed in the United States, including 50,000 by the U.S. government. As one television news report noted, it was rumored that union foes of

¹⁷INS Statistical Yearbooks, 1989 and 1993.

¹⁸As Douglas S. Massey (1998: 28) reports, because of U.S. immigration policies that fail to address the actual causes and consequences of immigration, despite vastly increased funding for border control, the likelihood of apprehension (the "probability of arrest on any given attempt") has actually fallen from 35 percent to 40 percent in the early 1970s to the current level of 15 percent to 20 percent. Apprehensions, however, make news and are the predominant indicator of year-to-year flux in border crossing. Yet apprehension data is as much an indicator of border control agency policies as actual flow. For instance, in 1974, a new policy focusing on big-time smugglers over individual border crossers resulted in a 57 percent drop in "alien arrests" in just one month (*New York Times*, December 24, 1974, p. 22).

illegal immigration had tipped off the INS in order to raise concern about the increasing number of "illegal aliens" taking American jobs.

The INS had reasons of its own to focus attention on the "new" problem of illegal immigration. An investigation of corruption within the service's ranks, dubbed "Operation Clean-sweep," appeared in news accounts during the early 1970s and had tarnished the agency's image. In 1974, the *Los Angeles Times* featured prominently a story on Attorney General William B. Saxbe's warning of an "invasion" of illegal aliens who were taking American jobs, using welfare services, and contributing to increasing crime rates. Among the television networks, however, only NBC covered the Saxbe speech, and the *New York Times* did not cover it at all. Many of the themes that would emerge as dominant in the 1990s, such as welfare abuse, were thus already present at the start of America's contemporary immigration crisis. But the relative emphasis at this point was on jobs, reflecting not only the recession of the period but the relatively greater influence of labor unions during the early 1970s.

While the President and his Cabinet, federal agencies (particularly the INS) and the Supreme Court generated most of the news about immigration, and particularly Mexican immigration, during the 1970s, the other occasional actor attempting to influence the immigration public debate was Cesar Chavez's United Farm Workers. During the early 1970s, the UFW held a number of protests against illegal immigration, including setting up picket lines on the border to try to stop Mexican workers from crossing the border to break farmworker strikes. But for the most part, the UFW's campaign against illegal immigration was invisible in the news media. From 1971 through 1976, stories about the UFW's opposition to illegal immigration numbered little more than a dozen in the *Los Angeles Times*, three in the *New York Times*, and just one on the national television networks.

The media field influences public debate and policy not only by the way it frames issues but by the changing relative level of attention it accords various framings. And it is perhaps significant that the relative lack of attention to the immigration issue during the

mid-1970s coincides with a period in which the major definition of the problem was economic. Public debates, by definition, require at least two sides. During the mid-1970s, labor unions, and particularly the tiny UFW, were the only non-state actors to promote the immigration problem.¹⁹ Just as important for the lack of visibility to immigration as an "economic problem" was that the opposing side -- factory owners, agricultural corporations, and wealthy private employers of illegal immigrants -- was able to effectively avoid the media spotlight (Tunstall and Walker 1981).²⁰ Without an opponent willing to publicly debate, proponents of the economic argument found themselves unable to "make news" (Tuchman 1978) and thus get on to the public agenda.²¹

Opposition to labor union and INS economic framing of the immigration problem began to emerge in the mid-1970s, not from employers, the most obvious beneficiary of illegal immigration, but from organizations linked to the Chicano rights social movement. These groups emphasized the discriminatory aspects of the INS's enforcement policies. By concentrating raids on farms and low-wage factories, the INS arrested far more Mexican immigrants than European or Canadian illegal immigrants who were more dispersed and

¹⁹The only other non-state actor visible in the media field arguing for the need to restrict legal or illegal immigration were population control groups (appearing in a single network newscast in 1971 and occasional press stories). While their concerns largely went unheeded, population control groups later provided the major leaders and original members, along with former INS employees and their friends, for the reconfigured (non-labor union) immigration restriction movement of the 1980s.

²⁰British media scholar Jeremy Tunstall and journalist David Walker, who observed the California news media in 1978 and 1979, were struck by the virtual absence of reporting on the agricultural industry and of Chavez. After Chavez's grape boycott, they noted, "he and the UFW have retreated into the shadows, lit only occasionally (p.91). Tunstall and Walker also observed that "corporate power is as invisible as the Hispanics." While Hispanics have certainly become more visible in the California media during the 1980s and 1990s, corporate power (despite the expansion of business pages at most newspapers) remains largely invisible.

²¹Of course, not all public policy is the result of public pressure or produced in the media spotlight. Whether or not labor unions had been able to get more media attention and despite occasional warnings about the immigration threat by the INS during this period, the Nixon and Ford administrations were not likely to take the side of labor unions against employers (though greater media attention to labor's perspective certainly could have increased pressure on these Republican administrations to do something). With the election of Democrat Jimmy Carter in 1976, labor unions had a far more sympathetic hearing and the federal government began taking a far more pro-active approach toward immigration. Compared to only 19 network news stories on immigration during the *eight* years of Nixon and Ford, 24 appeared during the *four* years of the Carter administration, more than twice as many per year.

less "visible." But the "discrimination" framing was also concerned with the spillover effects on American citizens of Mexican heritage who suffered or could potentially suffer from harassment by the INS agents or on the job because of their skin color, language or accent. There is no doubt that these abuses did occur. But since one framing tends to displace others, given the limited "carrying capacity" of political and media fields (Hilgartner and Bosk 1988), as the ethnic-rights left gained visibility it gradually crowded out the labor left's economic framing of the problem.

Of course, America's "economic left" has never been strong by European standards. Labor's decline since the 1950s has been well-documented and a number of analysts have traced the gradual transformation of the left into racialized, genderized "identity politics" movements emerging out of the 1960s civil rights movement (e.g., Gitlin 1995, Hollinger 1995, Rieff 1991). But it is important to recognize that this debate has largely taken place in a public sphere crucially organized by large-scale commercial media outlets, for the most part increasingly hostile to labor during the 1980s and 1990s, and far more supportive of the politics of culture which could be more easily reconciled, indeed which nicely dovetailed, with the media's primary function as advertising medium.

Labor reporting, like other beats devoted to working-class or poor people, has tended to be a low-prestige assignment within American newspapers. The *Los Angeles Times* has had a long tradition of anti-labor union politics and for most of its history, provided only occasional, and usually derogatory, coverage of labor unions (Hart 1981)(Gottlieb and Wolt 1977). In the wake of its early 1960s "professionalization", the newspaper hired its first full-time labor reporter who was not openly hostile to labor unions: Harry Bernstein, the labor editor at the *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner*. As INS raids on immigrants increased during the early 1970s, Bernstein wrote stories that emphasized the effects of illegal immigration on American jobs and wages. This aspect of the problem,

Bernstein recalls, was "self-evident": If you have a large pool of poor workers, that's bound to have a demeaning effect on worker wages."²²

Just as it had never paid much serious attention to unions and worker issues, the *Los Angeles Times*, like most major newspapers of the era, had made little effort to cover issues of race and ethnicity, particularly Hispanics. When the legendary Ruben Salazar²³ joined the *LA Times* in the early 1960s, he was only the second "Mexican" journalist to have been employed by the newspaper. Salazar was an advocate of acculturation, of the Mexican-American community being "part of the American way of life" (Gottlieb and Wolt 1977 : 421). Salazar's tragic death in 1970 coincided with the rise of the Latino identity movement. Frank del Olmo, who joined the *LA Times* in the early 1970s and quickly became Salazar's successor as the newspaper's most prominent Latino reporter, identified with this movement far more than had Salazar. He was among a group of reporters who began reporting about the border during the early 1970s in response to increased INS activity. But gradually, he became the first regular reporter assigned almost exclusively to cover immigration issues.

As del Olmo began paying greater attention to Chicano groups and thus emphasizing the ethnic-racial aspects of immigration, he came into increasing conflict inside the *LA Times* with Bernstein. To del Olmo, Bernstein was a "knee-jerk" defender of the "AFL-CIO line" on immigration. Bernstein would corner del Olmo in the newsroom and "make a fuss" about del Olmo's stories.²⁴ The designation of the immigration beat as a separate beat and as one assigned to a reporter, del Olmo, who viewed immigration as a

²²Interview with Harry Bernstein, March 23, 1998.

²³Salazar was "accidentally" shot in the head by police firing a tear gas canister into a building (the exact circumstances surrounding his death are still not known) while he was covering an anti-Vietnam war protest in 1970.

²⁴Interview with del Olmo, March 13, 1998. During this period, del Olmo was one of the few Mexican-American reporters covering immigration for a major American newspaper. In one study of news coverage by the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Washington Post* and *Arizona Daily Star*, of Mexican immigration from 1972 through 1978, del Olmo alone wrote more than half of the stories with bylines by reporters with Spanish-surnames (just 17 percent of the total) (Fernández 1981: 13). del Olmo also wrote a number of articles on the Chicano movement for various journalism reviews.

complex, generally positive phenomenon, and problematic primarily in terms of ethnic/racial discrimination, helped to consolidate the *Los Angeles Times*' framing of immigration in these ethnic/racial terms. Bernstein, for his part, saw his own purview as limited to labor unions and did not challenge this administrative division of beats. But the effect was to marginalize the economic perspective on immigration, to discredit economic framing as primarily the self-interested view of labor unions and "bosses."²⁵ For example, in 1980, del Olmo began writing an occasional column on immigration, often focusing on Latino (termed "Hispanic" at the time) opposition to employer sanctions and other proposed immigration legislation. Only in 1984, as congressional debate on immigration policy was heating up, was Bernstein provided space to present an opposing view, but del Olmo's columns outnumbered Bernstein's five to two. After Bernstein retired in the late 1980s, the *LA Times* did not replace him with a full-time labor reporter. The *Times* now has only a "workplace" reporter, Stuart Silverstein, who Bernstein reports, tries to get stories in the newspaper on labor unions and labor issues, but is "not encouraged to do [those kind of] stories."

Aided by del Olmo's coverage, groups like CASA and MALDEF began offering an alternative and increasingly visible framing of the immigration issue during the mid-1970s (Acuña 1996).²⁶ By 1973, new Mexican-American organizations such as CASA and the National Coalition for Fair Immigration Laws and Practices were publicly criticizing the UFW for its anti-illegal immigration stance (Gutiérrez 1995: 197). Some of the Chicano

²⁵Bernstein notes that he worked for years, ultimately successfully, to stop the *LA Times* practice of referring to labor union leaders as "union bosses." Since his retirement in the late 1980s, however, he has ruefully observed the return of this derogatory label in *LA Times* (increasingly rare) stories on labor unions.

