

**THE ROLE OF ETHNIC DISCRIMINATION IN RADICALIZATION FOR  
MOROCCAN IMMIGRANTS IN FRANCE**

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by

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## ABSTRACT

The Role of Ethnic Discrimination in Radicalization for Moroccan Immigrants in France

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An increase in major terrorist events in Europe over the past decade has shifted the reality for Muslims in Western Europe—and not for the better. The 2015 Paris attacks and the 2016 Nice truck attack have refocused attention on people’s origins as a place of blame rather than examining the internal factors that may have contributed to their individual radical actions. Moroccans, one of the largest immigrant populations in Western Europe, are consequently one of the largest Arab populations to have been affected by the policy and attitude changes in response to these events. The French secularist policy, *laïcité*, has long faced criticism for its prejudices against Muslim populations. Through new research, I show the presence of a potential connection between ethnic discrimination and radicalization through the application of the reactive ethnicity theory as a theoretical framework. The understanding of collective ethnic identity formations through the lens of various psychologists such as Jean Phinney, Ruben

Rumbaut, and Henri Tajfel allow for a deeper comprehension of the importance of identity to examine the reasoning behind certain behaviors, such as the inherent favoritism of people within same groupings. Understanding how people come to view themselves opens a possible explanation for why they behave the way they do. Identity is very entwined with behavioral actions (Simons 2021) The pertinence of identity in relation to radicalism is explained by examining the process of radicalization through research experts such as psychologist Bertjan Doosje et al., and political scientist Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen. However, these studies were independent of each other and did not attempt to connect the relationship of ethnic identity and radicalism through the lens of reactive ethnic identity. The research conducted for this thesis strongly suggests that a discriminatory environment, such as that facilitated by the *laïcité*, results in an ethnic identity deemed ‘reactive ethnicity’. Along with examining reactive ethnicity as a concept, this piece delves into the process of radicalization in Europe by examining the Moroccan immigrant population in discriminatory contexts in order to facilitate a deeper understanding of the complexities that motivate radicalism.

## **DEDICATION**

*To my friends, families, instructors, peers, and colleagues who supported me throughout the research process.*

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## **NOMENCLATURE**

Fraternal Relative Deprivation is a theory that evaluates “the feeling of injustice that people experience when they identify with their group and perceive that their group has been treated worse than another group” (Doosje et al, 2015).

Ethnoreligious is an identity classification that refers to a group of people unified by a common ethnicity and religion.

Reactive ethnicity is the reinforcement of an ethnic identity “in the face of perceived threats, persecution, discrimination, and exclusion” (Rumbaut 110).



## INTRODUCTION

France has historically been religiously intolerant, specifically towards Muslims, and these migrants formed the new generation of people hurt by French actions. This paper examines the role of ethnic discrimination as a factor of influence for participation in radical activities such as Islamic extremism and terrorist activities. With the resurgence of radical actions across Europe, it has sparked a new focus on people's places of origin which has resulted in a further increase of stereotyping someone as a particular ethnicity. International media outlets frequently place an emphasis on "place of origin" or "descendent" and neglect to reflect the fact that many of the actors were nationals of the nation that they attacked (BBC, 2016). I analyze the experiences of Moroccan immigrants and descendants in France to show some of the key realities of identity development in the midst of discrimination that contribute towards antagonism to the French state and society. Through examination of controversial French policies as well as analysis of ethno-religious identity formation and previously researched radicalization models, my research reveals a possible connection between ethnic discrimination and radical beliefs.

France has a longstanding history of imperialism across the globe, notably in the North African regions. Morocco itself was under a French Protectorate from 1912 until 1956. A relationship formed in this manner fashions a close relationship politically, economically, and socially. A 2018 study found that the countries with deep ties to France contribute the most to their immigration population; Moroccans being the second most populous immigrant group, making up nearly 20% of the immigration population (Boubtane, 2022). There are two major

events that resulted in a massive influx of North African immigrants to France; the decolonization of French colonies and the Arab Spring.

