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Nicholls, W.J.

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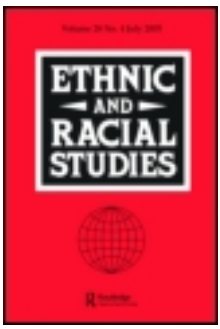

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Fragmenting citizenship: dynamics of cooperation and conflict in France's immigrant rights movement

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Abstract

This paper examines the contradictory relational dynamics of immigrant rights movement through a close examination of the French case during the 1990s. Through this movement, we find a network made up of different groups of immigrants and well-established rights organizations. As the movement intensified over the months, powerful cleavages developed between groups of undocumented immigrants (e.g. families, single men, etc.) and between certain immigrants and rights organizations. The same discursive and political structures that precipitated the cooperation of these diverse actors were also responsible for planting seeds of conflict by presenting different groups of migrants with unequal opportunities *and* placing resource-rich associations in a powerful position in the network. The paper concludes by discussing how the theory developed here can be 'extended' to analyse the relational dynamics found in similar social movements in other countries (e.g. USA).

Keywords: Social movements; undocumented immigrants; regularization; France; *sans papiers*.

Introduction

In 1996 undocumented immigrants in the Paris region initiated a series of small mobilizations in the hopes of regularizing their legal status. These immigrants soon gained the support of a broad range of important French organizations and personalities, transforming what

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had been scattered skirmishes into a full-fledged social movement. This '*sans papiers*'[1] movement opened up a channel for a highly marginalized group to express its grievances in the national political field. The more these newcomers mobilized, the more they became fluent in the rules and practices of the national political game. Although participation in this movement served to enhance the voice of immigrants, it also introduced powerful cleavages into the networks that carried them into the field. Different groups of undocumented migrants (i.e. parents with French-born children, long-term residents with employment, single men, etc.) and different groups of supporters developed conflicting arguments for why immigrants should gain rights within the country. Competing views over how rights *should* be distributed to immigrants resulted in conflicts between network participants, ultimately undermining their capacity to continue their struggle with any degree of real political force. Participation therefore provided undocumented immigrants with an important vehicle to express their claims but this same participation precipitated the proliferation of conflicting ideas over how best to make rights claims within the national political field.

The aim of this paper is provide an explanation for the relational dynamics of cooperation and conflict in this social movement network. The central argument is that the process of making undocumented immigrants into rights-claiming actors is necessarily a contradictory one: the legal and discursive openings available to undocumented immigrants stimulate the formation of complex social movement networks but these same openings introduce competing ideas and expressions over how rights should be distributed within national citizenship regimes.

The paper analyses the high point (six months) of a longer mobilization (1994–7) to oppose repressive immigration laws passed in 1993. Although the immigrant rights movement has a long history, this period was selected because it reflects an important uptick in the cycles of mobilization (Siméant 1998; Wihtol de Wenden and Leveau 2001). The study is based on 27 semi-structured interviews[2] and archives from three organizations participating in the social movement networks.[3] The interviews were performed in 2007. This paper cites archival documents in the following way. The first letter inside the parentheses stands for the type of document used: 'M' stands for minutes, 'C' for correspondence, 'IR' for internal report, and 'T' for political tract or statement. The subsequent letters stand for the name of the organization. For example (MFASI 1.4.94) means that the information was taken from the organization of FASTI's minutes on 1 April 1994.

The dynamics of cooperation and conflict in immigrant social movement networks

Structural and network approaches to immigrant rights movements

Much of the literature on undocumented movements in France and Europe is either descriptive or normative in its approach (Terray 1997; Cissé 1999; Cissé and Quiminal 2000; Blin 2005). These rich accounts succeed in identifying divides between various activists but they do not provide theories to explain for relational dynamics. Other accounts are more analytical but their aim is not to explain relational dynamics but other important aspects of these movements, like their effects on national institutions and their relations to migrant labour markets (Morice 1997; Siméant 1998; Iskander 2007; Laubenthal 2007; Anderson 2010).

To help explain the relational dynamics identified here, this paper draws from the broader literature on immigrant social movements. Recent scholars have suggested that political and discursive structures play key roles in shaping the opportunities facing immigrant activists (Koopmans et al. 2005). Neo-institutionalists have examined how national and local political institutions (agencies, regulations, laws, officials, governance strategies, etc.) structure the available opportunities for immigrants to express their concerns and claims in receiving societies (Ireland 1994; Garbaye 2005). Others have gone on to argue that political institutions are underlain by cultural norms and legitimated through discourses (Giugni and Passy 2004; Koopmans et al. 2005; Giugni and Passy 2006).