²⁶As Acuña (p.54) notes: "... the *Los Angeles Times*, a historically conservative, anti-labor newspaper, was becoming more sensitive to minority issues by 1982. Thanks to the presence of Frank del Olmo as a columnist and larger numbers of Latino reporters, its coverage of the community improved, making politicians more aware of the large presence of the Chicano/Latino." But, Acuña adds in a footnote (p.62), "by 1992 the *Los Angeles Times* had returned to a neoconservative policy." If anything, by 1992, the *Times*' pro-diversity editorial positions and coverage of the minority communities it had helped construct as legitimate actors on the political stage were unimpeachable, but its traditional indifference if not hostility to labor unions had certainly returned. What Acuña does not acknowledge is that these two positions -- pro-minority, anti-labor -- reinforced each other, just as the Latino civil rights groups had helped to displace the economic left in California politics.

groups combined ethnic consciousness-raising with critiques of American capitalism and corporations. But most tended not to be interested in issues of economic justice.²⁷

That Latino groups would increasingly come to adopt a civil rights/ethnic discrimination view of immigration issues was not an obvious outcome of the Latino experience. Through the early 1970s, the oldest Latino American organization, LULAC, took positions against increased immigration and for assertive assimilation (De le Garza 1985). However, a number of new Latino organizations impressed by the model of the black civil rights movement and attracted to government policies that provided benefits and legal protection to groups constituting themselves as a race, began to challenge this assimilationist model. MALDEF (Mexican American Legal Defense Fund), the richest and most visible Latino organization to this day, was explicitly created in 1968 in the image of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and continues to receive more than 90 percent of its funding from the Ford and other foundations (Skerry 1993: 324)(Moran 1989). In 1968, the National Council of La Raza was also founded, representing more than 100 community-based organizations serving Latinos. The college student group MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan) was founded in 1969 at college campuses throughout the southwest to push for Chicano studies departments, more Latino faculty and greater economic opportunities for Latinos. Increasingly, these civil rights oriented organizations, despite significant ambivalence on the part of many Mexican-Americans to this framing of their experience, were the primary organizations identified in news media accounts as representing the Mexican-American community.

In 1978, the National Council of La Raza came out in favor of affirmative action for Hispanics. LULAC broke definitively with its assimilationist past in 1979. For the

²⁷The effect of groups like CASA and MALDEF on unionizing efforts, as Chavez saw, was unequivocal: "... most of the [Chicano] left attacking us has no experience in labor matters. They don't know what a strike is. They don't know because they're not workers... And they don't know because really they haven't talked to the workers" (Gutiérrez 1995: 198). The Chavez quote is from "UFW Leader Talks with El Malcriado," *El Macriado*, October 18, 1974, 11.

first time, Latinos presented a relatively united front comparable to black organizations. During this period, the term "multiculturalism" first began to be used in contrast with the notion of "assimilation" to the "Anglo-American" model. Yet as late as 1979 the dominant understanding of assimilation had not yet taken on pejorative connotations. For example, in one clearly positive news story, a friendly Barrio policeman is described helping illegal immigrants with the "difficulties of assimilating into a new culture" (*Los Angeles Times*, 12 August 1979). While MALDEF and other groups were increasingly "for" diversity and against discrimination, no group had stepped to the fore to offer what journalists like to call the "other side." Without a debate, the meaning of terms like assimilation and diversity could remain vague and overlapping. This would change during the early 1980s, although as we will see a large-scale debate between multiculturalists and assimilationists was never to take place.

The decline of the "jobs" frame and the stalling of "cultural" conflict

The Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) emerged in 1979 as the first organization specifically oriented to opposing illegal immigration (and reducing overall immigration) (Cooper 1986). FAIR was started by a former president of Zero Population Growth from Michigan. FAIR emphasized class-based politics as well as cultural concerns, and during its early years claimed some of the union's traditional issues by warning against the economic consequences of illegal immigration for low-income black workers and strongly advocating sanctions on employers who hired illegal immigrants (Connor 1986)(Mehlman 1995)(Tanton 1986).²⁸

In 1986, FAIR helped steer to passage the new Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) in Washington, D.C. whose three pillars were employer sanctions, tougher border control (both favored by FAIR) and amnesty for illegal immigrants already here

²⁸Many of FAIR's early members were noted liberals, such as former Senator Eugene McCarthy.

(opposed by FAIR but *not* forcefully advocated by Latino groups who mainly hoped to derail *any* legislation). That same year FAIR came to California to aid grassroots organizing of new anti-illegal immigrant groups. The group also began stressing more heavily the "cultural threat" posed by new immigrants from non-European sources (Tanton 1986). Many FAIR activists were allied, though not directly, with the first English-only campaign of 1986, which resulted in California voter's approval of Proposition 63.

It has been oft-noted that the news media are attracted to controversy and dramatic debates. But not every controversy attracts the same amount of attention. As we have seen, the labor union perspective on immigration, because it was allied against powerful employers who were able to resist being drawn into the media spectacle, never garnered significant media attention during the 1970s and early 1980s. Immigration remained in the news during the early 1980s largely due to ongoing congressional debate over immigration reform legislation, which pitted Hispanic groups and their silent partner large agribusiness and low-wage factory owners against labor unions and the INS bureaucracy. Because both unions and Hispanics were major constituency groups inside the Democratic party, and business groups sought no publicity, the battle was rarely joined directly. During this period, immigration coverage was driven by "importance" imperatives far more than journalistic "interest" imperatives. As the S&L controversy and other lightly-covered stories on complex bureaucratic problems demonstrate, "importance" imperatives tend not to be enough in themselves to put an issue at the top of the media agenda. "Interest" imperatives, in which structural phenomena are linked to individual personalities and offenses, heroes and villains, are needed to provide the drama and narrative clarity that make a "big story."

But even among issues that meet these "interest" requirements, not all are treated equally by the news media. It helps when major political figures, a state governor or President especially, decide to take a clear stand in an emotional and divisive debate. But

this explanation, typical of arguments that political logic ultimately trumps media logic, misses how political elites choose their battles in accordance with their expectations of whether or not it will attract media attention (Cook 1998). Political elites, like media companies, also have to be aware of their audiences. But here it is important to note the increasing complementarity of mainstream politicians' interest in pleasing the relatively narrow audience of middle and upper-middle class voters (those who do in fact vote) and media organizations' concern with reaching the "higher demographic groups" desired by the advertisers who subsidize their operations.

Thus, one question that needs to be posed for the politics of immigration in the mid-1980s, and beyond, is why the cultural assimilationist challenge of FAIR and English-only never truly emerged as a central aspect of immigration debate and policy in California, and in the United States. One answer, I want to suggest, lies in the intersection and complementarity of interests between the post-1960s civil rights social movement "industry" (Hilgartner and Bosk 1988) and the rise of "target marketing" technologies and associated cadres of experts in both the political and media fields.

A number of media scholars have noted the American news media's particularly heavy dependence on advertising as its major source of revenues, much higher than in most European nation-states (Bagdikian 1992)(Baker 1994)). These and other studies have emphasized how advertising dependence has minimized honest and critical reporting of business, as well as reporting on labor unions and other groups challenging class inequities, and increased the amount of consumer-oriented "soft" news (see also Collins 1992). During the late 1970s and early 1980s, however, to such basic advertising imperatives were added a new one: not just to avoid causing offense to the general capitalist environment or to major businesses, but to help advertisers reach and influence specific targeted audiences. Target marketing increased the pressure to reach only those consumers with significant income and the propensity to spend it. But newspapers and

political direct marketers also began targeting groups, so-called "life-style enclaves," linked to age, gender and race/ethnicity (Wilson and Gutiérrez 1985).

Turow (1997 : 194) argues that the advertising industry, via its target marketing strategy, "affects not just the content of its own campaigns but the very structure and content of the rest of the media system." Chiefly, he maintains, target marketing favors the rise of "segment-making" media, those outlets who speak to ever-smaller slices of America, over "society-making" media, those outlets "that have the potential to get all those segments to talk to each other" (Turow 1997 : 3). But I want to suggest that target marketing has transformed even the remaining "society-making" media, including major newspapers and network television, and made these media outlets more likely to promote cultural and ethnic pluralism and more likely to challenge or ignore political and intellectual efforts emphasizing the desirability of national unity, either political or cultural.

Given the professional ethic and organizational structure of journalism, advertising and other commercial pressures do not directly affect news content. Likewise, despite the growing success of the feminist and ethnic rights movements in the academy, these currents did not directly produce a changed "mindset" among American journalists that prompted them to take pro-immigrant, pro-diversity positions in their writing (as argued, by, e.g., Skerry 1993).²⁹ Instead, it is the confluence of these two trends that led journalists to pay increasing attention to immigration as an issue of ethnic/racial diversity

²⁹Responding rather vehemently to Skerry's critique, *Los Angeles Times* assistant editor Frank Sotomayor (who was in charge of the *LA Times* Pulitzer Prize-winning 1982 series on southern California Latinos) told me: "I don't think anyone thinks in the civil rights context ... there's certain groups, the ACLU, immigrant rights groups [with this view] and we cover a significant amount of them... [but] that mindset concept seems vague and not applicable to our daily newsroom... We think of individuals, of individual stories." Interview with author, March 18, 1998. A term like "mindset" of course is particularly galling to American journalists, particularly at elite newspapers such as the *Los Angeles Times* that pride themselves on their professionalism and if not their absolute objectivity, at least their concern for "balance." But it doesn't seem so unreasonable to claim that the civil rights movement and its offspring, the women's, Chicano and gay right's movements, to name a few, have had a tremendous influence on a whole host of American institutions and that it would thus come to influence the working assumptions and practices of journalists as well.

and thus potential discrimination, as promoted by MALDEF and other groups, and to pay only minimal attention or to provide dismissive, discrediting coverage to counter-movements that sought to reassert a common American cultural and political identity. What follows from this point is that the relative failure of the immigration public debate to be transformed into a debate about national culture and national identity (as it did so often in the American past and has done in most other western nation-states) is not due to the more tolerant, pluralist views of American citizens, but to the confluence of economic and political interests between advertisers, media companies, and political elites and activists, all of whom have a stake in the preservation of identity politics (Alliance, Service et al. 1998).³⁰

While some authors have raised dire warnings about Proposition 63 and the English Only movement (see, e.g., Crawford 1992), what seems significant looking back from the vantage point of Proposition 187 is how little media attention was accorded the 1986 proposition.³¹ CBS, ABC and NBC each ran *one* story on Proposition 63. The *New York Times* accorded 11 stories to the proposition, and the *Los Angeles Times*, obviously closest to the story and always in the lead in covering immigration-related stories, ran a

³⁰In a 1987 conference sponsored by the McKesson Corporation, Pacific News Service and the New California Alliance, a gathering reflective of the identity politics left's increasing cooperation with big business, California poll director Marvin Field told the audience of journalists, academics and activists that California was fragmenting into diverse "segments" and that "the mainstream media, individually and collectively, are reaching a smaller and smaller portion of the total. It's immutable: they can't overcome it. These growing segments together are becoming the majority. The only practical way they can be reached is selectively. And what we need is to make room politically, economically, and socially for a wider, diverse, specialized media." What Field does not stress, of course, is the extent to which the media itself is contributing to society's segmentation and fragmentation. But Field's statement is significant because he is the leading pollster in the state and taken as an authoritative voice on state trends, and thus what Field defines as "immutable" may in fact become a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy.

