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Whitney R. Henderson
Providence College

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FRANCOPHONE AFRICAN IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES: CAUSES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR AMERICAN SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

A project based upon an independent investigation, submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Social Work.

Whitney R. Henderson

Providence College

Providence, Rhode Island

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Whitney Henderson

Francophone African Immigration to the United States: Causes and Implications for Social Work Practice

Abstract

Francophone, or French-speaking, West Africans immigrants within the United States are of particular interest due to their choice of relocation. It is noteworthy because they are choosing not to immigrate to France, where there is excellent healthcare offered and the language commonality between France and the immigrant. This research studies why members of this population were choosing the United States over France. This exploratory research of Francophone West African immigration to the United States was conducted via face-to-face interviews with three members of this particular population in Providence, Rhode Island. Results from the interviews indicated that there are various reasons for choosing the United States over France, yet the lack of the French language was not a deciding factor. This study concludes that further study must be concluded in order to sufficiently know what is causing Francophone West Africans to immigrate to the United States.

I. Introduction

a. Francophone Africans are choosing to immigrate to the United States rather than France.
    i. Who are Francophone Africans?
    ii. A considerable number of Francophone Africans come from West Africa, as French colonialists dominated that region.
b. More Africans are arriving in the United States.
    i. Between 1990 and 2000, there has been a significant increase in the African population in the United States.
    ii. Out of this population, West Africans have accounted for the highest percentage.
c. Immigrants make up ten percent of the French population.
    i. Immigrants are not well-received in France due to economic instability and anti-political sentiments.
    ii. French-speaking African immigrants are beginning to choose to immigrate to a non-Francophone country, such as the United States.
    iii. It is possible that there problems within France that would deter immigrants from immigrating there, despite European social services and the linguistic commonality.

II. Immigration and its Implications in France

a. Demographics and Causes
    i. How many immigrants are in France?
    ii. How many of them are West African?
    iii. Causes for Immigration to France
        1. Economic opportunity
        2. Asylum/Refugee status
        3. Family
        4. Marriage
    iv. Were any of them aware of potential problems in France before immigrating there?

b. Effects of Immigration in France
    i. Creation of anti-immigration groups, such as *La Front National*
    ii. Economic problems blamed on immigrants
    iii. Harsher immigration laws, such as the laws that Nicolas Sarkozy imposed in 2006
    iv. Harsher naturalization and nationality laws, as implemented in 1993 and 1998

c. Social Services
    i. Psychological/Mental Health
    ii. Housing
    iii. Healthcare
    iv. Social Justice
    v. Family services
    vi. Elderly care

    vii. Childcare
    viii. Legal issues
d. Immigrant Satisfaction with Services
    i. Do French social services know how effectively they are treating and helping their clients?
    ii. Do the French perform needs-assessments for their practices?
    iii. Client feedback
e. French social work models
    i. How do the French define "social work"?
    ii. Comparison to American model
    iii. Ideology differences
f. West Africans in France
    i. Services and organizations specifically for them
    ii. How they are perceived and helped by the French
g. West Africans in the United States
    i. Better individual services
    ii. Less strict immigration and nationality laws
    iii. Less anti-immigrant sentiments
    iv. Is the United States less exhausted from this group than France?
    v. Services offered specifically for them

III. The Flipside (for lack of a better title at the moment)

a. Demographics and Causes
    i. Francophone Africans will continue to immigrate to France, regardless of the problems there.
    ii. There will always be cause to immigrate to France.
b. Effects of Immigration in France
    i. These problems arise in every immigrant-receiving nation.
    ii. Anti-immigrant sentiments are on the rise due to anti-terrorist sentiments caused by 9/11 and other events.
    iii. Anti-immigration sentiments rise with a failing economy; once the economy has stabilized, there will be a decrease in these negative effects.
c. Social Services
    i. Different and inadequate because they differ from American social services.
    ii. Cultural differences
    iii. Apathy
    iv. Lack of knowledge
d. Immigrant Satisfaction with Services
    i. Immigrants will be displeased with the services provided no matter what.
    ii. It would be very difficult to gather this information from all sectors.

iii. It cannot properly reflect the work that the French social system is providing its immigrants.

e. French Social Work Models
   i. The American notion of a "social worker" does not truly exist in France.
   ii. American social workers will not learn much from these models, as they are not working well enough for the immigrants entering France.

f. West Africans in France
   i. The French perceive them as any other immigrant group and treat them as such.

g. West Africans in the United States
   i. They are not seen as a significant group within the United States and should not be given attention to.
   ii. They immigrate here because everyone else has done so.
   iii. They come here to fufill the "American Dream".
   iv. There is a lack of services catered specifically to them due to their lack of numbers within the United States.

IV. Hypothesis

This research examines the reasons as to why Francophone West Africans in Providence, Rhode Island, have chosen to relocate to the United States rather than France by conducting face-to-face interviews with members of this population.