Other scholars have shown that in contexts where immigrants face the same political and discursive opportunities, those communities with strong and cohesive ties have greater capacities and abilities to make claims in politically effective ways (Fennema and Tillie 2001; Tillie 2004). While immigrant political bonding seems to be important, other scholars have stressed the importance of bridges between immigrant and native organizations (from labour unions to human rights associations) (Siméant 1998; Wihtol de Wenden and Leveau 2001; Péchu 2004; Milkman 2006; Hmed 2007). Native 'support' organizations often provide crucial resources to resource-poor immigrant activists, such as money, legal counsel, symbolic capital, and insider knowledge of national political cultures and institutions. Thus, bonding and bridging (i.e. strong- and weak-tie networks) enable immigrants to respond to political and discursive opportunities.

Making and breaking immigrant rights networks

The literature on immigrant social movements highlights 'structures' (political and discursive) and 'networks' but it examines these variables

in isolation of one another. This section draws from this literature to develop a theory that can explain for the relational dynamics found in this and other undocumented immigrant rights movements.

Political–discursive structures: narrow and uneven openings. Discourses and institutions interact with one another to mark the lines between possible and impossible citizens (Ong 1996; Ngai 2004; Honig 2006; Rancière 2007). New immigrants have long been represented as lacking the core attributes and competencies (i.e. linguistic, educational, cultural, religious, housing, wage, etc.) needed to be recognized as possible equals (Ngai 2004). By representing immigrants as impossible and threatening others, state officials gain the legitimacy needed to design laws and institutions to deny them basic social, civil and political rights enjoyed by nationals. These laws and regulations mark the 'real' institutional boundaries between full citizens, alien residents and illegal aliens (Honig 2006).

These discursive and legal categories set the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, but these boundaries are by no means fixed. Growing xenophobia over the past 20 years has fuelled discourses that stress cultural qualities that disqualify immigrants from citizenship and resident rights (i.e. 'culturalization of citizenship'). Immigrants do not only lack the cultural capital and dispositions needed to be treated as full and equal members of the national community, but they also bear ideologies and dispositions that threaten the public order; often represented as a veritable 'fifth column'. While the proliferation of these discourses have pushed national parliaments to roll out more legal restrictions, international and national legal norms continue to stress the liberal idea that all human beings, irrespective of their national origin, culture or legal status, have basic rights that need to be protected by states (Joppke 1999, 2007; Laubenthal 2007, 2010). These liberal norms can result in legal rulings that protect immigrant rights and require national governments to modify their own restrictions to formally comply with such rulings (Joppke 1999; Castles and Miller 2003). The constraints and opportunities facing undocumented immigrants are therefore produced at the intersection of conflicting liberal and illiberal forces, resulting in a profusion of uneven, unclear and contradictory categories of inclusion and exclusion.

Openings have remained available to undocumented immigrants but the conditions that one permitted for mass regularizations and general amnesties have become more limited (Castles and Miller 2003;Menjivar 2006). Instead, we find narrow, exceptional and niche-like openings that emerge in response to legal challenges and the moral ambiguities of nationals concerning particularly sympathetic groups of immigrants. Undocumented migrants respond to these niche-like openings by crafting careful arguments for how they possess desirable

qualifications and attributes (cultural, moral, legal, etc.). For example, if slight legal and discursive openings exist for families with young children, migrants with children may be encouraged to craft legal and moral arguments for why they are 'good' and 'deserving' migrants who merit residency status. Thus, facing a highly uneven and choppy opportunity structure, undocumented immigrants must demonstrate that they possess the right combination of cultural and legal attributes that make them 'deserving' of legalization.

Constructing cooperative activist networks in response to opportunities. Although undocumented migrants may possess some opportunities, they may not possess the appropriate legal and discursive resources needed to craft effective arguments and representations of their cases. Some migrants may certainly possess 'activist capital' acquired in their home countries, but these place-specific forms of capital are not easily transferable to their new political fields. This requires them to develop alliances with native supporters (e.g. human rights associations, unions, anti-racist organizations, etc.) in possession of the know-how, cultural and symbolic capital, and legal expertise needed to advance their claims in a restricted political field (Bourdieu 1994; Wacquant 2005). Native supporters who possess these scarce resources are likely to assume the position of *representational broker* within these mobilizations and become responsible for discursively framing and legally negotiating claims on behalf of immigrants. The asymmetric distribution of scarce and valuable social movement resources therefore produces a network structure in which natives play a dominant role in managing how the legal and cultural claims of immigrants are crafted and articulated in the public sphere.

Thus, the uneven distribution of these resources within the political field requires new immigrants to develop alliances with rich (mostly native) organizations for essential forms of support. This does not only precipitate cooperation between diverse activists in mobilization networks, but it also introduces a division of labour whereby natives assume the dominant role of representational broker.