³¹Many factors are crucial in determining media attention, such as what other kinds of social problems and events are vying for attention at the moment, the support of political elites, etc. In contrast to Proposition 187, most of California's political elites, including Republican Governor Deukmejian, had allied against the English Only Proposition 63. It is no easy task to disentangle these factors, but whether or not political elites support an issue is not a wholly independent variable; these decisions about what is politically "realistic" or optimal are influenced by the elites' relations and conscious and unconscious perceptions of the economic power structure, what will play in the media, what will play with voters, etc., which are all bound up with one another.

total of 65 stories.³² In contrast to the limited attention to the culturally-oriented Proposition 63, in contrast, the three television networks accorded in 1994 a total of 27 stories to Proposition 187, the *New York Times* ran 68 stories, the *Los Angeles Times* ran 656 stories, in other words, from six to ten times as many stories.

To sum up, from 1980 to 1986, immigration public debate was primarily driven by media "importance" imperatives, the ongoing and complicated story of congressional debate on national immigration legislation. During the same period, a potentially "interesting" and dramatic cultural challenge to immigration emerged, but this debate received very little media attention, because of the media's increasing promotion of cultural diversity as the implicit, if not explicit, ideological support for the fragmenting consumer economy which structured the media field -- and by extension, the political field. Discourses of cultural integration, so often in the past the fundamental response to increased immigration and economic insecurity, had become publicly taboo because of the intersection of interests between the post-1970s identity movements "industry" and the rise of "target marketing" technologies and associated cadres of experts in both the political and media fields. While the magnitude or scope of public debate about an issue tends to expand as it moves from a narrow, technical to dramatic, social framing (Guiraudon 1997 : 3)³³, this probably only occurs when the social framing itself does not itself call into question the dominant cultural and political-economic arrangements.

Proposition 187 and immigrants as welfare abusers

³²All aggregate numbers for stories include editorials, columns and letters to the editor, to the extent that they are included in Nexis-Lexis. It could be argued that letters to the editor reflect public or at least the "organized" public (since a high percentage of letters are the result of letter writing campaigns organized by "social movement organizations"), but editors of course still select among these letters only a portion to be published. Editorials and columns, however, are nearly as important as front-page stories in signaling the level of importance a newspaper is granting to a topic. In part, however, including all three was a practical methodological decision given the enormous number of total stories involved and the difficulty in sorting out for every year the various types of stories picked up by data-bases and indexes.

³³On this point, Guiraudon cites Nelson Polsby, *Political Innovation in America: The Politics of Policy Initiation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

As it became clear that IRCA was largely unsuccessful in curbing immigration, a number of groups, whose core members were former Border Patrol agents and members of a handful of conservative Protestant churches in southern California, began organizing for another assault to halt illegal immigration. With the active support of former Reagan and Bush-appointed INS officials, notably western INS commissioner Harold Ezell and national commissioner Alan Nelson, both of whom would later spearhead Proposition 187, a number of "grassroots" groups began holding media-oriented demonstrations at the California border during the late 1980s, publishing newsletters, writing letters to the editor, and calling in to sympathetic radio talk show hosts. The movement operated on two levels. In private and among their supporters, their rhetoric often referred to the threat or invasion of an alien culture.³⁴ Yet in their public pronouncements and demonstrations, the groups tended to identify the problem primarily in terms of threatened jobs and taxpayer costs for increased welfare expenditures.

What can account for the massive increase in media attention to the immigration problem during 1993 and 1994, centered around Proposition 187? I want to suggest that the reason has to do with this new public framing strategy on the part of immigration restriction organizations and the ways in which this new framing were explicitly linked and resonated with a larger conservative re-framing of poverty and marginality as a "fiscal" problem of abuse of welfare and other social services (Gans 1995)(Katz 1989)(Mehan 1997)(Calavita 1996)(Gamson 1992).³⁵ These framing strategies succeeded because they resonated, not with the "public" as is often claimed (a term that hides more than it reveals, unless specified, "which" public, that is, is being made to

³⁴In 1995 interviews with leaders of some of these Orange County groups, I found that a perception of multiculturalist and separatist claims by Latino leaders aroused their deepest ire. Cultural concerns also dominated the newsletters published during the early 1990s by such groups as Valley Citizens Together, one of the grassroots organizations behind Prop. 187.

³⁵As Gamson (1992:11) notes, "media-amplified images" from one issue may be "generalized and transferred to other issues," that is, used as a resource for understanding and action by political actors and citizens.

stand in for the public at large), but rather with media organizations and various relatively elite publics, as filtered through journalists' eyes.

American media organizations did not directly promote the immigration issue as a "fiscal" backlash, but they did channel the growing economic insecurity toward this framing of the problem. Most fundamentally, corporate media cooperated with business and political elites to withhold information about the causes, costs and far-reaching consequences of neo-liberal government economic policies, presenting instead a portrait of the economic climate as "natural" and beyond human agency. During the early 1990s, Robert Scheer's "Column Left" in the *Los Angeles Times* often raised these economic issues. For example, in one 1994 column, Scheer wrote about the Labor department's lack of inspection staff to enforce labor wage and safety laws: "What this means is that the only program with any real promise of cutting down the incessant demand for cheap immigrant labor barely exists. Jobs are the magnet that pull people to this country, and if employers continue to get away with violating our labor standards, then the migrants will keep coming, no matter how many propositions the voters pass."³⁶ City editor Bill Boyarsky dismissed Scheer's analyses:

"Scheer thinks in terms of classic Marxist economics, he thinks economics is at the root of everything." But except for Scheer, the *Los Angeles Times* coverage of immigration and of Proposition 187 in particular left the impression that economics was at the root of nothing.

But the suppression of an economic/jobs framing need not have produced a "fiscal" backlash. What was also essential was the rise of multicultural orthodoxy, especially within the *Los Angeles Times* and other southern California news organizations.³⁷ Unlike previous

³⁶Robert Scheer, "Column Left: Instead of 187: Enforcement of Labor Laws: Adequate Funding for Employer Inspections Could Solve The Illegal Immigration Problem," *Los Angeles Times*, November 20, 1994, p.5.

³⁷A number of southern California news outlets, including the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Orange County Register*, now have "diversity committees" which monitor success in hiring minority journalists and adequately covering racial/ethnic minority groups. There are no comparable "poverty" committees that analyze newspaper coverage in terms of class issues. When I asked the *Orange County Register* managing editor how his newspaper was making efforts to reach out to those members of the community who are not readers, because they cannot *afford* to be, he instinctively responded by citing efforts to reach out to "ethnically-diverse communities" which may be but are not necessarily synonymous with the economically

periods of American immigration, the contemporary wave of immigrants arrived during a period in which they were not only *not* expected to assimilate and become part of the American mainstream, but the very idea of a common culture had become suspect. During the late 1980s, references in the mainstream media to multiculturalism, generated by academics and ethnic/racial activists, increased rapidly. By 1990 usage of the term surpassed assimilation for the first time never again to lose the lead.³⁸ And by 1993, it became clear that assimilation was a discredited term, one that was only uttered by extremist, anti-immigrant activists. As one story noted, "for FAIR strategists, who are enthusiastic proponents of assimilation, diversity is a suspect notion" (*Los Angeles Times*, 23 November 1993). In 1997, when the U.S. National Commission on Immigration Reform published its final report, its findings, including a recommendation for policies to promote "Americanization" of immigrants, were scarcely reported.³⁹

Thus, by suppressing economic explanations of societal strains and promoting the inevitability if not desirability of societal fragmentation and the lack of a cultural and political commonweal, the media and political fields produced a discursive void which new right activists were able to fill. Rapid economic and social change was producing new discontents, yet the existing public discourse provided no answers or solutions. Americans, increasingly isolated from each other socially and culturally, were thus open to the suggestion that the only thing they had in common was their common negative identity as

deprived. The national Committee for Concerned Journalists, a journalistic reform group, sponsored a forum in February 1998 on "Diversity and the News" but to my knowledge held no similar meeting on "Class and the News," arguably a far more pressing problem in the face of America's widening income inequality.

³⁸In 1990, *Los Angeles Times* stories mentioning "multiculturalism" (and variants of the term, multicultural, etc.) numbered 300 compared to 283 stories mentioning "assimilation" (and variants). By 1994, stories mentioning multiculturalism outnumbered those mentioning assimilation, 561 to 218.

³⁹To be sure, this 1997 version of Americanization differed significantly from the Americanization drives of Teddy Roosevelt and others earlier in the century. For the U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform, Americanization meant "the cultivation of a shared commitment to the American values of liberty, democracy and equal opportunity" but also the common use of the English language (from the 1997 Executive Summary, Washington, D.C.).

taxpayers, against whom were allied all those on the bottom who did not pay taxes and yet demanded government services.

The only way to break out of this debate would have been for the very media and political actors who had created the conditions for this kind of discourse, by their omission of economics and emphasis on cultural and social difference, to affirmatively seek out new sources of information, to have affirmatively sought to reframe the debate. But given the professional norms of American journalism, this was the one thing they could not do. *Los Angeles Times* reporter Paul Feldman, when asked about the "silence" of businesses and economic elites during the Proposition 187 battle, that is those who benefited from illegal immigration and were the driving force behind it, responded that "if businesses say they're neutral, you have to leave it at that ... to harp on the business aspect of it, that would have been advocacy."