V. Methodology

a. Sample
   i. At least five French-speaking West Africans living in Providence, RI
   ii. Have used services from the International Institute of Rhode Island within the last fifteen years

b. Data Gathering
   i. Preliminary questionnaires
      1. Country of Origin
      2. Demographics
      3. Reason(s) for relocation
   ii. Face-to-face interviews concerning:
      1. Other countries of relocation considered
      2. Why France was not chosen
      3. Primary reasons the United States was chosen
      4. Changes of opinion of United States since arrival
      5. Difficulties in finding/receiving social services
      6. In retrospect, would they have chosen another country?

c. Data Analysis

- **i.** Analysis of stories
  - **1.** Find commonalities
  - **2.** Find and predict future trends

VI. Conclusion

- **a.** Results of study
- **b.** Implications for social policy and practice

Francophone Africans are beginning to immigrate to the United States rather than France; it may be because that there are internal problems within France, such as

unemployment, that are deterring them from immigrating there. Francophone Africans are Africans that speak French as a first language, or come from a country where French is an official language, such as Senegal or Côte d'Ivoire. Other official languages spoken in these countries are typically Arabic and/or regional African languages; very few have English as another official language. Francophone Africans often come from the West coast of Africa, as there were many French colonies in that region from the early 19th century to the late 1970s. West Africa encompasses a region of seventeen African nations[i], out of which ten are Francophone[ii]. The current internal problems in France and within its government range from economic instability to anti-immigrant legislation and sentiments, all of which are connected to its immigration figures in that the internal problems can dictate how France receives its immigrants. The manner in which the Francophone African immigrants are treated in France could influence theirs or others' decision to immigrate to another country, such as the United States.

There has been an increase of African immigrants coming to the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003); in fact, this number has grown by 166.9% between the years 1990 and 2000 (Logan & Deane, 2003). In particular, West Africans have accounted for the highest increase of African-born immigrants in the United States between 1990 and 2000 (Dixon, 2006); of the 1.0 million Africans in the United States, 35 percent came from Western Africa (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). Ten out of seventeen West African countries are Francophone, which suggests that there is an increase of French-speaking African immigrants in the United States; what is curious is the fact that they are choosing a country that does not speak their language as their destination. There is one country in particular that most of these immigrants choose—France, due to its cultural, linguistic,

and historical connections to these West African countries. Since the 1960s, after the independence of several of its territories and colonies in Africa, France has been the hub of immigration for Europe. The immigrant population in France is currently 6,471,000, which is currently ten percent of the total population (United Nations, 2006). This large percentage has led to the creation of anti-immigrant feelings and political groups (Henderson, 2008). France has anti-immigrant sentiments that are similar to that of the United States, which would make one wonder why people would choose to immigrate to one over the other, as the problems are the same in both countries. However, France has one major advantage over the United States—the French language—that would lead to a French speaking immigrant choose there over the United States.

Francophone Africans and their choice of arrival to the United States is relevant to social work practice because the fact that this group coming to the United States could imply that there is something within the French political and social welfare sectors that are not meeting the needs of this population. History, ideology, and government structure have shaped how the French view and aid its immigrants (Henderson, 2008). France's social welfare system is, by nature, structurally and fundamentally different than the American welfare system. The French idea of social work and social work practice is also different from American standards. These differences between the systems and ideologies of the United States and France can be seen as differences in social work practice at the macro level, as they are practices that affect a population as a whole. By examining the differences between French social work and American social work, one can find out where there are commonalities and deficits in the services offered to clients in both countries. In effect, studying why Francophone Africans would choose the United States,

a country with very little common with their culture as their destination, rather than a country that they more familiar with, such as France, ties in with international social work practice in that it requires a comparison of different social services and structures between the United States and France.

With globalization and immigration, social workers must be competent in other forms and models of social work that are found abroad in order to better serve their clients, as there is a possibility that the social worker will be serving a client from a different country and different social welfare system. The social worker will need to have a broader knowledge of the client's background in terms of what they have been offered in another country to better determine what can be done for them in this country. Changes and adaptations in American practice models and how systems are organized may need to occur in order to better serve the client (Hokenstad & Midgley, 2004). In this instance, American social workers can learn from French social workers as to what has and has not worked for Francophone African immigrants; what they learn can be adapted to how American social workers treat and help this population.

The effectiveness of the immigration policies and social services offered in France determine whether or not they help immigrants assimilate into French society or whether they influence the immigrants to go elsewhere. If the Francophone Africans are finding fault with France, they seem to be finding something more appealing in the United States. Pinpointing the cause of this trend of migration will further help social work researchers, organizers, and practitioners serve this population.

Demographics and Causes

France, unlike most Western European countries, has had a long history of immigration (Noriel, as cited in Gran & Hein, 1997). Since the Revolution of 1789, waves of immigrants have come to France to start a new life (Henderson, 2008). After the independence of Algeria in the 1960s, there was another large wave of immigrants. As of the 2006 census, there were 6,471,000 immigrants in France (United Nations, 2006). However, it is difficult to know exactly how many Africans, in particular West Africans, there are in France due to inadequate census information. In fact, French statistics and numbers are often false, for there is no differentiation between foreigners, temporary residents, and immigrants on the national census. In addition to this, the census only includes those who want to be included (Gourvitch, as cited in Bikales, 2003). This is critical information, because illegal immigrants would logically choose not to include themselves in the census, out of fear of being found and deported. As a large number of Africans come to France illegally, one cannot accurately or specifically know how many West Africans exist in France.