Cleavages and conflicts in alliance networks. First, the uneven legal and discursive terrain can introduce powerful cleavages between different groups of immigrants. The uneven and niche-like openings that characterize the political–discursive field provide more opportunities for some groups of immigrants than others. When certain groups of undocumented immigrants face a discursive and/or legal window to regularize their status, they frame their claims by stressing the attributes that make them particularly deserving of regularization (e.g. families, students, youths, infirm, etc.). The greater the resonance they have in the general public and among political officials, the more they legitimize those narrow attributes as preconditions for

regularization. Immigrants not possessing these attributes (i.e. non-students, singles, unemployed, adult males, etc.) find it more difficult to find a cultural and legal basis to make their own claims. *In this sense, the more one group struggles to open the legal–discursive door for themselves, the more they may contribute to closing the door for others not possessing the same legal and cultural attributes.* This can prompt those immigrants left out to call for the more radical and inclusive claim of 'regularization for all'. Thus, the narrow and uneven nature of opportunities generates conflicting claims between pragmatists and radicals over how and to whom rights should be distributed within their adopted countries.

Second, discursive and legal structures attribute unequal values to the resources possessed by different activists in a network. The importance of discourse and legal expertise place the actors in possession of scarce cultural, symbolic and legal resources into a powerful position within these networks. As richer native organizations assume central roles in representing the case of immigrants to the media and political leaders, their notoriety grows as does their status and power in the political field. This can give rise to conflicts over how the symbolic, financial and political returns on their work are distributed between natives and immigrants. Moreover, representational brokers are at the forefront of making the legal and discursive arguments for why certain groups are particularly deserving of regularization (e.g. families, students, etc.). These brokers are therefore inadvertently drawn into the difficult role of negotiating the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. Migrants who find themselves excluded from these agreements will hold the representational brokers accountable for their legal and discursive situation.

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The next section seeks to develop a theory to explain how opportunity structures strongly influence the contradictory relational dynamics found in these types of immigrant social movements. Political and discursive opportunities require diverse activists to cooperate with one another in hierarchical and segmented activist networks. The hierarchical and segmented character of these networks precipitate conflicts between participating activists.

The age of Pasqua: the discursive and legal grounds of exclusion

The period of the 1990s was marked by increased restrictions and repression for immigrants in France. Charles Pasqua, the Minister of Interior from 1993 to 1995, initiated a series of restrictive reforms that aimed to restrict visas, limit the criteria to qualify for a 'family

reunion' visa, introduce random identity checks of foreigners, and implement measures to accelerate deportations (Hayward and Wright 2002; Berezin 2009). The Pasqua measures closed down most pathways to regularization for irregular migrants in the country, leaving thousands in the country with no legal avenue to regularize their status.

The Pasqua laws employed widely circulating xenophobic discourses to craft its legal restrictions on immigrant rights in the country. From the mid-1980s onwards, French political officials employed discourses produced by the extreme right to frame immigration as a social problem (Berezin 2009). As early as 1985, Socialist Prime Minister Laurent Fabius stated that 'Le Pen [leader of the extreme right party] raises real problems but gives bad answers' (Fabius, in Berezin 2009, p. 78). In 1991 Jacques Chirac (at that time, former Prime Minister, sitting mayor of Paris, future President) argued:

> How do you want a French worker who works with his wife, who earns together about 15,000 francs and who sees next to his social housing apartment, a piled-up family with a father, three or four spouses and twenty children earning 50,000 FF via welfare benefits, naturally without working... If you add to that the noise and the smell, well the French worker, he goes crazy. And it is not racist to say this. We no longer have the means of honoring the family reunification policy, and we need to finally start the essential debate in this country, as to whether it is moral and normal that foreigners should profit to the same extent as French people, from a national solidarity to which they don't participate, as they pay no income taxes. (Chirac, in Blin 2005, p. 67, translated by author)

Chirac argued that the cultural attributes of the 'typical' immigrant family violated the French principle of national solidarity, making it impossible for society and the state to grant immigrants equal rights.

The Pasqua laws were the first major legal effort to draw upon these kinds of xenophobic discourses to produce the legal boundaries of inclusion and exclusion in the citizenship regime. The UN's *Special Report on Racism and Xenophobia* maintained that the Pasqua laws drew on xenophobic discourses and helped reinforce a culture of racism in the country. 'The wave of xenophobia currently sweeping France feeds on the attitudes adopted and statements made for electioneering purposes by politicians, on both the right and the left... Xenophobia in France today is sustained by the Pasqua Acts...' (United Nations 1995, p. 4).