The 1990's was once a period where terrorists would consider France to be a "safe-haven" to recruit and develop radical ideas. One such example is the infamous Roubaix gang, a terrorist cell associated with Al-Qaeda. Members were "native-born French citizens and second-generation French North Africans who had converted to radical Islam in France" (Shapiro and Suzan, 2003). It is important to note that France has among the highest number of terrorist events amongst other European nations (2015 Global Terrorism Index). The year 2015 proved to be a turning point in the number of terrorist attacks in France that contain several attacks that contribute to this statistic. An attack at the office of the satirical weekly magazine, *Charlie Hebdo*, in January 2015 killed 11 people and was conducted by Saïd and Chérif Kouichi who pledged their allegiance to Al-Qaeda (*Le Monde*, 2015). The brothers were Algerian-French. Less than 48 hours later, another attack at a Kosher supermarket by Amedy Coulibaly resulted in the death of six people (*France 24*, 2020). This time, the attacker was Malian-French. Despite not being Moroccans themselves, these attackers display that radical actions transcend ethnic identities as well as national identities. The attackers' North African ancestry is enough to assign certain labels to the North Africans living in France, especially Moroccans, which creates the necessary conditions for reactive identity formation. Later in November 2015, France suffered their worst terrorist attack since World War II. A series of coordinated fatal strikes all over the 10th and 11th municipal districts of Paris (arrondissements) killed approximately 130 people and injured over 400 (*PBS*, 2021). The historical theater, Bataclan, was the site of the deadliest attack with 89 people killed and countless others injured. The Islamic State of the Levant (ISIL) also claimed credit for this attack and its attackers possessed national identities of French and Belgian

with ethnic ties to Algeria or Morocco. The Paris attacks were a defining moment for the perception of Arabs and Muslims in France by the French population.

By the end of 2015, France had drastically increased their military operations at ISIL strongholds in both Syria and Iraq, implemented Operation Barkhane to address counterinsurgency movements in the North African region as well as intensified their domestic policy in regard to religious expression. These events as well as France's imperialistic past start to illustrate why there is dissension between the French government and North African immigrants.

Research analysis of the connection between ethnic discrimination and the observation of a radical ideology is performed on the Moroccan immigrant population in France in a case study manner; Moroccans are the second largest immigrant population in France (European Commission). My research reveals a possible connection between ethnic discrimination and radical views from the basis of ethnoreligious identity formation and previously researched radicalization models. This paper also further explores the deeper reason behind France's strict secular policy and the possibility of it stemming from fear. In the first section, I discuss the French policies for dealing with radicalization within its society. After that, I explore the connections between these policies and the factors that lead to the formation of reactive identities. Then I apply those observations to the Moroccan diaspora context in France to illustrate the ways in which radicalization can develop through dynamics of discrimination and reactive identity. At the end of the discussion, I clarify the factors that show a link between discrimination and radicalization and provide a summation of the main key points.

The analysis performed uses the theoretical framework of the collective identity formation of 'reactive identity' as the basis for determining the overall interconnectedness of

ethnoreligious identity and radicalization. Through the illustration of instances of how this identity develops as well as identifying the environment that fosters it, I will show the very real reality of the appearance of reactive identities. Using the works of sociologist Ruben Rumbaut to best understand reactive identity, this thesis seeks to provide insight as to why this theory plays a significant role in adhering to extremist ideologies.

## **1. FRENCH COUNTER-RADICALIZATION MEASURES**

France's approach to solving the problem of extremists can be classified into two categories: military action and policy. The period 2014-2015 became critical years in terms of the French government's perspective of their counterterrorism and counter-radicalization tactics. In 2014, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) made its introduction to the global scene after the withdrawal of United States troops from Iraq. A coalition of Western powers, including France, developed a campaign movement targeting insurgency movements all over the world. Operation Barkhane is one such campaign. Active until 2022, the operation countered insurgent cells within the Sahel region. The Moroccan government has also worked with France to counter threats in this region which is important because maintaining a friendly repertoire with between governments may help France's relationship with Moroccan immigrants. A collaborative effort is key to reducing remaining tensions from colonization in addition to eliminating extremist ideologies. Though French foreign political actions may suggest an openness to a joint effort, their domestic policies do not reflect the same degree of partnership with their diverse population.