Instead, *Los Angeles Times* journalists felt that their responsibility was to focus on the symptoms rather than the causes. When I asked reporters and editors who had been responsible for coverage of immigration during the early 1990s what aspect of the story they had not covered adequately, they almost universally pointed to their not taking seriously enough the "grassroots" immigration restriction activists. As *Los Angeles Times* chief immigration reporter Patrick McDonnell recalled in 1998:

I think that one of the things that was not covered sufficiently leading up to that, and one of the reasons the whole vehemence of the movement caught people by surprise, is the real kind of shock, disbelief, unhappiness that a lot of white, non-Latino people, around here particularly, had about this really incredible historic influx of immigrants. We'd written a lot about the historic influx of immigrants, about the plight of refugees, the plight of immigrants. Now I have, myself, I think done some [stories on] the demographic shock. But I don't think we'd done enough on that. So there was all this anger building in these communities. That was probably somewhat untapped in the press. So it kind of burst out... I think we were caught totally by surprise by the vehemence of the reaction.

In his conversations with his editor at the time, Alan Acosta, McDonnell said the two agreed "that it was important to air out this anger as much as possible."

Although many of the *Los Angeles Times* journalists were far from sympathetic to the aims of Proposition 187, their strategic view of politics, that is, politics as a matter of strategy and tactics rather than ideological debate, ensured that they would cover it intensively (Schudson 1995).⁴⁰ As Feldman recalls:

I saw my role as basically covering the election as a political campaign in much the same way that I covered other campaigns and so it was that body of stories that I concentrated on. Taking a look at who was for 187, who was against it, but a lot of it in the prism of the fact that it had overwhelming support [in the polls], yet a lot of community leaders, and state organizations like the medical association, the education association all were against it. So looking at the prism of how in the face of this overwhelming public support they intended to try to you know knock it down ... And whether or not there was a chance of success [in defeating Prop. 187].

Experts were then called upon to comment, usually in one-sentence quips, on the soundness of this or that strategy, the likelihood of success, and occasionally, in cliched terms, why Prop. 187 was attracting so much public support. Journalists choose experts not so much on the basis of their expertise, except to the extent that experts should have some legitimate institutional affiliation, as on such characteristics as availability, willingness to talk, ability to "say things that are quotable."⁴¹ Quotability contains an implicit political content, for genuinely critical, oppositional thought takes time and space to express, beginning as it must by knocking down all the assumptions that guide the reporters' questions. As reporter McDonnell ruefully conceded, "Newspapers maybe aren't as good with stories that are high concept." High concept, in other words, refers to stories in which agency is obscured and obscures itself from view, yet it is precisely here, in the realm of corporate decision-making and global economics, that the real story of immigration was to be found.

⁴⁰As Schudson (1995:70) writes, American "journalists are persuaded that politics is a matter of running campaigns, handling pressure groups, and disarming oppositions, and this is an engineering task appropriately analyzed by experts, not partisans."

⁴¹Author interview with Paul Feldman, *Los Angeles Times*, March 25, 1998.

Global perspectives are also downplayed in the context of increasing market pressures on newspapers to emphasize "local" news. In Orange County, the epicenter of the immigration restriction backlash, the *Los Angeles Times* competed intensively with the *Orange County Register* over who could provide more "local" news. For example, in 1992, the *LA Times* conducted a "More Local News Sweepstakes" promotion in Orange County, in which participants were required to go over the Orange County edition of the *LA Times* and circle with an orange crayon all the local news in the newspaper. The *Register* responded proudly in its own counter-promotion, "To circle all the local news in the *Register*, you'd need a whole box."⁴² Needless to say, there are no such promotions for "global" news.

American journalists often couch their resistance to "academic" analyses of immigration and other issues as a question of keeping the interest of the reader, the necessity to avoid being "boring."⁴³ Thus, for instance, Bill Boyarsky, former chief political reporter and currently city editor for the *Los Angeles Times*, describes how he and Sacramento bureau chief George Skelton conceptualized and pulled together a series on the demographics of race in California politics, for which they consulted with a number of academics.⁴⁴

We were more influenced by our own knowledge of politics. We were both very friendly with a couple of political managers, strategists, who we had known for years and years who were very forward-looking in this field but we were not influenced by the *National Journal* because we thought that was really boring. Most of this kind of analysis looks to me extremely tedious, you know, because this is what we do for a living, you gotta have people and life and controversy and action... [we were looking for something] that was clear, very, very clear... no bullshit... we didn't want any academic hedges.... We knew we had to ... have the guts to come to a conclusion.

⁴²M.L. Stein, "Battle of the crayons in Orange County: Competition between *Los Angeles Times* and *Orange County Register*," *Editor & Publisher*, v125, n13 (March 28, 1992), p. 13.

⁴³Not all "boring" perspectives are critical, but critical thought, to the extent that it always takes time to express and does not easily fit within the favored "strategic" news frame, will usually be seen as "boring" by reporters. For a discussion of "media-intellectuals'" tendency to offer "throw-away thought" that conveys and legitimates "received ideas," see Bourdieu (1998).

⁴⁴Interview with Bill Boyarsky, *Los Angeles Times*, March 25, 1998.

In the case of immigration, where the "facts" on the causes, costs and benefits of immigration were much in dispute among researchers, journalists felt there was no way to adjudicate and assess who was right, so they tended to simply report the conflicting studies and leave it at that. Yet, despite some journalists' stated preference for "objective" experts, the experts they tended to turn to and report were far more often "media-academics" linked to either conservative or liberal "think-tanks." Immigration scholars such as Douglas Massey, Wayne Cornelius, Alejandro Portes, etc, appeared much less often in mainstream media accounts than advocate-experts such as economist Julian Simon, various ethnic studies scholars, political analysts and others with predictable, clear-cut positions. Journalistic time pressures and journalists' primary need for "strategic" quotes that they can easily incorporate into campaign-style stories ultimately leave very little room for traditional academic sources (Luker 1999).

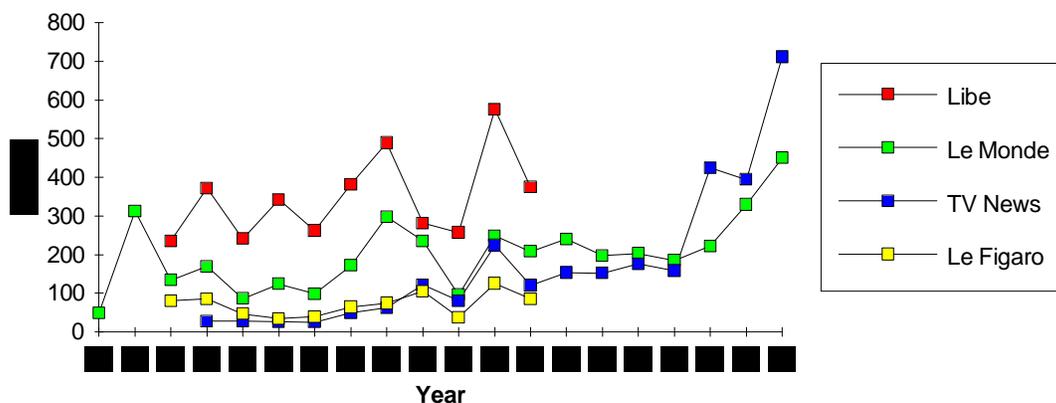
Leaving now this rather schematic discussion of the U.S. immigration political debate as it appeared in major media outlets, we turn to the French case. In the final section, I will return to the California case as it relates to the French situation and draw out some of the general differences and similarities and what these may indicate about the role of the media in constructing public political debates.

French news media construction of the immigration problem

Figure 2 shows French national media attention to immigration from 1973 to 1991 (Bonnafous 1991)(Gastaut 1995).⁴⁵ The basic pattern of media attention shows the immigration problem being driven in the early years by the left-press, *Libération* and *Le Monde*. Beginning in the mid-1980s, and increasingly thereafter, television news began featuring immigration stories more and more, overtaking the print press in the late 1980s.

⁴⁵Sources: Gastaut (1995), Bonnafous (1991), Data compiled by author from INA (French national television archives). While Figure 2 shows only *Le Monde*, combined French television (TF1, Antenne 2 and FR-3), and *Libération* and *Le Figaro* (from 1974-84), the years 1973, 1983 and 1991 were the three peak attention years for most of the French national media. Additional data is available from the author.

Figure 2: Immigration-related stories in Liberation, Le Monde, French television news and Le Figaro



Similar to the trajectory of the American news media, total French media attention to immigration increased markedly from the early 1970s to the early 1990s, though the level of attention, especially for the national press, was much higher even initially. The biggest wave of contemporary French immigration occurred from 1955-1965, preceding the United States by a full decade. Moreover, in contrast to the American case, actual immigration, including estimated illegal immigration, did not increase substantially during the period in which immigration became a "social problem" in media and political discourse. While the percentage of foreign-born residents in California *did* increase markedly from 1970 to 1990, from 8.8 to 21.7 percent of the population⁴⁶, the foreign-born population in France has held steady since the 1970s and even decreased slightly, dropping from 6.5 percent in 1975 to 6.3 percent in 1990 (Bernard 1993).⁴⁷

⁴⁶The fact that California immigration has been clearly higher yet the French political reaction to immigration has been much more vehement shows that raw levels of immigration and demographic transformations do not suffice to explain anti-immigration backlashes. As U.S. immigration scholar Douglas S. Massey recently noted, "What's amazing given the scale of immigration to California is how little reaction there has been" (Remarks to UC-Berkeley Department of Sociology colloquium, Berkeley, CA, April 22, 1999).

⁴⁷Even if one adds naturalized French citizens to "foreigners" (foreign-born), a broader measure of the "immigrant" population, there is no substantial increase: from 9.2 percent in 1975 to 9.4 percent in 1982 to 9.4 percent in 1990 (Bernard 1993: 49).

Unemployment began a long steady rise in France beginning in the early 1970s. The French government responded during this period by portraying immigration as a threat to French jobs and officially cut off legal immigration in 1974 (Ogden 1991) (though immigration, both legal and illegal, continued throughout the 1970s as spouses and families were allowed to rejoin workers already in France). It should also be noted that unemployment as a social problem is constituted in part by societal attitudes and state policies: the "unacceptably high" unemployment that first prompted the French cutoff of immigration was in fact "only" 2.8 percent, reached 8.3 percent in 1983 when the Front national first rose to national prominence and did not attain double-digits until 1985.⁴⁸ While relatively high unemployment was clearly an important contextual factor in facilitating anti-immigration public discourse, as in California, it does not explain those "critical discourse moments" (Gamson 1988 : 26) when immigration became a major public concern, nor the specific content of public debate which, as unemployment became chronic in France, has focused less and less on jobs.