The Pasqua laws sparked intense grievances among undocumented immigrants by denying them many basic civil, social and political rights, closing off traditional pathways for legalization, and increasing

levels of state repression. The grievances of migrants in certain categories (i.e. families, parents with French children, etc.) were further aggravated because international courts upheld their claims but the Minister of Interior refused to recognize their rights to live in the country. While this ambiguity sharpened their grievances, these particular immigrants also had more legal and discursive opportunities to make their claims than other immigrants. For example, immigrant parents of French children not only had the strongest legal case for regularization but they also enjoyed the greatest amount of public support and sympathy (Siméant 1998; Blin 2005). Other migrants (recent arrivals with no family ties or steady employment) had the weakest legal base to make their claims (i.e. no international conventions or national courts protecting them) and they generally had less sympathy from the public. Thus, the Pasqua laws raised the bar for all undocumented immigrants but narrow legal and discursive openings continued to exist for certain migrant groups.

The process of making and implementing immigration policy was based on a two-level system (Hayward and Wright 2002). At one level, the Minister of Interior and the National Assembly retained the authority to introduce legislation, design decrees to modify existing legislation, and provide specific instructions on how to implement national laws and decrees. At another level, government-appointed department prefects were charged with implementing national laws and reviewing applicants on a case-by-case basis. Migrants seeking to regularize their status would present their cases to department administrators and they decided the merits of the case based on the criteria established by the prefect. The ambiguous character of the Pasqua laws and the absence of clear criteria to implement them provided department prefects with great discretion over how national laws were applied in their particular departments (Siméant 1998; Blin 2005). The discretionary powers of local prefects made them the primary targets for aggrieved immigrants (Ireland 1994).

Forming a network: connecting *sans papiers* and native support associations

France has a long history of immigrant rights activism and the mid-1990s marked the beginning of a particularly important cycle of mobilization that affected the relational dynamics between immigrant rights activists for years to come. The remainder of this paper examines how the political and discursive contexts described above affected the networks that arose to contest the Pasqua laws. This will be done through a detailed discussion of one moment in a longer mobilization dating from 1994 to 1997. The particular moment under

examination (March 1996 to August 1996) is considered the most intensive stage of this longer mobilization.

In the year and a half following the passage of the Pasqua laws, human rights and anti-racist associations and undocumented migrants launched separate mobilizations. The rights associations launched several campaigns that targeted the central state, aimed to repeal the national laws, and employed the mobilizing frame of 'social exclusion' in an attempt to create a link with the broader French public. Whereas the targets, aims and frames of the native rights associations were broad and highly political, the *sans papiers* developed informal associations (i.e. *collectifs de sans papiers*) to express grievances along much narrower and more apolitical lines. Their principal aim was to acquire a residency visa for the handful of migrants belonging to their *collectifs* and their claims were made to the department prefect (the official charged with processing and deciding visa applications). Facing a narrow window of opportunity, the early *collectifs* fashioned a mobilizing frame that centred on the legal and moral legitimacy of the family. The names of their organizations, banners, chants and public declarations stressed their status as family members and parents of French residents and citizens. For example, the names of two of the early and most prominent *collectifs* were the 'Right to Live in a Family' and 'Foreign Parents of French Children'.[4] They framed and justified their struggle explicitly through their public pronouncements: 'Contrary to *international law and basic human principles*, the government has made it impossible for us to live in the same country as a family. We are here to contribute to France and raise our children and provide them with a secure and stable life' (TDVFP 6.1.95, emphasis added). Thus, in the period following the Pasqua laws, rights associations and *collectifs de sans papiers* addressed the problems of the Pasqua laws in divergent ways, with one seeking to change national immigration policy by pressuring the central government and the other seeking to attain residency for a handful of immigrants by pressuring the department prefect.

March 1996 marked an important change in these mobilization networks. Approximately 200 undocumented African immigrants occupied the St Ambroise church in Paris. They demanded the Paris prefect to review their cases and regularize their immigration status. The first rights associations to support the *sans papiers* of St Ambroise were Droits Devant and the Abbé Pierre Foundation. These associations had made contacts with several *sans papiers* organizers through their previous work on a housing campaign in Paris (2004). At this early stage, these two associations played important brokering roles by facilitating connections between the *sans papiers* and various other associations in the Paris milieu. Jean-Claude Amara, the leader of Droits Devant, requested his friends and allies to come out and

support the *sans papiers* at a rally in front of the church. Following the action, Amara visited associations around the city to personally thank them for their support (MFASTI 30.3.96). The brokering work by Amara eventually allowed the group of *sans papiers* at St Ambroise to gain more support from the leading associations LDH, GISTI, FASTI, and MRAP.[5] For example, during Amara's visit to FASTI, he called on the association to disseminate news about the 'refugees of St Ambroise' to branch organizations throughout the country. FASTI complied and sent out the following message to its branches: 'We are pleased that you have declared yourself in favor of the regularization of the "*sans papiers* of St Ambroise". It is important we support the families and the coalition in support of them' (MFASTI 27.4.96).