Policies in de-radicalization efforts to disband any religious extremist networks and prosecute offenders were largely a subset of the counterterrorism techniques in use at the time. However, the Syrian civil war led a mass number of foreign fighters toward making their way to fight the "holy war", including French nationals (Masbah, 2015). Thus, the French government began to pursue countermeasures against radicalization. Attacking terrorism, while important, is a reactive method of security whereas attacking radicalization efforts internally would be a more proactive approach in regard to preventive measures.

Prisons are an area thought to contribute significantly towards radicalization efforts through the development or intensification of Jihadist beliefs (Hellmuth, 2015).<sup>1</sup> Feelings of stress stemming from isolation and alienation are thought to contribute to an overall feeling of vulnerability that translates into an interest in radicalism. Chérif Kouichi, one of the Charlie Hebdo attackers, met the Kosher market shooter, Coulibaly, while in the Fleury-Merogis prison (Hellmuth, 2015). Serving a sentence for drug trafficking and robbery, Coulibaly is thought to have become radicalized in prison, whereas reports suggest Kouichi solidified his Jihadi beliefs while behind bars as his conviction for an attempt to travel to an Iraqi terrorist camp suggests prior extremist tendencies (Hellmuth, 2015). Prison reforms may be another area that would be beneficial to target in counter-radicalization measures.

After the series of brutal attacks in 2015, France has attempted to combat home-grown radicalism through strict religious regulations. A 2021 bill introduced by the current French President Emmanuel Macron is the latest effort to curb the rise of radicals. Known as the ‘Strengthening Respect for Republican Principles’ or the ‘Anti-Separatism Bill’, it endorses “the need for engaging with religious councils, community leaders, and civil society actors to stem the proliferation of online radicalization networks” (Joshi, 2021). This bill was highly controversial and a topic of interest during the French 2022 presidential elections.

The ancient Greek philosopher Thucydides developed a theory that called fear, honor, and interest as the human behaviors behind major conflicts (Bagby, 1994). This theory can help shed light on the situation regarding terrorist violence in France today, particularly with its focus on intrinsic motivations and how those shape responses to negative actions. As previously mentioned, France is still recovering from terrorist attacks and the lingering fear the country

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<sup>1</sup> Jihad at the base level means a Muslims internal struggle to do what’s right. However, the way it is used by Western media has altered the meaning to “holy-war”. This is what it is being referenced as in this context.

feels has been reflected in their policy decision. The policies, despite receiving criticism for supporting actions of prejudice, may instead be a reaction of fear. In the case of France, fear is the most significant reason for their actions; fear for what they have been through and fear for what more they could go through. From the perspective of the French people and the French government, these policies may be interpreted as not a response to fear, but rather as a manner of preserving or honoring their culture. In this sense, it would be in the best interest of the purity of French society to limit the changes introduced within their nation.

However, this narrow-minded thought process only limits societal growth and progression into the global age. Rather than embracing and adapting new cultural variations, these policies place their civilization in stasis due to misplaced behavioral actions. Rather than a fear of change, the fear should be a *lack* of change for without development, there can be no success. French honor is for the preservation of the people of their nation, but their people aren't stationary or uniform like they may have once been. Recent policy, as was previously discussed and discussed further throughout this thesis, clings to the historical French identity. People from diverse backgrounds have become part of France and their best interests must also align with the state's interests. French honor for their identity, the fear of terrorist activities, and the interest to put an end to Islamic radicalism may be beneficial for the state image, however, it causes a rift between people living in the country. Just as Thucydides' s theory provides explanations for major historical conflicts, it may also possess the answer to resolving them.

Just as policies are analyzed and dissected, the same can be done for the people of whom the policies affect, whether intentionally or unintentionally. As important as it is to understand the 'what' of a policys' purpose, the 'who' is an equally if not more important factor to understand.