During the 1970s, immigration became an increasingly visible and contentious public issue, but for the most part it was not the far-right but the far-left which drove the agenda. The events of May 1968 marked a definitive break, setting a "precedent for foreign worker protests and public articulation of demands upon the French government" (Miller 1981 : 85) (see also, (Weil 1991 : 507)(Aubry and Duhamel 1995 : 162-3).⁴⁹ On the extreme left, activists viewed immigrants as a politically important force for revolutionary change, for the very reason that they had not been integrated and co-opted

⁴⁸Since U.S. unemployment figures significantly undercount the actual unemployed by omitting the long-term unemployed, the differences in the raw level of unemployment that is felt to constitute a "crisis" differs even more substantially between France and the United States.

⁴⁹ Some of this groundwork had been laid before 1968, by such humanitarian organizations as FASTI (La Fédération des associations de soutien aux travailleurs immigrés), founded in 1966, MRAP (Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples), founded in 1949, CIMADE (Comité inter-mouvement auprès des évacués), founded in 1939, le LICRA (Ligue internationale contre le racisme et l'antisémitisme), founded in 1927, and le Ligue des Droits de l'Homme, the grandparent of all such anti-racist, humanitarian groups, created in 1898 in response to the Dreyfus affair.

by the system, that is had not become part of the labor union "aristocracy", nor had been co-opted by the moderate French communist party (PCF) (Miller 1981 : 4-5).

Immigrants provided a means for these small "gauchiste" groups to define themselves in opposition to the mainstream left opposition. At a time when more than a decade-and-a-half of uninterrupted right-wing rule gave an aura of respectability to any opposition movement, no matter how extreme, newspapers such as *Le Monde*, which remained sympathetic to the legacy of 1968, and *Libération*, which were a direct outgrowth of the May events, were able to sympathetically report and even promote the immigrants' cause even while enhancing their "independent" credentials.

Many analysts date the emergence of immigration as a major political issue to 1972 and 1973, during the months following the announcement and implementation of the Marcellin-Fontanet circulars, which established the principle linking immigration to work, and hence allowing for the expulsion of any foreigner unemployed for more than six months (Silverman 1992: 50, 56)(Wihl de Wenden 1988). The Fontanet circulars sparked hunger strikes in Paris, Lyon, Nice and other cities across France.

But media attention to these protests and in general to leftist attempts to highlight the immigration problem was highly selective. Left-leaning newspapers such as *Le Monde*, and in particular chief immigration reporter Jean Benoit, as well as the left-Catholic *La Croix*, covered these protests heavily (Battegay and Boubeker 1993)(Benoît 1980)(Carrère 1979). Immigration was a major focus of *Libération*, founded in 1973 by Jean-Paul Sartre, though during this period *Libé* was only a tiny radical newspaper, operated on a shoe-string budget and with a circulation of less than 30,000 (Samuelson 1979). But even for these "sympathetic" press outlets, immigrants were far more often the objects of discourse than subjects expressing their own views and experiences. *Le Monde* portrayed immigrants as exotic and culturally different, and immigrants were often "defended" as a "necessary evil" from an economic standpoint who should be treated justly and fairly only because they were performing a useful function for France

(Hourant et al. 1986). *Le Monde*, as well as the right press, made frequent reference during this period to what the "social scientists" (never specified) called the "limit of tolerance" to explain the "natural" native French reaction to the increasing presence of immigrants in their midst (Silverman 1992)(Favell 1998).⁵⁰

Le Figaro, *France-Soir* and other mainstream to conservative newspapers gave virtually no attention to these leftist protests, except when there was violence or direct conflicts between North African and "French" workers. Likewise, state-controlled television, in the hands of right-wing governments until 1981, also minimized attention to immigration (see Figure 2).

Anti-immigration activism also began in earnest in the 1970s.⁵¹ Although it drew on a number of monarchist, *poujadist*, and other anti-republicain traditions, France's current anti-immigration right is most immediately descended from an organization called *Ordre Nouveau*. This organization was founded in 1969, succeeding the extreme right *groupuscule* *Occident*, which was dissolved by the government on October 31, 1968. *Ordre Nouveau* was openly neo-fascist and maintained links to extreme right parties in Germany and Italy and counted some 2,000 followers, many of them university students, particularly at the University of Paris II (Assas).⁵² At the June 1972 national congress of *Ordre*

⁵⁰Favell (1998) argues, however, that during the 1970s "limit of tolerance" was defined instrumentally, as "an economic limit ... to the assured insertion of new immigrants" in contrast to the "exclusionary cultural or nationalist argument" it came to connote by the late 1980s.

⁵¹While immigrants became the targets of symbolic and often physical attacks almost as soon as they began arriving on French soil in the nineteenth century, the first major *anti*-immigrant wave is usually attributed to the 1920s and 1930s (Schor 1985). In the immediate post-World War II period, anti-immigrant political mobilization was stymied by the need to rebuild France's economy and a generalized desire among most French to put the far-right, racist Vichy regime behind them. Immigrants, at first mostly from Spain, Italy and Portugal, but by the mid-1950s increasingly from the north African Maghreb countries of Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco, were actively recruited by French government and businesses. During this early period, "immigrant workers" as they were called, were mostly socially segregated from other French. The Algerian war was also a major concern, and the free flow of Algerians into France was seen at the time as a way to legitimize and maintain French colonial rule over Algeria. It was in this context of economic growth and colonial war that the future leader of the Front national, Jean-Marie Le Pen, could say of the Algerians "not that they need France, but that France needs them" (28 January 1958, cited in Ogden 1991: 294).

⁵²This brief history of the founding of *Ordre Nouveau* and its relation to the Front national draws on the discussion in Mayer (1996), Aubry and Duhamel (1995), Freeman (1979) and Brigouleix (1977).

Nouveau, Francois Brigneau, editor of the far right newspaper *Minute*, sought to expand Ordre Nouveau and other far-right groups into a unified "national front." Out of this effort was born the Front national on October 5, 1972, with Jean-Marie Le Pen as president, Brigneau as vice-president, and Alain Robert of Ordre Nouveau as general secretary (Aubry and Duhamel 1995 : 28, 104-8)(Freeman 1979)(Brigouleix 1977).

During these early years, and throughout the 1970s, the Front national gained few adherents and little public support or media attention. In the legislative elections of March 1973, the FN received only 2.3 percent of votes in those districts where it presented candidates. At *Le Monde*, which prided itself on its comprehensiveness, Bernard Brigouleix recalls how he took over the "far right" beat from veteran Noel Bergereux, the assistant political editor. At the time the Front national and other far right groups were so small and politically insignificant that Brigouleix considered his task to be like that of "an etymologist... I treated them like an insect to be dissected."⁵³

In the context of pro-immigrant agitation on the left, Ordre Nouveau and other far-right groups thus did not invent the immigration "problem," but rather sought to reconstruct its meaning away from the injustices suffered by immigrants to the "threat" which uncontrolled immigration posed to public order and economic security. Ordre Nouveau held a large public meeting in Paris in June of 1973 in order to protest against "*immigration sauvage*," prompting a gauchiste counter-demonstration which ultimately resulted in several police officers injured and the banning of both Ordre Nouveau and the far left Ligue Communiste. Brigouleix recalls and scholars concur that this was the first major anti-immigration protest in post-World War II France. Yet what stands out from an analysis of the press coverage of the event at the time is how largely unsuccessful the Ordre Nouveau was in advertising its anti-immigrant stance. Of *Le Monde's* 19 stories in the immediate aftermath of the Ordre Nouveau meeting and the Ligue Communiste counter-protest, only

⁵³Author interview of Bernard Brigouleix, Paris, October 16, 1998.

two headlines contained any mention of immigration or immigrants, the ostensible theme of the meeting. *Le Figaro* paid far less attention to the event and none of the headlines of its three stories prior to the two groups' dissolution (nor afterward) mentioned *Ordre Nouveau's* campaign against "immigration sauvage."

But other factors were also at work, at least at *Le Monde*. Brigouleix recalls that there was a conscious decision not to play up the immigration issue: "In our reporting on *Ordre Nouveau*, we didn't emphasize immigration because we felt that would be like waving a red flag ... France was still prosperous at that time, not many unemployed and France needed the [foreign] laborers." Immigration, like domestic issues in general, were also generally considered less prestigious and significant than foreign news at *Le Monde* during this period. While *Le Figaro* and most of the Parisian daily press played up the protest with dramatic page one photos of protesters and police clashing, *Le Monde's* first dispatch about the event was a tiny notice on the front page titled "The *Ordre Nouveau* Meeting" with even smaller type underneath, "Sixteen police hospitalized after clashes with counter-demonstrators." On television, only a handful for the numerous stories on the march mentioned *Ordre Nouveau's* anti-immigration message. In part, this was probably due to the documented tendency of news media to focus on the disruption of a protest rather than its intended message (Gitlin 1980).

As in California, overall French media attention to immigration was relatively low as long as the general focus was on the problems of immigrants themselves or the purely economic problems allegedly caused by immigrants. An economic framing, while possessing the dramatic qualities valued by media organizations, also was highly sensitive and called attention to business practices and broad macro-economic policies that are rarely challenged by the mainstream media (even, in this case, by the "left" *Le Monde*, *La Croix* and *Le Nouvel Observateur*). For this reason, even though state television tended to downplay immigration in order to insulate right governments, a commercial television system would have likely done the same (as we saw in the case of the United States). The right-

governments of Pompidou and Giscard d'Estaing pursued a dual policy strategy of limiting further immigration and assuring the "insertion" of those immigrants already in France. Insertion was less a coherent policy, than an ensemble of ad hoc practical, often localized, solutions to the increasing presence of immigrants in France, a "sub-set of general state social policy on welfare and political economy" (Favell 1998). Policies shifted back and forth between punitive approaches (deportations, etc.) and social welfare improvements (better housing, worker rights, etc.), but right governments' primary aims were to depoliticize the issue and keep it within the realm of the "technical" bureaucratic oversight and ultimately out of the media.