Several weeks after the occupation of the St Ambroise church, the police raided and removed the *sans papiers.* Their displacement resulted in a scramble to find a new place to house them. The support associations employed their networks and found a suitable location at a theatre (*la Cartoucherie de Vincennes*) on the outskirts of the city. The move to this site unleashed another important round of networking. The support associations had been circulating information about the struggle through their own networks. Associations like FASTI, GISTI, MRAP and LDH invited a range of other associations and organizations to attend meetings. These meetings provided new opportunities for unconnected organizations and associations to become integrated in the ever-widening network. Older North African and Turkish associations (ATMF, ATF, FTCR, ACORT[6]) entered the network through these channels. These associations provided greater legitimacy to the movement by including ethnic minorities into the leadership rank (instead of the dominance of white middle-class leftists). They also employed their national networks to disseminate information about these struggles. As the president of ATMF noted in a meeting, 'The national office considers the issues of the *sans papiers* and their struggle for regularization be a national priority for our organization. It asks each local section to designate somebody to take up the issue' (MATMF 16.6.96).

In addition to this, the director of the theatre and the support associations employed their networks to gain support from a number of prestigious personalities in the Paris region. The aim was to use the symbolic capital of these personalities to represent the *sans papiers* to the government and the general public. The group would constitute itself as the *Collège de Médiateurs* (i.e. College of Mediators). The *Collège* framed the struggle in the following way:

> Procedures of deportation are in place against men and women, who after many years of working and living on French soil, ask nothing but to live legally and peacefully with their families. Our

> responsibility as citizens is to assure these people solidarity without reservations. Our obligation is to rise against the cynicism of the State that consists of deliberately placing foreigners in an illegal situation in order to justify their deportation. (*Collège de Médiateurs, in* MATMF 16.6.96)

The *Collège* employed its intimate knowledge of French political culture to represent foreigners in a positive and morally compelling way. The *sans papiers* were represented as victims of the government's unjust policies and such an injustice obligated citizens to stand up and resist.

It soon became clear that the small theatre lacked the capacity to house the *sans papiers* and their supporters. The associations contacted allies with the CFDT[7] rail workers' union in Paris who provided a warehouse and basic communication infrastructure. The CFDT's involvement in this high-profile campaign encouraged greater interest from other unions (CGT, SUD and the FSU[8]) to get involved. 'The participation of the unions in the campaign was significant because they could provide resources that the associations simply couldn't' (treasurer, LDH, personal interview with author). These resources were used to provide the *sans papiers* the basic materials (i.e. office space, paper, copy machine, telephone, etc.) needed to constitute an organization of their own: the National Coordination of Sans Papiers (CNSP) (president, CNSP, personal interview with author).

In June 1996, the *sans papiers* left the CFDT's warehouse, occupied the St Bernard church in Paris's 18th *arrondissement* and initiated a hunger strike (eight parents). These actions raised the media profile of the action and drew the support of French intellectuals and entertainers. Prominent entertainers like Emmanuelle Béart and intellectuals such as Pierre Bourdieu and Emmanuel Terray became supporters of the campaign. The rights associations capitalized on this support by placing personalities and intellectuals in prominent places where politicians and the media would take notice. For example, the organizers of one petition drive were careful to place the names of the most prominent intellectuals at the top of the list. 'The letter has received almost 700 signatures, among them the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, the historian Jacques Le Goff, and the astronomer Jean-Claude Pecker' (http://bok.net/pajol/signataires.html#univ2).

On 12 August the Minister of Interior ordered 300 riot police to remove the striking parents from St Bernard (IRG10 21.8.96). The government's massive show of repressive force was broadcast through the media, resulting in an outpouring of additional support for the cause. The government responded by initiating a complete evacuation of the church through the use of 1,500 police agents. One witness noted: 'The CRS [France's riot police] intervened in a very brutal way

when they expulsed the *sans papiers.* It happened very quickly and it was captured by the national media. This immediately created solidarity actions without precedent' (organizer, SUD PTT, interview with author). A demonstration was quickly organized, with 11,000 people marching through the capital demanding the regularization of the 200 *sans papiers* of St Bernard (Siméant 1998).

Forming leadership within the network and negotiating inclusion/exclusion

During the campaign, the legal skills and symbolic capital of the rights associations enabled them to assume the central position of *representational broker* between the *sans papiers* and a range of interlocutors including the government, police, media, the Catholic church, other associations, unions, prominent personalities and the general public. Their increased role in the struggle prompted these associations to increase the frequency of their face-to-face meetings to three to four times a week. This enabled them to pool their information and use it to plan their next steps forward. The meetings intensified to one to two a day at St Bernard, using the headquarters of ATMF, which sat adjacent to the church (co-director, MRAP, interview with author). In addition to deepening solidarity between the rights associations, these interactions improved their abilities to work with one another under conditions of extreme political uncertainty. 'St Bernard became a giant village where we all converged to provide support for the *sans papiers.* Working like this, working under these conditions, helped transform the relations between our different groups because we really learned to work together' (president, LDH, interview with author). Their enhanced collective powers reinforced their leadership positioning within the network. The associations involved in these interactions formalized their relations and constituted themselves into the 'Group of 10'.