## **2. ETHNO-RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AS A REACTIVE IDENTITY**

Through studies of immigrants in the United States, similar to the experience of immigrants in Europe, Rumbaut has identified a mode of ethnic identity formation in hostile contexts that provide an explanation for the increase of ethnic identity rather than a decline (Rumbaut, 2008). Viewing identity as a dynamic rather than static process is necessary to understand the impact it can have on the actions of individuals (Phinney, 2003). Especially when discussing identity formation as a reaction to external circumstances, it becomes an example of how identity can change while in a discriminatory environment (Van Heelsum, Kooman 2016). This is further supported through social psychologist Henri Tajfel's Social Identity Theory, psychologist Jean Phinney's research about ethnic identity as a "multidimensional construct", and social psychologist Michael Hogg's research on the motivational role of uncertainty (Phinney, 2003).

Identity is a topic that attracts research interest for its ability to explain the motivation behind human behavior as well as provide a way to name different groups in society (Hogg, 2021a). One such method of naming resulted from Tajfel through the creation of the social identity theory. The founding father of social identity research, he conceptualized people's sense of belonging (group identity) and its significance to their self-concept to understand the psychology and sociology behind the interactions of groups (Tajfel, 1979, Abrams and Hogg, 1990). It must first be understood why humans have an innate desire to belong to a group before this phenomenon may be applied in different contexts. Dr. Hogg is the developer of the Uncertainty-Identity theory which he considers to be the "motivational component of social identity theory" (Hogg, 2007). His research describes the reason why people identify with a



social group, choose a new group, or reformulate an existing one. Group identity, in an ethnoreligious sense, refers to a common origin and/or religion that a person most identifies with. Discussing it in terms of North African immigrants in France, this may be the ethnic identity of being Arab and the religious identity of being a Muslim.<sup>2</sup>

Identity, as it relates to immigrants, furthers the complexity of the process and points to the idea of identity changing over time. Identity is a dynamic and complicated process that is never set in stone but rather continually develops and evolves over time (Phinney, 2003). Dr. Phinney has laid the foundation for research about ethnic identity formation, specifically the role it plays in people's lives, through the development of a three-stage model. The first stage coined the unexamined stage, identifies the period (adolescence) where an individual possesses a lack of awareness of their ethnicity. The second stage is an era of exploration about a group and the role of being a group member. Finally, the third stage is the stabilization and internalization of ethnic identity. The dynamic aspect of identity is especially beneficial when examining identity formation in immigrants because of their dualistic nature. This makes an examination of the development of the second stage of identity formation especially useful to observe in immigrant populations as new environments inspire new identity characteristics. Ethnic identity, as a subset of group identity, is a category measuring the sense of belonging to an ethnic or ethnoreligious group (Phinney, 2003). The start of ethnic identification occurs intrinsically through self-categorization and includes "not only a claim to membership in a group or category but also a contrast of one's group or category with other groups or categories" (Rumbaut, 2008).

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<sup>2</sup> North Africa consists of several different ethnicities as well as religions but the overwhelming majority are Arabs and the religion of Islam. The next large ethnic minority group would be the Amazigh who populate all of North Africa but have the largest population in Morocco. For the purposes of this analysis, the majority of Arab and Muslim populations are being considered.

Continuing with the underlying theme of ethnic identity as a dynamic process, it can be assumed that the ethnic identity that an immigrant first entered the host nation with may not be the same after living there for a time. Reactive identities are identities that are formed in reaction or opposition to another identity, dependent upon the perception of outside forces. Through this understanding, reactive ethnic identity can be better understood as the focusing of a reactive identity in an ethnic context. The formation or augmentation of an ethnic identity due to hostile social environments is a mode in which identification of the effects of ethnic-based discrimination may be examined.<sup>3</sup>

France is known for its secularism policy, *laïcité*, as it tends to target the Muslim population despite the apparent neutrality of the police. In 2012, a new policy known as ‘Chatel Circular’ was enacted that prohibited mothers from wearing headscarves to accompany their children on school field trips. This sparked a protest movement by the mothers affected. An indication of poor social and political integration, protests by French Muslims broke out due to a perceived deprivation of a right of citizenship and their inability to be both Muslim and French (Kassir and Reitz, 2016). North Africa consists of several countries, including Morocco, and they all contain different ethnicities and religions, however, there are major overlaps in identifying as an Arab and a Muslim. This can make identifying as either equivalent to the perception of non-Arabs and non-Muslims.