Beurs, Dreux and the rise of the Front national

For more than a decade the extreme right had been marginalized in the political field, and for similar reasons, in the political and academic/intellectual fields. The game, as it were, had been played to the left, with Valéry Giscard d'Estaing maintaining his narrow 1974 majority only by constantly covering his left flank. But the victory of socialist François Mitterrand in 1981 forced a complete re-arrangement of power and discourse in the political, media and intellectual fields. For the first time since the 1930s, the left was indisputably in power in France.

During the first two years of the socialist government, there was a general flourishing of leftist alternative political action, including not only the traditional economic left, but increasingly an identity politics left similar to that in the United States that was in part the legacy of the 1968 student protests. When the local PCF secretary opposed the building of an Islamic center in Rennes on the basis of the republican tradition of separation of church and state in 1981, the PS mayor responded that "*la laïcité* consists in respecting differences and in giving to everyone the possibility to live his or her culture" (*Le Monde*, January 11-12, 1981). And in a story on immigrants in schools (*Le Monde*, May 7, 1981),

an educational researcher is quoted: "Sometimes there is as much difference between the culture of the poor and the culture of the privileged as there is between French culture -- which doesn't exist anyway -- and immigrant culture." One of the earliest appearances of the famed slogan "Le droit à la différence," appearing in the April 7, 1981 edition of *Le Monde*, concerned not immigrants, but gay activists. However, the marchers linked their cause explicitly with those of Maghrebin immigrants and Jews: "Anti-arabes, anti-sémites, anti-homosexuels même racisme." This so-called "right to be different" movement never gained the prominence or power that was later attributed to it by both left-wing and right-wing critics later in the decade.⁵⁴

From 1981 to 1983, the increasing interest in the cultural aspects of immigration, the valorization of cultural difference, and the promotion of grassroots social movements can be linked to *Libé*'s influential "model" of covering alternative lifestyles and cultures.⁵⁵ *Libé*'s "ex-gauchiste" journalists were mostly only too ready to promote "cultural" over "economic" politics, including the celebration of immigrant identity politics and cultural difference.⁵⁶

In part to distinguish itself from *Libé* which was rapidly gaining circulation at its expense (Kuhn 1995), *Le Monde* increasingly allied itself with Jacobin left intellectuals.⁵⁷ Some analysts have argued that the automobile worker strikes of 1982 and 1983, during

⁵⁴The slogan "right to be different" was also linked to state policies allowing greater regional autonomy which had begun under Giscard d'Estaing and were promoted by Jack Lang and other socialist ministers once Mitterrand came to power.

⁵⁵During the early to mid-1980s, *Libération* had close and sympathetic relations with a number of grassroots immigrant groups, as well as the immigrant/second generation newspaper *Sans Frontière* (Author interviews with Driss El Yazimi, former *Sans Frontière* editor, Paris, 1997 and Eric Favereau, *Libération* reporter, 1997.)

⁵⁶Interview with Eric Dupin, *Libération* reporter, by Phillipe Juhem, 1994. Interview transcript made available to the author.

⁵⁷Bourdieu argues that this emerging intellectual/journalistic left "Jacobin" front also included the journals *Le Débat*, *L'Esprit*, *Commentaire* and eventually, *Le Nouvel Observateur*. Michel Wieviorka offers a similar explanation of the important role played by Debray and other left-Jacobin intellectuals in creating a new ideological consensus. *Le Monde Diplomatique* journalist Serge Halimi stresses the opposite role played by *Libération* during this period in promoting multiculturalism. (All from 1997 interviews conducted by the author.)

which a minority of immigrant strikers rallied around their Islamic identity, marked a crucial turning point. *Le Monde's* coverage of the strikes (6 December 1982) linked immigrant activism with the legacies of May 1968. The most unfortunate legacy, according to the story, is the "blossoming of the right to be different" (quoting Mitterrand confidante Régis Debray) which leads to the "communion of the excluded" and the "sacralization of particularisms." During 1983, *Le Monde* articles and opinion pieces increasingly grappled with the meaning of a republican alternative to this valorization of differences. For instance, the newspaper (23 August 1983) published a two-part series by EHESS researcher Michel Tibon-Cornillot, headlined "Le défi de l'immigration maghrébine," where a new definition of the proper place for cultural difference was clearly articulated: The French model, as opposed to the American model, allows differences as long as they are not explicitly stated. Tibon-Cornillot concluded by advocating a new policy of state intervention which preserves "diverse cultures" but does not make the mistake of treating different groups differently or else "risk creating a situation close to that of black Americans."

From October to December of 1983, the nascent "beur" movement launched its first "march for equality."⁵⁸ Many commentators have described this event as the clearest expression of the "right to be different." Within the movement, however, the march took on several meanings. The radical priest Christian Delorme, when asked what the marchers intended by their action, replied simply "A France fraternal" and spoke of how the marchers had been inspired by the models of Martin Luther King and Mohatma Gandhi (*Temoignage Chretien*, 7-13 November 1983). Included in the march's demands was the "the right to expression of minority cultures," but it was not signaled out as the purpose of the march. *La Croix* and *Le Monde*, which provided the earliest coverage of the march and helped to legitimate it as an important event, emphasized Catholic sponsorship and universalistic human rights themes (Battegay and Boubeker 1993).

⁵⁸Beur was a French slang term of the time which referred to second generation North African immigrant youths, most of them French citizens.

The overall increase in attention to the immigration issue and its dramatization also owes in part to the economic difficulties experienced by much of the print press during the early 1980s. Paradoxically, as media outlets were less and less allied with any particular political faction, commercial pressures led them to increase their overall coverage of immigration and dramatize the issue in ways that served the particular political interests of the right and far-right. For example, competition between the major Paris press prompted the launching during the early 1980s of regional versions, such as *Lyon-Libération*, *Lyon Figaro* and *Le Monde Rhône-Alpes* (Battegay 1992). These regional versions helped promote immigration as a national issue in two ways. First, the need for the Paris regional-version papers to mark their difference with the existing regional papers led them to seek out and "nationalize" local news. Thus, incidents which formerly may have remained local (such as the youth riots or "rodeos" in Lyon suburbs or *banlieues*) suddenly were framed by the Paris regional-version papers as the early signs of a new national trend. Second, the regional journalists working for the Paris-regional newspapers were on the look-out for ways to increase the significance and status of regional news, traditionally much less highly valued in the Paris-centered news system. Again, by promoting immigration as an emerging national issue, these reporters were able to get more of their stories in the Paris newspapers and audiovisual media, and thus served to magnify immigration's importance as a topic of debate in the national public sphere.

By 1983, Mitterrand's economic socialist program was in full-scale retreat toward "realism." The retreat was hardest on the communist party which had had the most to lose in joining the socialist government. The PCF's inevitable compromises had disillusioned its working-class base which turned increasingly to the populist, far-right alternative offered by Jean-Marie Le Pen's Front national. In part to counter the increasing defections, local community party officials took increasingly strident anti-immigration positions, for example opposing any increases of foreigners in public housing (Singer 1991)(Silver 1993)(Favell 1998).

Inside the political field, and in the field of social classes, political power and the positions linked to them were thus gradually made fragile and open to transformation. But the transformation did not become evident, or indeed was not recognized and consecrated as an actual power shift, until something significant and indisputably public *happened*. There needed to be an event that crystallized and expressed the transformation (Sewell 1991). And for the new public discourse of immigration as threat, and of immigrants themselves as threats, that event for France was Dreux.

To this day, French journalists, politicians and scholars debate what happened at Dreux (Ignazi 1996:65, 77-78) (Ysmal 1996:107)(Taguieff 1996:196). In the face of the long political ascension of the Front national and the opportunity presented to it by the collapse of the left, it is difficult to support any thesis that the media *made* the Front national and thus the scapegoating of immigration into a national debate. But of course the choice need not be either-or. Clearly, the French news media were present at the "public" baptism of the Front national that was Dreux and in their intricate relations to the political and intellectual fields, shaped the meaning of this event and thus the future of the immigration public debate in France.⁵⁹

Even before the September election day, the news media were preparing for a big story in Dreux. *Libération* sent several special correspondents. *Le Monde* was there. But perhaps most importantly television was there in force. In 1983, French television, though still ultimately state-controlled, had been divided into two competing channels, TF 1 and Antenne 2, since the early years of the Giscard administration. Under Mitterrand, there had been a further opening up of the "audiovisual" sector and the promise of even greater

⁵⁹Whether or not the media were more or less influential in shaping the immigration public debate in France than in the United States, it is clear that the French have been more aware and self-conscious of the media's role as a political actor. During the 1980s and 1990s, French journalists and academics held a series of forums on "*les médias et l'immigration*," while no such forums have yet been held in the United States.

autonomy (Nel 1988 : 61-62).⁶⁰ Whereas *Le Monde*, in its desire for comprehensiveness, had designated a reporter to cover the Front national (usually in combination with other political parties) since the 1960s, television news did not pay much attention to the Front national until the early 1980s. At Antenne 2, Pierre Allain became the first television reporter to be "accredited" to cover the FN only in 1982.⁶¹ With Dreux, French television found a reason to cover the far right far more extensively.

Expectations were high that the Front national would do well in the election, well enough in all probability to force the mainstream right to form an alliance in order to win in the likely second round. Antenne 2 decided to transmit the results from Dreux "direct," not a common occurrence in those years since the channel did not yet have satellite technology. "Direct" thus meant that temporary transmitters had to be set up between Paris and Dreux, some 40 miles distance, a technological achievement requiring at the time the work of more than 50 technicians. If Dreux had not been so close to Paris, and if Antenne 2 had not chosen to go "direct," amplifying the event's significance, Dreux the municipal election may in fact not have become Dreux the myth, Dreux the beginning of the Front national's long inexorable rise in French politics -- which is not to say that some other "media event" might not have occurred later to launch the FN as a significant national political actor.

In the French national newspaper field, the rise of *Libération* also clearly made a difference in the *mediatization* of Dreux. Throughout the 1970s, *Libé* had existed only at the margins of the "legitimate" press. Its circulation, still only some 50,000 to 60,000 in 1981, had been strictly limited to students, intellectuals and far-left political activists (Scriven 1993). At *Libération*, according to former *Libé* reporter Veronique Brocard, "there was a sense that journalists and readers were part of the same community. We felt

⁶⁰The law of July 29, 1992 notably affirmed for the first time liberty for "audiovisual" communication, ending in principle the state television monopoly. It also created a new organization to oversee television, the "High Authority" to serve as an institutional buffer between the state and television, public or private.