The Group of 10 and the *Collège de Médiateurs* assumed parallel representational roles within the network. The network remained plural and highly diffuse but these two powerful clusters – both constituted primarily by white and capital-rich French natives – emerged to assume important representational, decision-making and steering functions within the network. The Group of 10 and the *Médiateurs* deliberated with one another over how they should proceed in their negotiations with the government. The central issue in these deliberations concerned whether or not they should accept the use of formal criteria to evaluate the applications of undocumented immigrants. The *Médiateurs* maintained that the government was not likely to accept a general amnesty for all undocumented immigrants in the country. The most pragmatic option would be to influence the

criteria used by the government and prefects to evaluate individual cases. Pushing for extremely broad criteria would cast a wide net and cover most of the undocumented immigrants in the country. They proposed the following 10 criteria:

> Foreign parents of French children; foreign parents of children born in France; spouses of French citizens; spouses of legal residents; foreigners whose medical treatment for life threatening illnesses would be interrupted; asylum seekers entering France before January 1st 1993; foreigners having a close relative in France (parent, brother, sister); foreigners who would experience major risks if returned to the country; students in the middle of their university education; foreigners who are well inserted in French society.' (MATMF 16.6.96)

In public statements, the *Médiateurs* claimed that each criterion should be considered as having equal weight. For example, the case of a 'well inserted' immigrant should have the same merit as 'foreign parents of French children'. However, privately they recognized that government negotiators would not consider each criterion as having equal weight. This required them to rank the criteria in order of likelihood of regularization, placing the 'foreign parents of French children' at the top of the list (MFASTI 11.5.96).

Various associations in the Group of 10 were apprehensive about the use of such criteria and ranking them in this way. Based on their previous experience, they knew that using formal criteria to negotiate the regularization of *sans papiers* would make it easier to regularize some people but it could also raise the bar for others (MFASTI 11.5.96). For example, if the government accepted the regularization of parents of French children they would likely offset this by making it more difficult for single men to attain a visa. Moreover, by arguing that parents were particularly 'deserving' of regularization on moral and legal grounds, they would inadvertently condone the idea that others were less deserving of regularization because they lacked certain cultural and legal attributes. The associations therefore believed that such negotiations would aggravate the unequal opportunities between different groups of *sans papiers*. The associations of the Group of 10 therefore presented a counter-proposal: reject the use of criteria and embrace the broader and more radical claim of 'regularization for all' (MFASTI 11.5.96).

The Group of 10 entered into deliberations with the *Médiateurs* over this central issue but the *collectifs de sans papiers* supported the *Médiateurs*. 'The associations [of the Group of 10] explained that they demand the regularization of all *sans papiers* without the use of criteria. However, the *sans papiers* at the meeting accepted the criteria,

leaving the associations with no option but to do the same' (MFASTI 11.5.96). Many of the *sans papiers* families viewed that a struggle to influence government criteria (in which their group was prioritized) would provide a shorter and less risky path to regularization than a protracted struggle for general amnesty.

The associations were also heavily involved in representing the cases of individuals seeking to legalize their status. Most associations would collect a number of applications and then send them off in a batch to the prefect for evaluation. The associations representing applicants learned that their chances of success improved when they sorted applications by the strength of their cases, placing the strongest files at the top of the pile. By representing the cases of undocumented immigrants and sorting applications according to their relative strength, these associations became unsuspecting gatekeepers in the regularization process and played a frontline role in separating 'strong' applicants out from the weaker ones. Most of the associations found this to be deeply problematic but they also felt they had no other choice if they wanted to regularize at least some *sans papiers*. 'This was evidently a very ambiguous situation. One could tell us:

> You are the ones responsible for selecting files. You have taken up some and not others.'' But it is not our responsibility to say yes or no on individual applications. That is the responsibility of the administration. We tried to put forth the strongest files so at least, those who could be saved were. (president, LDH, interview with author)

In sum, the resources of native supporters placed them in a pivotal representational role within the network. In this role, they were confronted with the very serious issue about how to negotiate the competing rights claims of undocumented immigrants. *Their growing importance as representatives of undocumented immigrants drew them into concrete negotiations over where to draw the line between 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' migrants.*

Emerging divides: conflicts between (excluded) *sans papiers* and support associations

Some immigrants within the network became frustrated by the prioritization of certain categories of immigrants (i.e. parents) over others and they directed their frustrations at those who had assumed responsibility over representing the *sans papiers*, i.e. the native support associations. 'They [the associations] said they wanted the regularization of all the *sans papiers* but they really didn't. They just talked like that but their real focus was on the families. Everybody else was left

out' (president of CNSP, interview with author). The leader of another *collectif* also criticized the role of associations: 'All these people [the *sans papiers*] accepted to take important risks but all they were doing was providing support for the strongest applicants, the parents. It is not fair that everybody takes the same risks but only a few benefit' (president, *Rassemblement Collectif Ouvrier*, interview with author). This criticism stressed the complicity of the support associations in favouring certain categories of migrants over others and maintained that the associations were responsible for placing many at risk to benefit a few.