This is a direct representation of how reactive identities formulate; in this case reactive religious identity from French nationalistic policies targeting those deemed ‘other’ in the eyes of French society. It is important to distinguish the difference between feeling religious and expressing religion. In the case of this protest, the participating mothers are clear to identify the

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<sup>3</sup> Though reactive ethnicity is often used in contexts of denoting the reinforcement of ethnic minority identity, this thesis challenges the view of reactive ethnicity as not the reinforcement, but rather a point along the continuum of ethnic identity formation.

focus of this struggle as not being about their right to practice religion but rather their civil rights of being a French citizen, who happens to be a Muslim, yet still being stigmatized for their immigration history (Kassir and Reitz, 2016).

You either give me the French nationality or not! I am good here in France, I am proud of its flag and origins, but if for every little thing we're going to say Moroccan-French or of Moroccan origins! I mean, I am proud to carry its flag, but the country is not proud that I am like that!

To further the isolation of ethnic minority groups in France, the *laïcité* policy reflects an “ethnicity-blindness” as a method of ensuring equality and further adherence to their strict secularist policy (Simon 2015). This restricts methods of identifying yourself in political, social, and economic settings thus making the idea of a “hyphenated Frenchman” have no legitimate label as an identity (Simon, 2015). The general idea for the stigmatization of Muslims in Europe is the idea that Islam and general Western values are incompatible (Ryan, 2011). Conservative policymakers' distaste for cultural pluralism is seen through policies enacted and felt by immigrant populations most affected, namely the Muslims. France is one of many nations that still adhere to a ‘purist’ ideology with respect to the national community and believe that the best way of protecting freedom is through “popular sovereignty...that is not divided and falsified by intermediaries” such as religions outside of Catholicism and languages that are not French (Safran, 2003). It is part of a larger long-lasting assimilation tactic by a conservative regime to ensure national unity.

Multiple factors contribute to this idea of a reactive ethnoreligious identity as a form of ethnic identification, the least of which is the historic treatment of people who are labeled as the ‘other’. The colonizer mentality has not entirely left French society as is evidenced in their

policymaking and labeling of immigrants of color. Consistent discriminatory behavior results in a shift of ethnic identity formation in the form of reactive identity. External events are the instigator of this perception suggesting that this phenomenon may be most felt in the heavily immigrant populated *banlieues* of Paris.

### 3. THE INTERNAL EXCLUSION OF A DIASPORA COMMUNITY (PARIS)

To be 'French' is more than being born in France. It also consists of being of a particular appearance (white) and participation in common French traditions and customs (Barwick and Beaman, 2019). This has made integration for immigrants difficult as well as for second generation children. After the decolonization of French colonies, a mass migration movement overwhelmed the urban housing districts. This led to the settlement in *banlieues* on the outskirts of Paris. Largely from former French colonies, notably the Maghreb region, they contributed to the workforce that opened up during the post-World War II redevelopment period in the 1950s and 1960s (Stovall, 2001). Limited funds were reserved for the housing of foreigners or migrants with less than 10 percent of the one percent for housing tax being used for their purpose (Simon, 1998). These areas, also called 'shanty towns' or 'slums', later became associated with the term 'No-Go Zone'. Journalist David Ignatius coined this term, but it gained notoriety through the usage of the Middle East Forum founder Daniel Pipes. In the early 2000s, this term gained popularity among tourists and foreigners and referred to the idea that certain areas heavily populated by North African immigrant families became dangerous at night (Bridge Initiative Team, 2020). In the eyes of the French government, each is officially known as a Sensitive Urban Zone (SUZ). SUZ's consist of 751 areas that French officials have identified as being the most in need of development in accordance with their Urban Policy (Decree No. 96-1156, Simon, 1998). The migrant or migrant children populations are further ostracized by French society which expedites a reactive ethnic identity response.