There are many reasons why one would immigrate to France: language and cultural commonality; economic opportunity; asylum and refugee status; already existing family members in France; marriage; and healthcare.

Knowing the official language of the new country aides the immigrant to assimilate into society—and aides them in finding work. One main reason is the language and cultural commonality that West African countries have, as these countries were at one point French colonies or territories. Due to this factor, there may be some familiarity with the French culture and customs to the West African peoples. Many former French colonies have become nations whose citizens choose to eventually live in

France. In fact, France has created certain accords with its former territories, such as Algeria, that facilitate immigration and the acquisition of French nationality more so than other countries (GISTI, 2001; Henderson, 2008).

Immigrants have historically left their native countries in search for better economic opportunity. Migration between countries of the European Union and other European countries is common, as the European Union has a more stable and stronger economic environment that naturally includes more work opportunity. If the immigrant is a European Union national, he or she has the right and the capability to find work of any sort in France. If the immigrant is a non-EU national and enters France legally with the appropriate visa, there is the distinct possibility for work to be found. However, there is no guarantee that work will be found for them, as EU citizens are preferred over non-EU citizens in terms of employment. This is due to the belief that if workers are needed, they will be found within the European Union rather than outside of it. Despite this, it is not impossible for illegal immigrants to find employment. While professional and legal work is difficult to come by, clandestine immigrants can easily find work, albeit illegal work, in such professions such as the restaurant, construction, and garment trades (Bikales, 2003). It is often not unheard of for illegal immigrants to forge documents stating that they are legal immigrants so that they can work in the professional fields. As passports and visas to enter France and the European Union can be difficult to obtain, some find it easier to simply cross the borders without the necessary documents and forge their own.

Another reason for immigration would be refugee and asylum status. To clarify for this discussion, a refugee is a person who flees his or her home country due to persecution or conflict; an asylum seeker is someone who has filed a claim for refugee

status and is waiting for the results (UNCHR, 2007). France has long been hailed as the *pays des droits de l'homme* (country of human rights) since the Revolution of1789 and the anti-Semitic Dreyfus Affair in the late 19th century. Because of these two events, there is a perceived notion that France will serve and protect those who need it the most. This protection can come in the form of political asylum. Many of the West African countries, such as Côte d'Ivoire and Mali, have experienced political instability that has led to civil war (Edi, 2006). There was and still is a sizable group of people in this region who believe their lives to be in danger if they stay in their native country--so they seek refuge in another country. West African countries, when looked at individually, are too weak to maintain peace and security on their own (Edi, 2006). With this knowledge, one can interpret this as a sign that West African nationals will continue to seek refuge in another nation. France to this day continues to accept refugees and asylum seekers; between 2007 and 2008, France received 30, 800 claims for asylum (UNCHR, 2007).

People also immigrate to France because they already have family established there. Typically, the father or a male relative will immigrate to France, find work, and establish one's self there. Once his economic life is stable and has established residency there for at least two years, he can apply for a visa(s) for his spouse and dependent children in order for them to join him in France. This process is called *regroupement familiale* (family reunification). *Regroupement familiale* is also applicable to parents of adult children living in France if there is dire need for the children to take care of the parents (GISTI, 2008). In other instances, the immigrant has other close family members that have been assimilated into French society and have even gone so far as to acquire French citizenship. Having these tangible connections to French society can be a deciding factor in whether or not the immigrant will be able to legally cross the borders.

Marriage is another reason as to why people would immigrate there. Marriage by French definition is a purely civil and secular act that is performed by the mayor of a town; if a couple wants to have a religious ceremony, it is optional and must be done separately. If a legal immigrant is married to a French national and their marriage is recognized by the state, the foreign spouse has every right to apply for a permanent residency card to live and work within France. After a certain number of years, the foreign spouse can become a naturalized French citizen. However, immigrating to France because of marriage can be bureaucratically difficult due to the complexity of procedures and paperwork. If the couple marries in France and the foreign spouse did not enter the country legally, without a visa for example, the foreign spouse will continue to be considered undocumented. To remedy this, the foreign spouse has to return to his or her country of origin, obtain a visa, and then become a legal immigrant. In other instances, a French citizen will return to his or her parents' country of origin and marry a national of that country within those borders. The foreign spouse will then join his or her French spouse in returning to France with the correct visas and paperwork. While the procedures can range from moderate to complex in nature in terms of accessibility of visas for foreign spouses of French citizens, people continue to ask for them.

Healthcare is another reason why one would willingly choose to immigrate to France, as there are services and experts that are more likely more available in France and the European Union than the country of origin. If there are no health services for a specific ailment in the person's country of origin, he or she can apply for a visa that specifically pertains to health care that allows for him or her to live in France to receive this specific health treatment. However, this is considerably difficult to obtain. Once in France, however, healthcare is easily accessible and affordable. It is a combination of

universal coverage with a mix of public and private mix of hospital and ambulatory care, as well as higher levels of resources, and more service provision than in the United States (Rodwin, 2003). Health insurance is compulsory for everyone, but there are no competitive rates, which allows the individual to obtain at a much more affordable price; it also shows how French society views everyone on the same level of importance in terms of healthcare. In this system, everyone is given the same opportunity to have healthcare and services. With this insurance system, the more expensive procedures are often the ones most covered by the insurance companies. In addition to this, hospital care is available for all those insured (Rodwin, 2003). Unfortunately, health insurance is not granted to illegal immigrants, but they are allowed access to *l'aide médicale État* (State Medical Aide), which gives exactly the same coverage that insured health care would provide—and they are not required to pay anything for it (GISTI, 2006). In this respect, French social services provide more for their vulnerable populations than their American counterparts. In short, there are two ways for someone to have healthcare in France: either one be legally be in France and obtain health insurance and by transitive notion, hospital care, or illegally be in France and have access to their own version of legal healthcare.