The associations were also accused of maintaining a patronizing attitude toward the *sans papiers*. 'In France, the associations say "our" *sans papiers* as if they owned us. They have always treated us like children' (president, CNSP, interview with author). For some, this attitude reflected long-standing neo-colonial dispositions of French activists. Many of the associations were also accused of using the *sans papiers* struggle to advance the political ends of formal political parties (Socialist Party, Greens, Communist Party and Communist Revolutionary League). Others accused individuals within the associations of using the *sans papiers* to advance their own prestige and power.

> The people who are at the head of these associations have used the *sans papiers* movement to advance their careers. They are only interested in themselves. All that stuff doesn't interest us; we were created only to help our brothers and sisters. (president, CNSP, interview with author)

The growing criticisms prompted some *collectifs* and the CNSP to seek alternative allies in the Parisian activist milieu (especially the extreme left) and develop new ways to finance their operations. These moves intensified tensions with the native support associations, especially in the months after St Bernard.

> There is little information on what is happening with the CNSP. It is difficult to get reliable information from the group and other collectifs. We believe that the African groups are influenced by the extreme left. The Group of 10 has to reassert its relation to the *collectifs* because we give these struggles their general character. Their struggles alone are not the same as ours. (MFASTI, 25.11.96)

This statement raises three points of concern: the *collectifs* and the National Coordination were operating in increased isolation from the rights associations, the *collectifs* had begun to shift their support base from human rights and anti-racist associations to extreme left groups,

and the rights associations believed it important that the National Coordination be brought back under their sphere of influence.

Tensions blew up when the National Coordination was accused of fraud and charging exorbitant fees to assist undocumented immigrants with their residency applications. The president of the LDH described these tensions in the following way:

> It's true that we had problems with the National Coordination at a certain moment. Those are people in a difficult situation and they sometimes act too fast and do foolish things. Understanding their situation, it is difficult to ask these people to always think of what they are doing . . . So it is not the general rule but it has arrived at certain moments that we, in partnership with some unions and the other associations, have had to remind the *sans papiers* organizations of the necessity to remain vigilant of their activities, to assert some control and discipline over their activities. (president, LDH, interview with author)

The National Coordination of *Sans Papiers* largely denied the charges and argued that they were a pretext to reassert associational control over the *sans papiers*.

Thus, having assumed representational roles within the network, native support associations were drawn into the difficult role of negotiating the criteria used to demarcate the boundaries between 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' migrants. Migrants finding themselves in the latter group held the associational representatives accountable for their legal plight. Complicating matters further, their roles as representatives of the *sans papiers* came under further attack by *sans papiers* activists marginalized by the native associations. These marginalized *sans papiers* activists sought out alternative sources of support (i.e. the extreme left, charging for services, etc.) to establish greater autonomy. These acts exacerbated tensions with their native supporters, which prompted the associations to re-exert their power over the *collectifs de sans papiers*.

After autumn 1997 (the last large-scale mobilization), the networks needed to sustain large-scale mobilizations all but collapsed, leaving these various activists groups in relative isolation of one another. The network has been revived in three mobilizations during the 2000s (*Uni[e]s Contre l'Immigration Jetable, Réseau Éducation Sans Frontières*, and recent workers' mobilizations led by the CGT), but the conflicts of the 1990s continue to influence activist relations in these recent mobilizations. One activist involved in recent mobilizations remarks:

> For me, the problem with the movement in France is that there were these problems between the *collectifs* and support associations, and that resulted in a real schism within the coalition [*Uni[e]s Contre l'Immigration Jetable*]. Among the *collectifs,* there are strong levels of mistrust toward the support associations. And also, the associations have a critical view vis-à-vis the *collectifs de sans papiers,* notably because they had these very difficult relations in the past. (organizer, Autremonde, interview with author)