From a literary perspective, the livelihood of the people living in these banlieues has been documented through different mediums. One in particular is a film called *La Haine*. It is based on the true story of Makomé M'Bowole who was killed in police custody while in the eighteenth arrondissement of Paris.. In the film adaptation, three boys of different backgrounds (Arab, African, Jewish) struggle to find fair treatment from the Parisian police in the wake of a brutal attack on their friend that ultimately proved to be fatal. The film, while not a documentary, was shot in France in one of the SUZ areas (Chanteloup-les-Vignes) and shows a depiction of what life is like for people there. Though released in 1995, this film has stayed relevant over the years as Islamophobia continues to rise in France due to significant terrorist attacks in the last decade. Powerful stories like that of M'Bowole showcase the severity of the situation, and when stories like his become memorialized through media such as film, the issue becomes harder to ignore. An analysis of this film provides further insight into the public perception of this part of French society. Through the lens of the Co-Cultural communication theory, the interactions taking place within the film support the findings that suggest that media further pushes the negative perception of areas such as those depicted in *La Haine*.

As shown in the previous section, discrimination can be a breeding ground for the development of a reactive identity. Based on the evidence of public perceptions and occurrences in these immigrant-heavy communities, it is reasonable to conclude that a SUZ environment could foster people's self-identity in that way. When analyzing discrimination, it is important to take note of the language used in reference to the populations in question. Though 'No-Go Zones' are not used in the French government's vocabulary, there is still an association between that covert term and SUZs due to their reference to the same locations. The combination of French policy and societal norms indicates a systematic and cultural ingraining of discrimination

of these populations. Though the situation that *La Haine* depicted was one example, the tense relationship between the SUZ citizens and police still exists today and furthers the divide between ‘French’ and ‘other’.

In more recent years, the exclusion is still apparent, and it is so in a very political manner. The 2022 Presidential elections brought many heated conversations to light again. The attempt of Anasse Kazib to receive a spot on the ballot only to fall short is one instance of this. The son of Moroccan immigrants, the almost nominee had a very different persona than the rest of his competitors, one of which he accurately felt aware. Subjected to racial slurs and neglected by the media to showcase any of his political views, it was no surprise he did not receive a ballot spot (Alsaafann 2022). Comparatively, far-right candidate Eric Zemmour is the son of Amazigh Jews from French-Colonial Algeria. He based his campaign on immigration and security, however, he advocated for the deportation of millions of immigrants. As a self-proclaimed savior of French identity, he is fiercely strict and intolerant of the French Muslim community (Mazoue 2022). These two variations of candidates display the diversity of ethnic backgrounds and the different perceptions they can take. Discrimination is both internal and external.

There is a widely circulated accusation of the French government for trying to create Islam in France rather than embracing Islam for how it naturally comes. Presidential administrations have been promising a ‘French Islam’ since the 1980s (Piser 2020). It calls for a twofold objective; integrating the country’s Muslim population and combating Islamic extremism. President Macron has discussed his ideas for a ‘French Islam’ since his election in 2017 and resurrected his ideas in 2022 (Piser 2020). He pushes for the reformation of Islamic institutions so that they may better reflect French virtues and ideals. To accomplish this directive,

he announced the aim to transition to French-led mosques rather than foreign-trained imams and the reliance on foreign nations for the organization of mosques.

Not only does this damage immigrants' self-perception, but it also limits any nationalistic tendencies of French citizens who do not fit the pre-made model of the ideal French citizen. To force Islam to adapt to the French identity is not feasible for a religion that has survived centuries without doing so. To subjugate a people is to dance the line of control and freedom.