There is no evidence to support the idea that this population was aware of any potential problems, such as racial or religious discrimination, that would occur upon their arrival to France. The possibility to work, escape political turmoil, opportunity to join family and/or a spouse, and free healthcare are definite reasons for immigrating to France.

Effects of Immigration in France

Immigration to France has had its share of problems for the French, in that immigrants are discriminated against and are not well received in French society. When the French economy has difficult times, the consensus of the government and the general population is to blame the immigrants, in particular, illegal immigrants (Henderson, 2008). The belief is that the augmentation in the job market is due to the rise of immigrants in the country and to the number of immigrants taking jobs away from rightful, natural-born citizens. This ideology is not entirely different from its American counterpart. During these difficult times, the government tends to tighten its nationality laws and make it harder to become a naturalized French citizen, curb immigration in general, and stop the number of unemployed people in the country and those dependent on the state. For instance, in 1974, during the oil crisis, French president Valery Giscard d'Estaing decided closed French borders to foreigners (Gastaut, as cited in Henderson, p. 24, translated by the author).

Anti-immigrant sentiments have seriously contributed to the creation of far-right political parties, such as *La Front National (FN)* or the National Front. This political party has its platform rooted in anti-immigrant, anti-Semitic, and anti-Islamic beliefs. Their slogan is "*La France pour les français"* (France for the French), which expresses their nationalistic and xenophobic ideology (Henderson, 2008). In the 1980s, the National Front wished to deport all non-European immigrants to their homelands (Weil, as cited in Henderson, 2008). This political party was not particularly note-worthy until the municipal elections of 2002, when the world was shocked that the National Front candidate had won a considerable percentage of the first round of presidential elections (Henderson, 2008). It is this political party, along with its leader Jean-Marie le Pen, that has advocated for harsher immigration and nationality laws. Currently, this party does not

hold much sway within the *Assemblé Nationale* (National Assembly, the French equivalent of the House of Representatives), but the fact that it still continues to garner seats within the legislative body demonstrates the power that that this anti-immigrant ideology has over the French political mind.

Another effect of immigration is the long sequence of legislative changes in nationality laws. Nationality laws are linked to immigration laws in that immigrants, if legal, have the right to become naturalized citizens. Becoming a naturalized citizen, with all of its benefits is a, if not the, major incentive to enter France legally. If one becomes a naturalized citizen of France, one becomes a citizen of the European Union, allowing the freedom of mobility for work and travel within the European Union. These nationality laws also affect immigration in that the children of immigrants who are born in France have a better chance of becoming French citizens. Nationality and immigration are both connected to the economy as well. Typically, when the economy is poor or slow, the unemployment rates soar. Understandably, the French government seeks to preserve the job market for its own citizens by tightening immigration laws to make it harder to enter the country and make it much more difficult to acquire French nationality. Between 1978 and 1981, former French president Valery Giscard d'Estaing tried to pass legislation that would have deported a large percentage of immigrants in France, in particular those of Algerian descent (Henderson, 2008). The mentality present at the time—and is in fact still present today within some circles of French society—is that immigrants take all jobs that rightfully belong to native-born French citizens.

France has two ways of conferring nationality: *jus solis* (right of the soil) and *jus sanguinis* (right of the blood). The first, *jus solis*, states that a child receives a country's

citizenship and nationality if the child is born within its borders. The United States confers its nationality this way by assuring any child born on American soil or territory, such as a military base, is granted American citizenship upon birth. The latter, *jus sanguinis*, states that the child takes on the nationality of its parents, regardless of being born within France's borders. Thus, should an American couple were to give birth in France, the child would not have French nationality or citizenship upon birth (Henderson, 2008).

France has a long history of changing its nationality laws that begin before the French Revolution of 1789. However, there are two important years in the history of nationality laws. The Méhaignerie Law of 1993 stated that a child born in France of immigrant parents could not become French until he or she reached the age of 18. The justification of this law was that the child must consciously want to be French and must have a grasp of French culture (Henderson, 2008). This law created an atmosphere of separation between the children of French nationals and those of immigrants—they attended the same schools, spoke the same language, and participated in the same society, but one group was *not* French. It created an "us versus them" situation between the second-generation immigrant children and the children of French citizens. In addition to this, the sudden change in the law was not entirely well-known throughout every social in France. This meant that some foreign parents did not know the legal status of their children—and neither did the children. 1998, the Guigou Law changed the provisions for obtaining French nationality. If a child was born on French soil to immigrant parents, the parents could petition for French nationality of the child, with his or her consent, at the age of thirteen. Between the age of thirteen and sixteen, the child can claim French

nationality himself. At the age of eighteen, the child is given French nationality (Henderson, 2008).