Conclusion

This paper began with a particular problem concerning the cooperative and conflictive relational dynamic of this social movement network. To explain such relational dynamics, the paper highlights the strategic importance of the discursive and political opportunities structuring this particular mobilization field. Declining chances for mass regularization or amnesty did not close off all possibilities for regularization. Certain niche legal and discursive openings continued to exist for those groups that possessed certain attributes (e.g. families with young children born in the country, etc.). While large numbers of mobilized immigrants were needed to get the public's and government's attention, cultural capital and legal knowledge were also needed to craft persuasive arguments. The discursive and legal structure of this mobilization field necessitated cooperation between migrants and resource-rich organizations but it also planted the seeds of conflict between cooperating activists. First, when immigrants and allies responded to niche openings, they argued that their group was particularly deserving of rights. In arguing for their inclusion on the basis of unique cultural and legal attributes (i.e. families with French children), they reinforced the exclusion of those immigrants lacking the same attributes. Second, the concentration of scarce resources by natives did not only make them into important partners in the struggle but it also placed them in a dominant representational position within the network. The 'representational gap' between natives and *sans papiers* resulted in serious tensions between these groups especially when the former assumed responsibility for negotiating the concrete terms of inclusion and exclusion within the country. Thus, the same discursive and political conditions that propelled the formation of cooperative networks between these diverse stakeholders were also responsible for the cleavages that led to the movement's rapid demise.

Much of what has been analysed here is unique to the French context. However, the theoretical framework presented in the paper's literature review section can be 'extended' to interpret the complex relational dynamics of immigrant social movements in other countries (see Burawoy 1998). For example, in the USA, the recent struggle by

undocumented college students to regularize their status can be partially interpreted through the framework developed here.[9] The political difficulty of pushing through comprehensive immigration reform in the mid-2000s prompted established rights activists to support the struggle of well-integrated yet undocumented college students. In a context where a general amnesty was improbable, established activists believed they should support groups that stood the greatest chance of regularization. These students possessed the cultural attributes and narratives that placed them in the strongest position to push for regularization. However, as they pushed for this in 2009 and 2010, cleavages emerged over where to place the lines of inclusion and exclusion in these struggles, prompting a schism in immigrant rights networks. By extending the theory developed in this paper to analyse cases in the USA or elsewhere (e.g. UK, the Netherlands, Italy), certain aspects of the theory will be falsified by empirical realities on the ground. This would require modifications to the theory, which in turn would contribute to a more general and thicker theory of the relational dynamics in immigrant rights movements (Burawoy 1998, p. 26). Thus, the aim of this paper is to explain for the problematic as it emerged in the French case, but also to use this single case to *begin* the first steps of building a theory to understand the complex relational dynamics found in these kinds of social movements.

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Notes

1. '*Sans papiers*' is the name given to undocumented immigrants. The literal translation of the term is 'without papers'.
2. Only interview materials used are cited in the references.
3. Key organizations: *Fédération des Associations de Solidarité avec les Travailleurs Immigrés* (FASTI), *Ligue des Droits de l'Homme* (LDH), *Groupe d'examen des programmes sur les étrangers en France* (GISTI), *Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples* (MRAP), *Association des Travailleurs Maghrébins de France* (ATMF), *Associations des Tunisiens en France* (ATF), *Fédération des Tunisiens pour une Citoyenneté des Deux Rives*, *L'Assemblée Citoyenne des Originaires de Turquie*, *Confédération française démocratique du travail* (CFDT), *Confédération Générale du Travail* (CGT), *Solidaires Unitaires Démocratique* (SUD), *Fédération Syndicale Unitaire, Droit de Vivre en Famille, Parents Etrangers d'Enfants Français, Confédération Nationale des Sans Papiers.*
4. *Droit de Vivre en Famille and Parents Etrangers d'Enfants Français*, respectively.
5. Respectively: *Fédération des Associations de Solidarité avec les Travailleurs Immigrés*, *Ligue des Droits de l'Homme, Groupe d'examen des programmes sur les étrangers en France*, *Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples.*

6. Respectively: *Association des Travailleurs Maghrébins de France, Associations des Tunisiens en France*, *Fédération des Tunisiens pour une Citoyenneté des Deux Rives*, *L'Assemblée Citoyenne des Originaires de Turquie*.
7. *Confédération française démocratique du travail*.
8. Respectively: *Confédération Générale du Travail*, *Solidaires Unitaires Démocratique*, *Fédération Syndicale Unitaire*.
9. These comments are based on conversations with activists in the USA and field observations of two meetings.

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Minutes, *Troisième Collectif de Sans Papiers*
Personal Interview, Organizer, *Autremonde*
Personal Interview, Co-Director, *Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples* (MRAP)
Personal Interview, Director of *Droits Devants*
Personal Interview, Organizer of *Solidaire Unitaire Démocratique* (SUD PTT)
Personal Interview, President of *Coordination Nationale des Sans Papiers*
Personal Interview, President of the *Ligue des Droits de l'Homme*
Personal Interview, President of *Rassemblement Collectif Ouvrier*
Political Tract, *Coordination Nationale des Sans Papiers*

WALTER J. NICHOLLS is Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at University of Amsterdam.
ADDRESS: Department of Sociology, University of Amsterdam, Oudezijds Achterburgwal 185, 1012 DK, Amsterdam NL.
Email: w.j.nicholls@uva.nl