#### **4. PROCESS OF RADICALIZATION**

Along with understanding ethno-religious identity, I also examine the process of radicalization in French immigrants as a negative effect of discrimination. A reactive identity is shown to incite feelings that radical groups specifically target, such as ISIL, otherwise known as the Islamic State of Syria and Iraq (ISIS) or as merely the Islamic State (IS). Feelings of uncertainty caused by stressful events such as humiliation, socioeconomic status, or a general feeling of not belonging anywhere are all common in migrant populations due to poverty and discrimination by the host population (Doosje et al, 2016, Hogg, 2021a). Extremist groups wield these feelings throughout their propaganda to appeal to these people in a weak state and either become saviors by offering them the purpose that is missing or by offering them the opportunity to become a hero within their group. Research thus far has been focused on the methods of ethnic identity formation or in-depth insight into the radicalization process. However, there is a noticeable gap in the literature about a potential relationship between ethnic identity and radicalization. Thus my research will provide further analysis of the connection between these facets of discrimination to further understand the complexities of ethnic identity as well as the consequences of ethnic discrimination through the works of Rumbaut, Tajfel, Doojse, Van Heelsum, and Hogg. Discrimination creates feelings of uncertainty that leave people vulnerable to certain extreme ideologies in an effort to find a place of belonging. However, the social integration struggle is not the only consequence that follows discrimination. There are also economic and gender facets as well. As shown in later sections, certain policies banning the wearing of the hijab in certain public spaces is a target to the Muslim women population that ostracizes them from society. From the economic perspective, there are studies showing that over

two generations, Muslims have fared worse economically than for the historically Christian French population (Adida, Laitin, and Valfort, 2010). Though this thesis does not directly focus on the economic effect of discrimination and is rather focusing on the social and political effects, later sections identify possible explanations for the economic disparity.

Discrimination is looked down upon by states around the globe, however, being frowned upon does not mean it does not exist. In fact, the large manners by which it has survived and resurfaced have been through less obvious means such as security measures and policies. By identifying where an interest in radical movements may occur, it opens the potential for effective and long-lasting preventive strategies through policy measures.

Uncertainty is a known motivator of human actions and identity and ideological development (Hogg, 2007). As previously discussed, this emotion is shown to be incited in discriminatory contexts due to social exclusion as well as unstable socioeconomic status. Research also shows the motivational role that uncertainty has in social group identification; however, this also pertains to extremist ideologies (Hogg, 2014). The perspective of Islamic extremism as containing members of the same ethnic, religious, or both groups would suggest that reactive ethnic and ethnoreligious identities as well as ideology result from the same process. The driving force behind individual and group actions is reducing uncertainty. External events affect how people view themselves and reducing uncertainty is a motivator behind in-group interactions (Hogg 2020). Hence, it makes it equally important to understand the mechanisms behind why group identity is affected by discrimination and how it comes about. When looking at the standing of radicalism in a group setting, it can be assumed that since uncertainty contributes to both extremist ideals as well as the development of a reactive identity, then reactive ethnic identity may also have a role in the adherence to a radical ideology.

The term 'radical' or 'radicalization' has different definitions amongst scholars. However, leading international scholar of terrorism and a former lead strategist for the Danish Security and Intelligence services, Dr. Dalgaard-Nielson, explains a radical as someone possessing the desire for "fundamental socio-political changes" which accurately fits the description of radicals as they apply to immigrants in France (Dalgaard-Nielson, 2010). Motivations for the Paris attacks were in response to recent French foreign actions in addition to their policies regarding the treatment of Muslims around the world. The Charlie Hebdo stabbing responded to the satirical depiction of the Prophet Mohammed. Both attacks were retaliatory towards a perceived grievance of treatment that made known a desire for a change in attitude and political direction. The French secularism policies are notorious and have caused discontent among the Muslim and Arab populations. Radicalization, therefore, is the readiness to act on those ideas. When it comes to radicalization, most scholars agree that there is to some degree a process over which it takes place (Benevento, 2021; Doosje, 2016; Hellmuth, 2015). However, the type of process is where agreement varies.

Dr. Ayşenur Benevento is a psychologist who specializes in how youths interact with their surroundings. She clearly outlines the two different methods of viewing radicalization: Stage Theory and Non-Stage Theory. The theory that radicalization occurs in stages suggests a certain path followed that encompasses specific acts; an instance of vulnerability, indoctrination to an extremist group, and commitment to action (Doosje 2016; Hellmuth 2015; Rahimullah et al, 2013). Yet, there are others who would say that there is a definitive point where someone makes the leap from "becoming" to "being" a radical, but people move from one state both sequentially and not (Benevento, 2021). Radical ideology is no different in how it develops, merely differing in its extremist tendencies. The process of radicalization, like identity

formation, should be viewed as a dynamic process across a spectrum of ideologies rather than a fixed state of being (Benevento, 2021).