More recently in 2007, there has been the development of a law that allows, in the case of *regroupement familiale*, for an immigrant in France to prove that his or her children or spouse are biologically related to him or her by having DNA testing performed (Gdadamassi, 2007). The legislation came from the idea that immigrants were entering France under the guise of being related to someone already there; they would enter France with a fake name and forged passport. French politicians, with the implementation of this legislation, have opened a door that could lead to the mandatory testing of all immigrant families to ensure that they are truly related to the person in France. It has raised many questions; for example, how can one prove that an adopted child is in fact a member of the family? It has been declared racist and discriminatory by many organizations, such as *La Mouvement contre le Racisme et pour l'Amitié entre les Peuples* (The Movement Against Racism and For Friendship Between Peoples) (Gdadamassi, 2007). Fadela Amara, the French Secretary of State of Urban Policies, a child of Algerian immigrants herself, has been vocal against this development, stating that it is "disgusting" (Pierron, 2007).

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11th, French public sentiments towards immigrants, in particular Muslim immigrants, has turned for the worse. France has the highest concentration of Muslims out of any country in the European Union; they constitute almost ten percent of the population (U.S. Department of State, 2009).This high percentage, as well as the prominent visibility of Islamic culture in France, has created a sense of anti-Muslim feelings among the natives. Unfortunately, the French,

like Americans, automatically relate the word "Muslim" to "terrorist". France's secularity laws have created tensions between the two groups—French law states that the state will not recognize any religion, nor will it allow obvious religious symbols in public settings (Astier, 2004). This act has been viewed by the Muslim population as discriminatory and racist because it specifically targets them; for example, this law forbids Muslim women and girls from wearing the headscarf in schools and at work. The Muslim population is not projected to stop arriving in France and this is reflected in the attitudes and laws of the country.

French Social Work Models

To fully understand how the French conceive "social work", one has to have a background in the history of the French welfare state and how it has evolved. Their history and events have shaped how the French view the nation-state and how the state should serve its people. The history of the French welfare state begins with the Catholic Church. Before the Revolution, the Catholic Church did not do much as far as welfare organizations were concerned, but they did provide services to the poor and needy. After the Revolution, due to strict separation of church and state, private-sector services were available only to "believers" (Maier, Campenhausen & Mayeur, as cited in Bahle, 2003). However, after the law of March 19th, 1793, the state began to support the needy—solidarity, an ideological result of the Revolution, replaced the idea of charity (Hamburger, Sander & Wöbcke, ?).

The French social work and welfare model can be described as *decentralized*, which is a stark difference from the rest of the services and hierarchy of the French state. Historically, the French state has been very centralized; this decentralization occurred in

the 1980s. Some reasons for this include the global oil/gas crisis, legal immigration policy changes, and the shift of political power between the UDF (Union for a French Democracy) and the Socialist Party (Henderson, 2008). One main reason for decentralization of French social services was that the Socialist Party, who gained power in 1981 with the election of Francois Mitterrand, was mistrustful of a small group of elite conservatives with the control of social services (Bahle, 2003). Another reason was that the socialists wanted to revive the non-profit sector as a basis for social solidarity—a key ideology at the time (Bahle, 2003). The government presented decentralization to create more democracy, better coordination of local services, more sensitivity to local demands and ultimately, less bureaucracy. The government wanted to create a manageable and accountable welfare state, as well as social workers in that same regard (Ward, 2006). There are in fact four, as opposed to three, levels of French government: the central state, *régions, départements,* and towns (Ward, 2006). After decentralization, the direction of social services was no longer a job for the national government; instead, it was passed down to the *départements*. As a result of this decentralization, the connection between the public and private sectors was strengthened at the local level (Bahle, 2003). Eventually, privatization became synonymous with decentralization.

The French social welfare model can be described as a mix between Bismarckian and English systems. Bismarckian can be defined as a national health insurance system that allows for the person to have easy access to health care without waiting for them. Core values of this model include equality in healthcare accessibility, a strong financial base, efficiency and efficacy (Ryan, 2008). The Bismarckian state should also provide care in the form of social protection for one's entire lifespan. In the English system, there are universal rights for citizens and families; this idea was put into the French

Constitution of 1948 (Ward, 2006). Hence, the French system is based on the idea that health care is something that should be easy, affordable, and universally given to everyone. In contrast to this system of healthcare, the American model is based off of personal responsibility and is paid by insured only (Ryan, 2008).

There are differences between the American and French social work models and how social work is practiced within the two countries. For example, in France, interest groups that exist for immigrants and the expansion of immigration legislation are absent from the social work setting; in the United States, plenty of these interest groups can be found (Guiraudon, 2002). The French social professions, including that of social work, are closely connected to the medical domain in practice and in training; one type of social worker is required to be trained at the National School of Public Health (Hamburger, Sander & Wöbcke, ?). From this fact, one can conclude that French social work is based off of the medical model, which is very different from American social work. American social work is a blend of many different models, with the ecological model as a French social work also tends to be more macro-based, whereas the American model is more micro-based.