⁶¹The following paragraphs are based in part on the author's interview with Pierre Allain, former reporter and now a news director at France 2 (the renamed Antenne 2), Paris, October 7, 1998.

that we were outside the journalistic field."⁶² This self-marginalization had begun to change in 1983, as a number of circumstances served to move *Libération* into the center of national media and politics, chief among them the decline of both *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro* as the indisputably dominant national newspapers. *Le Figaro*, recently purchased by the media mogul Robert Hersant, declined in journalistic credibility and prestige during this period. During the early 1980s, *Le Monde* encountered severe financial difficulties, and its intellectual and professional clout (that is, its reputation for objectivity) within the field were compromised by its close association with the new socialist president. In contrast, after the initiation of its "new (commercial) formula" in 1981, with a splashy graphic style and a push to be at the leading edge of French cultural and artistic life, *Libé* had captured both the public's and the Élysée's imagination. *Libé*'s influence extended further to television, where it soon became the most-read paper among television journalists (and remains reportedly so to this day). *Libération* published far more stories on Dreux than any of the other national newspapers. And its intensive coverage, magnified by its style of featuring only a handful of key stories on its "tabloid-style" front cover, no doubt contributed to the sense of importance and doom accorded Dreux.⁶³

Scholars often explain the rejection of a French version of "multiculturalism" as the *natural* reaction of the left in the face of the Front national's increasing electoral success during the mid-1980s (Aubry and Duhamel 1995)(Mayer and Perrineau 1996). This scholarly reconstruction of Dreux's immediate impact is inaccurate, first because the backlash against the "right to be different" had already begun well before Dreux and before Le Pen's 1982 claim in *Le Monde* that "it is our duty to affirm our national personality and, us too, our right to be different."⁶⁴ It is also inaccurate because the Socialist party, the bear

⁶²Interview with Veronique Brocard, *Télérama*, Paris, October 15, 1998.

⁶³Taguieff (1996: 196), however, emphasizes the crucial role played by *Le Monde* in diabolizing and marginalizing the Front national as the "extreme" right.

⁶⁴Le Pen quoted in Alain Rollat, *Le Monde*, September 21, 1983, cited in Guiraudon (1997).

movement and its anti-racist descendants, and even the media⁶⁵ did not immediately reject the politics of diversity. Rather until at least the mid-1980s, the anti-racist movement that arose in opposition to the Front national, sponsored in part by the Socialist government, promoted a complex discourse that included both multiculturalist and universalistic claims while attempting to draw attention to the extremist, racist nature of the Front national.

Republican consolidation: Immigration and the project of national culture

The French media's role, particularly television, in amplifying and promoting the rise of the Le Pen and the Front national, are the stuff of endless debates and conspiracy theories in France. François Mitterrand is credited with personally urging the director of Antenne 2 to invite Le Pen on to the prominent news interview show, *L'Heure de Vérité* (Faux et al. 1994). This action, along with Mitterrand's unilateral (though temporary) institution of proportional representation in the French national assembly, are taken as proof that Mitterrand "created" the Front national. Clearly, the socialist president took advantage and promoted splits in the right opposition. But the efforts of politicians and journalists acting without cynicism or collusion were at least as important in promoting Le Pen. *Le Monde* and *Libération*, as well as *Le Nouvel Observateur*, and a whole range of left associations, came to define their identities and their missions increasingly in terms of opposing the Front national. The threat, of course, was real. The Front national represents an extremist, anti-democratic political current that is for all practical purposes absent in the American political field. But the FN's rise both reflected and served to deflect attention away from the deeper causes of the anti-immigration backlash, that is,

⁶⁵In November 1983, two months after the Front national's breakthrough at Dreux, TF 1 president Hervé Bourges explained his hopes to show the French public that "we live in a pluricultural society" where "we laugh, sing and cry together" (from Philippe Gavi, "Hervé Bourges: 'Je ne laisserai pas filer l'audience de TF 1'; Dans une réception qu'il a donnée jeudi dernier, le P.D.G. de la première chaîne a fait appel à la capacité d'innovation des producteurs et des réalisateurs. Mais, en matière de programmation, TF 1 aura du mal à surmonter des handicap," *Libération*, November 5-6, 1983, p. 17).

the reconfiguration of the political and media fields occasioned by the election of a left government and its subsequent compromises and failures.

From 1984 through at least 1989, the French immigration debate attained a new degree of dramatic clarity pitting the "evil" but telegenic Jean-Marie Le Pen against the "*génération morale*" (Joffrin 1987) of the anti-racist social movement SOS-Racisme, backed by the Socialist party and other left and anti-racist organizations. But it was clearly Le Pen that was driving both the conflict and the media's interest. Television stories on Le Pen and the Front national increased from 50 in 1983 to 127 in 1984, 357 in 1987, and 765 in 1988.⁶⁶ This increase in television attention accorded with the FN's repeated electoral successes during this period, and its increasing capacity to hold the balance of votes needed by the mainstream right. But this extraordinary amount of attention was also driven by other factors, linked to the increasing commercialization of television during this period. In short, Le Pen was dramatic television that attracted extremely high ratings. For example, for the prominent news magazine *L'Heure de vérité*, Le Pen attracted the highest audience share of any political figure appearing on the show: 32.1 percent in October 1985 versus the previous high of 23 percent for François Mitterrand (Nel 1988:170).⁶⁷

By contrast, the anti-racist organization SOS-Racisme, which first emerged in late 1984, was mentioned in 55 television stories in 1985 and decreasing numbers thereafter: 33 in 1986, 26 in 1987 and 39 in 1988, only a small fraction of the attention accorded the Front national. Among the French national press, SOS-Racisme was covered, even promoted, most heavily by *Libération*, the socialist party daily *Le Matin*, and to a lesser extent, much more hesitantly and ambivalently by *Le Monde* (Juhem 1998).⁶⁸ *Le Monde's*

⁶⁶All figures on immigration-related television stories are my own, compiled from the computer data base at INA, the French national television archives.

⁶⁷*L'Heure de vérité* began broadcasting on May 20, 1982. Le Pen received a 17.4 percent audience in February 1984, his first appearance on the show (Nel 1988 :69, 170]

⁶⁸According to Juhem (1998), *Libération* published from 29 percent to 39 percent of all the stories published by the French national press (including dailies and weeklies) from 1985 to 1989. *Le Matin*

hesitation was dictated more by its professional position and self-image as the "newspaper of record" less fascinated by "fashions" than *Libération*. Moreover, *Le Monde's* internal organization of "beats" (*rubriques*) revolved around established institutions (Padioleau 1985): Editors simply did not know where to fit "social movements" such as SOS-Racisme into their institutional framework of news. But for many of *Le Monde's* top editors, there was an ideological component to their reticence toward SOS-Racisme. Since the newspaper's founding, *Le Monde* had joined its "seriousness" with humanist ideals which though leaning toward left-wing causes had always been tempered by Catholic universalism (Thibau 1996)(Juhem 1998). Staunch Catholic editors such as Robert Solé thus viewed SOS-Racisme's "differentialist" tendencies with suspicion and this critical view appeared more and more in front-page commentaries.

When the socialist party lost its control of the General Assembly in 1986, Jacobin left intellectuals, politicians and journalists saw the need, and the opportunity, to put distance between the left and SOS-Racisme's soft "pluri-cultural" brand of anti-racist activism. A number of intellectuals, such as Pierre-André Taguieff, Luc Ferry and Alain Finkielkraut, began publishing books that sharply criticized multicultural anti-racism for not only aiding the rise of the far right, but of playing, in reverse, with the same dangerous racist ideas.⁶⁹ This intellectual and political revival of republicanism, though immediately occasioned by the rise of both SOS-Racisme and the Front national, was a response necessitated by a number of national and international forces challenging the

published the most stories initially, 32 percent in 1985, reflecting no doubt the socialist party's support of SOS-Racisme as a way to embarrass the mainstream right and link it to the "racist" Front national. By 1988, *Le Matin* had folded and likewise the socialist party's enthusiasm for SOS had much dissipated. *Le Monde's* coverage of SOS-Racisme, reflecting its general "reserve" toward the stories "a la mode", published from 16 to 30 percent of annual stories devoted to SOS-Racisme from 1985 to 1988, but during most of these years published about half as many articles, as a percentage of the total, as *Libération*.

⁶⁹Taguieff began writing of how SOS-Racisme and other anti-racist groups, by adopting a "differentialist" defense of multiculturalism, shared the same "racist" logic as the Front national in a number of articles, and in books that received a great deal of press attention: *La Force du préjugé* (1988) and *Face au racisme* (1991).

supremacy of the French centralized state (Favell 1998): the threat from "above" posed by the European union, the threat from below of regionalist movements in Corsica and Brittany, and growing financial difficulties in maintaining the social welfare state, linked to chronic long-term unemployment and stagnant economic growth. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, *republikain* intellectuals also constructed exaggerated counter-models of American and British multiculturalism and ethnic strife, lumped together as the "modèle anglo-saxon," as the unsavory alternative to the French model of *intégration*.

Whether or not SOS-Racisme "anti-racism" was just as racist as the Front national, Favell (1998) argues that both the new left anti-racist movement and the "extreme right" posed fundamental challenges to the power of France's centralized governmental and intellectual establishment, and its attempts to depoliticize immigration. The Front national's challenge drew on the lingering remnants of pre-Revolution monarchist traditions of France, myths of France's "Gallic" and Catholic cultural heritage and provincial and lower-middle class dislike of Parisian elites, combined with anti-Semitic and other chauvinistic attitudes discredited by Vichy but still widespread among certain sectors of the French population. On the other side, the cultural pluralist movement represented by SOS-Racisme and its allies, was linked both to leftist intellectual movements of the 1960s and 1970s and to the simple recognition of France's increasing ethnic diversity, but also to educational and social welfare bureaucrats whose special targeting of benefits and programs toward immigrants and immigrant associations had become a target of ridicule and resentment.

The mid-1980s were thus a period in which both the mainstream left and right experimented with various solutions to the increasing politicization of immigration and the threat it posed to the French centralized state, with the left continuing to support some version of cultural pluralism and the right veering closer to the cultural chauvinism of the Front national. Favell (1998) suggests that the key turning point was the widespread protests and negative media attention that followed in the wake of

conservative Prime Minister Jacques Chirac's attempt to put in place a harsh new restrictions on the attainment of French nationality. Chirac was forced to back down and established the first Commission de la Nationalité to work out a comprehensive policy toward immigration, integration and citizenship. The work of this commission and the later-formed Haut Conseil à l'Intégration received heavy and sustained media coverage, and were instrumental in legitimating a new national consensus around the need for integration, defined somewhat ambiguously to include a mixture of political, social and cultural elements.