Regardless of which perspective, the very beginning aspect of the radicalization process is arguably the most important to recognizing and ultimately preventing more radicals. The beginning stage of radicalization may be called the “sensitivity stage”, as is outlined by Dr. Doosje, or the “pre- radicalization” as many other scholars label it (Bigot, 2012. This is where a person first experiences thoughts and “feelings of insignificance”, otherwise labeled as “uncertainty”, due to a loss of status, a strong sense of humiliation, or poor career prospects’ (Doosje, 2016). When viewed from the lens of a non-Stage theory, this would fall into the “becoming” category of radicalization. Since these external factors are also attributed to the development of uncertainty-identity theory and consequently reactive identities, it can be assumed that this is the timeframe in which reactive identity formation is taking place.

When thinking about this in an applicable setting, we can refer back to the analysis of the SUZ (banlieue) setting. Negative public perception, poor integration by the government, and lack of funding mark those areas as lesser in the eyes of French society. The “problems of joblessness, discrimination, and collective withdrawal from society” only add to the polarization between immigrants or immigrant descendants and are perceived to be ‘pure’ French (Packer, 2015). These factors contribute to feelings of uncertainty which in turn contributes to identity formation.

If the process of identity formation is the psychological result of external influences, then the external result of this internal process may be explained through a theory known as fraternal relative deprivation. This theory explains that a feeling of injustice forces people to find a sense of purpose. Further explained as a method for reducing uncertainty for societal belonging,

moments of feelings such as doubt, fear, uncertainty, and frustration leave a person's mind vulnerable to manipulation. Personal uncertainty motivates people to identify strongly with a group that would reduce their uncertainty by providing clear values and norms that would alleviate their concerns (Hogg, 2014).

Radical groups like ISIS are known "to foster or restore feelings of significance by providing recruits with a sense of belonging, respect, heroism, status and the notion to fight for a holy cause" (Doosje, 2016). The mode of ethnic identity formation, reactive ethnicity, creates a vulnerability in a population that can easily be exploited by radical groups. Vulnerability can be understood as feelings of uncertainty due to a lack of belonging to a group or discrimination for being part of a certain group. More research is necessary to understand the potential reversing effects of de-radicalization efforts, but preventing radicalism from occurring by eliminating discrimination provides another route.

## CONCLUSION

The research conducted throughout this thesis has highlighted a possible connection between religious or ethnic discrimination and adhering to a radical ideology through the common denominator of uncertainty. The uncertainty factor is a key developmental characteristic in not only reactive identity but also is a motivator for radicalism. France's strict secularist policy fosters Islamophobia by limiting the ability for Muslims, to express their religious beliefs. Extensive research in the field of identity development by Phinney and Tajfel explained the importance of group identity on the self-concept and the critical effect that a person's environment can have on how they view themselves. Meanwhile, Hogg showed the dynamic role of uncertainty as a motivator for extremist ideologies and as a mental push factor for a reactive identity. Ultimately, the research has pointed towards uncertainty being the connection between reactive identity and extremist views through the manner of same-time development. Connections between these theories and their application of them to the Moroccan immigrant population in France opened the pathway to explore the definiteness of a potential connection between the overarching issues of ethnic discrimination and radicals. In terms of what the French government has done to address these issues, it was discussed their utilization of both military operations as well as policies. Operation Barkhane conducted anti-insurgency campaigns within the Sahel region in an attempt to asphyxiate radical movements that could threaten regional stability. Counter-radicalization efforts have dramatically increased in the years after 2014 with some positive actions such as the 2021 bill introduced by President Macron; however, there is still much work to be done to stop the systemic discrimination of Arabs and Muslims by the French system. Reactive ethnicity is an existing reaction toward the ethnic

discrimination taking place in French society and has been shown to create emotions that are associated with radicalism. These emotions emerge out of an unstable and frustrating situation which is where radical ideas thrive. Based on these connections, people who are vulnerable to assuming a reactive ethnic identity are more susceptible to radicalization efforts

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