One aspect of French social work that differs from American social work is the sense of a unified identity within the profession. French social workers, it seems, lack a voice in regards to the definition of their roles—a definite feature in the identity crisis that they are currently experiencing within the French social environment (Ward, 2006). They feel as though their profession is under defined and undervalued; this can be attributed to the extreme diversification of the level of recognition and qualifications (Ward, 2006). Social work education is also very diverse, as there are almost a dozen

different types of specialization offered in universities. Also, there are a multitude of professions that are classified as social work in the American context, but are not called "social work" in the French sense. The direct equivalent of a *social worker* in French is *assistante sociale*, but there are a plethora of other professions [give examples] that are categorized under social work in the French system.

Social Services

Social services are a key component to a country's government and can be a major influence on the quality of life in a country. In particular, the quality of social services can affect immigration trends and flows into a country. Fix and Laglagaron perfectly express the relationship between social welfare and immigration:

> "Nations that offer immigrants generous benefits serve as a magnet for poor immigrants who would qualify for subsidies and repel those who would have to pay for them. Thus, welfare's availability changes the composition of the immigration flow and enables some unintegrated immigrants to stay who would have otherwise returned, leading to a decline in immigrant quality" (p. 10).

That being said, immigrants have two good reasons to choose France as their country of destination: health care and health insurance. French social services are granted to all legal French citizens. Overall, there are extensive services for children, while limited for the elderly; 99% of children ages three to five are covered by French social services, as opposed to 6.5% coverage for elderly institutional care (Bahle, 2003). The French health insurance program is very appealing because it covers services ranging from hospital care, outpatient services, prescription drugs, nursing home care, cash benefits, and to a lesser extent, dental and vision care (Rodwin, 2003). Because healthcare for illegal immigrants is covered under *l'aide Medical Etat*, it is free and accessible, which can account for why a person would want to immigrate there. If this

system of health care did not exist in France, then perhaps there would not be such an influx of illegal immigrants there.

Immigrant Satisfaction with Services

While there is little literature to give any indication of immigrant satisfaction with social work services, one cannot help but note that since 1990, one-fourth of the foreigner population has left France—the only country in the European Union that has had a decrease in immigrant numbers within this time frame (Guiraudon, 2002). There also is a lack of literature in the area of needs-assessment or client feedback; it does not seem to be a part of French social work methodology. This is interesting—if the social workers do not know how well their services are performed, perhaps they are not adequately providing services to their clients, in particular migrant clients.

[West] Africans in France

As previously stated, the French census does not take into consideration the differences between immigrants, foreigners, and temporary residents. As many African immigrants enter France illegally, they often choose not to participate in the census, as it would alert the legal authorities of their status. If legal authorities were to find out about this, they would be issued an *obligation de quitter la territoire francaise*--a legal document stating that they must leave French territory within a certain time frame, usually within a month's notice (GISTI, 2008). Therefore, one cannot know exactly how many West African immigrants there are in France. However, based off of personal experience from the interns at *La Ligue des droits de l'Homme* (Human Rights League), most of the immigrants that were consulted were of African descent. Additionally, a vast majority of these African immigrants were clandestine (Henderson, 2008).

The French typically perceive immigrants in accordance to their nationality or the region from whence they came. Overall, European immigrants are viewed much more favorably. The French think that Africans are "going to bring all of their family with them and that Europeans are more qualified in the domains of education and work. They also think that Europeans are culturally the closest to French society, so they are more willing to welcome them" (Nadia Sebtaoui, cited in Henderson, 2008, p. 30, translated by the author). With this statement, one can see how the French generally view Africans—culturally too different from their own to function in their society. There is an "us versus them" mentality in France that prevents them from seeing these African immigrants as anything but people out to exploit the social service system. In the past few years, Europe has grown increasingly inhospitable towards African immigrants, because they perceive all Africans to be Muslim—ergo, terrorist (Henderson, 2008). Overall, the French believe that it is the obligation of the African immigrant to assimilate into French society (Gran & Hein, 1997).

[West] Africans in the United States

In the past two decades, the United States has seen a significant increase in the number of African immigrants; it has in fact quadrupled since 1980 (Takougang, 2003). The African-born population makes up roughly three-percent of the population in the United States (Gordon, 1998). There are approximately 50,000 legal African immigrants coming into the United States every year; more African immigrants have arrived in the United States since 1990 than the preceding two centuries (Roberts, 2005). This means that there are more Africans immigrating to the United States nowadays than during all of the slave trade. It is interesting to note this year, because a fourth of foreigners have left

France since 1990. There is a possibility that this one-fourth has gone to the United States. In particular to West Africans, they have been the fastest growing African population in the United States between 1990 and 2000, making up thirty-five percent of the 1.0 million Africans in the country in 2002 (U.S. Census Bureau). West African immigrants are typically found in New York and Maryland (Diouf, 2005).

A factor that could be influencing the migration of Africans to the United States is the lack of strict immigration and nationality laws. The year 1986 saw the passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act, which gave permanent legal status to all undocumented aliens with roots in the United States (Gordon, 1998). This liberal policy led to a huge increase of immigrants, most of which came from Third World countries. The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1990 created a diversity program that encouraged the immigration of skilled and employed immigrants to the United States. People were selected to come to the United States based on a lottery system. This diversity program definitely contributed to the increase of African immigrants in the United States: in 1995, there were an allocated 20,200 visas solely for African nationals (Gordon, 1998).