While Favell's analysis seems accurate to me, he pays little attention to the role played by the news media during this period, which was undergoing a dramatic transformation related to the privatization of national television. During the mid- and late-1980s, the state dramatically transformed the media field through the privatization of TF 1 (in 1987) and the creation of several new commercial channels (Canal +, followed by M6 and La Cinq). Whereas Antenne 2 had dominated TF 1 in 1983, by 1991 TF 1's overall audience share of 42.3 percent was nearly twice that of Antenne 2's (Cortade 1993 : 17, 28). While the daily press had revived somewhat since its low point of the early 1980s, the creation of a wholly private TF 1 siphoned off advertising dollars, readers, and the attention of political elites (Péan and Nick 1997). By 1991, TF 1 had become the dominant "consecrating" power in the French news media field, able to define what was newsworthy and what was not, and to force the rest of the press, even *Le Monde*, to follow suit.⁷⁰

The Front national was one beneficiary of TF 1's increasing dominance. During the 1980s, TF 1's coverage of the FN was consistently heavier than that of Antenne 2, and this gap accelerated after TF 1's privatization. Another effect, related not only to TF 1 but to increased commercial pressures across the French media field, was increasing ideological

⁷⁰Bourdieu uses the metaphor of Einsteinian physics to express how power is expressed in a field: "The more a body has energy, the more it deforms the space around it. A very powerful agent in a field can deform all the space, force all the other space to organize itself around it" (1995: 26).

convergence. Competitive pressures which nationalized local immigration issues in 1983 had only increased by the late 1980s and early 1990s, helping to produce media and ultimately political crises around the wearing of Islamic veils in the public schools and youth unrest in the *banlieues* of Paris and Lyon. The depoliticization of the media field and commonly felt commercial pressures helped produce a new dominant media complex of *Le Monde-Libération-TF 1-Antenne 2*.⁷¹ This "closing in" upon itself of the media field, nourished by increasingly common educational and social backgrounds of journalists, greater mobility between the written press and television (Bourdieu 1998), and an increased sense of media professionalism, contributed to the production of public discourse that spoke less about the wider public's concerns than the concerns of an increasingly narrow circle of journalists, public policy experts and pollsters.

Conclusions: Immigration in the American and French media fields

The first purpose of the foregoing "field case studies" was to reconstruct the history of immigration public debates in the United States and France as debates in which journalists did not only "mirror" political and intellectual struggles, but were actors in those struggles who also contributed to and shaped the public discourse. The details of this journalistic-political negotiation are far more complex than what I have been able to sketch here, but hopefully these brief narrative histories suggest the importance of "bringing the media back in."

⁷¹*Le Figaro*, more than ever, was outside this charmed circle, its stories often ignored by the dominant media organs (Author interviews with *Le Monde* reporter Philippe Bernard, 1997 and *Libération* managing editor Laurent Joffrin, 1997). Though only anecdotal, it may be significant that when I visited the offices of *Libération*, televisions were scattered and on throughout the newsroom and in the editor's office. At *Le Figaro*, the television in the editor's office was off, and the editor claimed he never watched it. It should be noted, however, that *Figaro-Magazine* had become by the late 1980s and remains a vocal mouthpiece of the French right and respectable far-right. One of the major immigration news events of 1991 was launched when former president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing wrote an article for *Figaro-Magazine* warning of the danger of an immigrant "invasion."

A second purpose has been to theorize about the broader linkages between on the one hand evolving media structures, market forces, political and social movement struggles and on the other hand the dominant framings of the immigration public debate in each case. In both cases, immigration was initially framed as an economic or technical policy problem. Because an economic framing touches most directly on powerful political and economic interests in each society, and because economic left advocacy organizations tend to be ignored or discredited by mainstream media organizations, as long as immigration was conceptualized in primarily economic terms it remained only a minor problem on the public agenda. It is interesting to see that the media funding structure does not seem to make much difference for the coverage of macro-economic, trade and labor policies, that is in terms of their effects on ordinary citizens: During the 1970s and early 1980s, both the French state television and the American commercial networks gave minimal attention to immigration. Likewise, in both cases, as long as immigration policy was successfully framed by political and policy elites as a complex, technical problem, that is neither simple nor dramatic, news media organizations tended to pay less attention to immigration.

But in contrast to theories that emphasize how journalism favors dramatic, simple story-lines, I have tried to show, particularly in the American case, how drama and conflict alone are not enough to guarantee significant media attention. Previous research has established how the American news media ignores the potentially dramatic labor and economic justice framing of issues. I have suggested here that in the context of the target marketing revolution in American business and media, and the increasing hegemony of a multicultural orthodoxy in the American intellectual and journalistic fields, that the question of American national identity and culture, though a relatively simple and dramatic framing, has also become taboo. Instead, immigration came to be increasingly framed in "fiscal" terms, linked to the wider "war against the poor" in American political discourse. Most journalists themselves did not believe that immigrants were motivated to come to the United States to gain access to social services or that once here immigrants constituted a significant

drain on government coffers. Nevertheless, by failing to honestly and extensively interrogate the causes and consequences of U.S. trade and labor policies and global economic restructuring, journalists created an information "void" in which anti-immigrant scapegoating could seem a reasonable explanation for the problems many citizens faced. In addition, by seeing their responsibility as "airing out" this anti-immigrant anger and devoting significant reportorial resources to the Proposition 187 "campaign" (rather than searching for deeper explanations and causes), the news media, and in particular the *Los Angeles Times*, legitimized and promoted the "fiscal" framing.⁷²

In the French case, we saw a very different trajectory of public discourse about immigration. During the early 1980s, a French-style "multicultural" framing of immigration began to emerge. It was discredited, in part, because a far-right political party with no real equivalent in the United States, the Front national, was willing and able to turn "differentialist" arguments on their head and call for immigrants who were not willing to become "French" to simply go home (even of course when these "immigrants" had been born in France). While American ethnic/racial activists often accuse any advocates of immigration restriction of "racism," in the post civil-rights era not even the most virulent American anti-immigration activists have matched the xenophobic and racist statements of Le Pen and other Front national leaders. In other words, in the context of a political discursive field bounded by racist differentialism on the right and multicultural differentialism on the left, the assertion of civic integration or even cultural assimilation could emerge as a moderate, compromise position.

But I have also tried to show that other social oppositions also worked to move the French immigration debate toward a consensus on cultural and political integration: during the early 1980s, the struggle for journalistic dominance between the Catholic, integrationist

⁷²The *Los Angeles Times* and most other southern California and national news organizations opposed Proposition 187 in editorials. But the simplistic drama featured on the front pages clearly had far more effect than the occasional thoughtful analyses on the editorial pages.

Le Monde and the libertarian, lifestyle leftist *Libération*; and during the late 1980s, the increasing influence of a single national commercial television channel that featured stories on Le Pen nearly every day, thus exaggerating his importance and his capacity to set the boundaries of public debate.

Other factors related to the French media field played a role in constructing the public debate. Despite increasing market pressures, the leading French national press outlets are not publicly traded nor nearly as reliant on advertising revenues and thus target marketing pressures. Thus, to date, the French media, even commercial television, have not faced the same pressures as exist in the United States to reflect and re-shape the national community as a fragmented network of lifestyle communities.

French intellectuals and policy elites who sought to reframe the immigration debate around integration also benefited from a closer, and different kind of relationship to the news media than exists in the United States: Whereas U.S. academics are called upon to offer one- or two-sentence sound bite quotes for stories that resolutely refuse to take any position and generally leave the impression that one idea is as good as another, or that ideas themselves are suspect, French intellectuals were allowed to develop their ideas at length in the pages of major national newspapers. These ideas were then commented upon seriously by journalists not inhibited by professional strictures admonishing a strict separation of fact and opinion.⁷³ In addition, the defense of national unity by French journalists, politicians and intellectuals seems to have been driven, at least in part, by a desire to maintain a French "difference" vis-à-vis their conception of "Anglo-American" societies.⁷⁴

⁷³It may be that multiculturalism has found such a ready audience in American newspapers because its relativist, anti-intellectualist posture fits in well with journalists' own anti-intellectual predilections. Multiculturalism is not so much a position in a debate, as the refusal to take part in a debate with others in order to reach a consensus. In this sense, American-style news stories have long been multiculturalist in "form" in that they generally consist of unconnected fragments of ideas. Rather than attempt to draw conclusions from the confusing welter of information, reporters "leave it up to the reader" to make sense of it all (from interview with *Los Angeles Times* reporter, March 1998).

⁷⁴ As global market pressures increase and/or if national intellectuals critical of American society lose sway, we may see in the future a breakdown of the French "integration" consensus. For a sense of how multiculturalism and identity politics has begun to re-enter the French political debate, as a not entirely

One implication of this study, I would suggest, is that while the French framing of immigration in terms of integration has not always worked to the benefit of immigrants, it has helped to *prevent* the kind of anti-welfare backlash and generalized *policy* war against the poor and immigrants that has occurred in the United States.

negative political path, see Michel Weivorka, et al., *Une société fragmentée? Le multiculturalisme en débat* (Paris: Editions La Découverte, 1996)

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Current immigration rates are nowhere near the levels that should cause concern about immigrant cultures overwhelming or supplanting existing American cultural norms. The current round of debate about immigration has been toxic, but not nearly as toxic as it can get, and in fact will get if we follow the historic American precedent. Both those skeptical of immigration, and advocates for higher immigration, would be well-served by fitting their concerns to the actual historical record. See my previous post, announcing my new Podcast and presenting my recent foray into historical research. If you like this post and want to see more research like it, I'd love for you to share it on Twitter or Facebook. Debating Immigration - edited by Carol M. Swain April 2007. This seemed normal to me as a financial journalist. But it was apparently shocking to political journalists and pundits (and politicians, although they, of course, are excused from not participating in such ivory tower debates). They actively resisted it even (in fact, especially) those working for newspapers nominally concerned with business and economics, particularly the Wall Street Journal. Indeed, to this day, the public debate about the economics of immigration simply does not reflect the professional consensus among labor economists, although this consensus has only strengthened over