For the most part, Americans seem to have a more positive view of African immigrants than Europeans, because they see Africans as better educated, eager to work, more compliant and non-threatening (Diouf, as cited in Roberts, 2005). As the United States is more heterogeneous in regards to physical appearance, Africans also find themselves treated better there than in France, as the general population cannot determine if they are African-American or an African immigrant (Roberts, 2005). Africans that come to the United States are generally better educated than other immigrant populations;

most of these immigrants come here to complete their education at the college and university level (Diouf, 2005).

As the African and West African population is fairly new to the United States, there seems to be a lack of strong sentiments against them. France is clearly more exhausted than the United States in serving this population, as the French have tried every few years to curb immigration (legal and illegal), as well as keep their citizenship to their native-born population.

American nationality laws are also less strict than they are in France. The principle of *jus soli* allows for the children of immigrants to become American citizens at birth. This law indirectly shows that the United States is more open to immigrants rather than France; on the other hand, this could be because the United States is a country based on immigration and it more adapted to this movement.

There are organizations in the United States that cater specifically to African immigrants; for example, there is the African Services Committee in New York City that aides immigrants in learning English, with legal paperwork, AIDS/HIV testing, and obtaining food ("Immigrant Support", 2006). The African communities themselves act as organizations to help their fellow countrymen.

L'autre côté

Demographics & Causes

Despite the efforts of the conservative political parties, 1970s immigration policies, and current French president Nicholas Sarkozy, Francophone African immigration is an issue that is not likely to end in the near future. During the postwar

period, France was the only European country to encourage immigration; the United States was another country to encourage this (Guiraudon, 2002). This can explain why there continues to be waves of immigrants arriving in France to this day—they have adapted to this open policy towards them. In the 1970s, when there were waves of high unemployment and high rates of deportation and expulsion, immigrants still found their way to this country, which suggests that they will continue to immigrate to France in the future.

Historically, even when the French economy and job market has been lackluster, immigrants still choose to flock to this particular country. Despite high unemployment rates, the chances of finding work, legal or illegal, is much higher in France than in the country of origin. Poverty is rampant throughout Africa, which is a driving force behind immigration to another country.

The pursuit of higher education is one major reason why France will continue to have consistent immigrants. Students from within the European Union, as well as Francophone African nations, venture into France to attend university. In the 2004-2005 academic year, there were more than 250,000 foreign university students in France, half of whom came from Francophone Africa (French Embassy in the United States, as cited in Murphy, 2006). It is, in fact, easier for students to obtain a visa to enter the country due to the 2006 immigration laws. These laws were imposed by then Minister of the Interior and current French President Nicolas Sarkozy, which created the idea of "selective immigration". This law was created in attempts to stop clandestine immigration, as well as create a skilled workforce of all nationalities. It also allowed the encouragement of foreign student immigration, as well as making it easier for them to stay there after the

completion of their academic studies (Murphy, 2006). France wanted to change the type of migrant arriving to meet the needs of the country—that is, migrants with highly-marketable skills willing to join the French workforce.

The fact that foreign individuals live and work in France adds to the list of reasons why one would choose to immigrate there despite political and public attitudes. The individual has the right to have his or her family join him or her in France after living there for two years; this is the concept of *regroupement familiale* (GISTI, 2008). Family reunification has been the leading cause of international migration since before 2000. To narrow down this population, 70% of family migration came from Africa, of which 18.3% came from Sub-Sahara Africa (Tanaka, 2007). Despite recent laws making it more difficult for people to enter France via *regroupement familiale*, they will still continue to enter France for this reason.

Effects of Immigration to France

Immigration is an issue that every developed country, particularly those in the European Union. Since the signing of the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997, immigration policy has become an issue pertinent to the European Union as a whole, which suggests that most countries within this economic union are having issues with illegal immigration and its consequences (Guiraudon, 2002). Illegal immigration is a topic that goes beyond the European continent; it is a sizable topic in the United States. With illegal immigration comes the economic, social, and political problems that are discussed in every political circle. For example, in the United States, conservatives want to stop immigration altogether, as well as construct a physical barrier between the USA and Mexico.

American immigration laws are more aligned with the idea of physically keeping illegal aliens from crossing the borders, as well as using 21st century technology to aid this process. However, current French immigration laws are more keen on limiting certain groups while facilitating the immigration process for specific groups, while carefully guarding its nationality and citizenship rights (Murphy, 2006).

The attacks of September 11th led to the creation of anti-terrorist laws in several countries; many of these laws specifically targeted illegal immigration for fear that this population would harbor terrorists. Anti-terrorist sentiments have increased the "need" for harsher and stricter immigration policies in many countries--had these terrorists attacks not have happened, these new laws would not exist. Governments are now more strict and quick in terms of deportation and incarceration of illegal immigrants because of past events and laws when they normally would not pay these immigrants any mind at all. For example, the United States has been known for arresting Muslim Arab men in larger quantities post-9/11 than they ever did before (Chamie, 2003).

As stated previously, French immigration and nationality laws are directly linked to the economy: if the economy is faltering, laws and policies become stricter due to conservative parties taking control of the government. In fact, every economic recession since 1888 has resulted in the augmentation of anti-immigrant public opinion (Lochak, 1996, as cited in Henderson, 2008). Conservative parties are more inclined to be elected during times of economic crisis because it is seen as a return to traditional values—something stable in an instable environment. However, when left-wing parties take control of government, due to stabilization of the economy and change of public sentiment towards conservative attitudes, laws and policies are generally changed to

allow more open immigration (Henderson, 2008). Once the economy has stabilized and the government becomes more liberally based, the negative effects of said policies will alter.

French Social Work Models

To properly explore the French social work model from an American perspective, one has to fully see the ideological differences between the two. One major reason why there is such a difference between French and American social work models lies in the fact that Americans and American social institutions are by nature more individualistic. Americans believe that success is determined by the efforts of the individual rather than forces outside of their own control. In addition to this, 33% of Americans do agree that the government should provide a social safety net, in contrast with nearly 60% of European countries (Schuck, 2008). America encourages individualism while discouraging collectivism, which is defined as putting the needs of the community of the needs of the individual. This can be seen with the arguments of the very construction of American government in terms of large or small government, as well as the hesitancy of the formation of labor unions in the early 20th century. This individualistic mindset has shaped how Americans serve those in need—it has created the conservative social atmosphere that exists today. Conservative ideology dictates that it is the fault of the individual for not succeeding, i.e. becoming dependent on social services, because he or she is seen as lazy and corrupt. This ideology and framework goes further to say that it is up to the individual to overcome their hardships; the individual has to be encouraged to work (Popple & Leighninger, 2002).

As individualism is discouraged in a country, collectivism becomes more prevalent. Collectivism can be related to a key element in French immigration law—assimilation. In French society, an immigrant must assimilate into the host country by adopting its language and customs as quickly as possible. French assimilationist attitudes are prominent in public opinion, as measured by housing, childrens' integration in schools, and childrens' assimilation into French culture (Gran & Hein, 1997). In essence, the immigrant is asked to become as French as humanly and efficiently possible. Conversely, France has accepted immigrants on a more individual basis than the United States; they welcome family members of immigrant workers already established there (Levine, 2004). This type of migration is based on the needs of the individual in France. The United States differs from France in that it has accepted immigration *en masse*, something that France is only beginning to experience. Because of this sudden change in migration trends, France has yet to modify its policies to adapt to new populations and their needs.

American social workers, it seems, cannot draw any productive conclusions from the French social work model, as it is not designed for a capitalistic democracy because it has more individualistic characteristics than not. In addition to this, if French social work models are not adequately meeting the needs of its immigrant clients, American social workers cannot learn anything new from them. However, they can use this knowledge of French models to know what they should not do in their practices.

Social Services

The social service sphere in France is intended to aid everyone in need, including

illegal immigrants. The creation of *l'aide medical Etat* allows for illegal immigrants to have free healthcare; *La Ligue des droits de l'Homme* (Human Rights League) provides free legal advice to immigrants of all statuses, as well as French nationals. However, there is a lack of information in regards to how and if these types of organizations and services are evaluated.

To continue with the idea of service evaluation, one does not know how well services are being performed from the view of the clients themselves. Immigrants, from a conservative standpoint, will never be fully satisfied with services given to them; why should there be any improvements on the situation if they will continuously be unhappy?

French social services, according to research and reviews, cannot be viewed as inadequate from an American perspective because when trying to compare their quality, but because they are viewed as *different*. This difference makes it difficult, if not impossible, to compare the two systems, because they are coming from two completely different cultures and value systems. French ideologies and views of the nation-state and its role to its constituents differ from the American counterparts. As discussed previously, France does not hold individualism in any particular high esteem; this is evident in its centralized government that promotes collectivism over individualism.

West Africans in France

The French do not give West Africans in their specificity prominent attention, as they perceive all Africans to be one and the same, regardless of culture or nationality. French census forms also do not ask for particulars in terms of ethnicity, which can explain why there is no specific attention given to West Africans. However, because France colonized this region of Africa, they must be aware that many of the African

immigrants come from this region.

West Africans in the United States

West Africans are beginning to become a larger population within the United States. However, their numbers are not high enough to be considered note-worthy; they make up a very small percentage of the total immigrant population in the United States.

Because of this lack of significant numbers, there is no organization that specifically caters to West Africans, because there has not been a need of yet for any group.

West Africans have immigrated to the United States because every other immigrant group before them as done so; proceeding actions have created a trend that has drawn immigrants from around the world to the land of opportunity.

Many of these immigrants come to the United States in pursuit of the *American Dream*—the idea that anyone can make anything for him or herself. However, with current unemployment and homelessness rates, in addition to racist and discriminatory attitudes and a faltering social welfare system, this is far from the "dream." Many critics would go so far to suggest that the American Dream has been put on hold for the time being.

Study Question

French-speaking West Africans often choose to immigrate to France due to language and cultural commonality, previously established communities, and economic opportunity. However, this large migration has had a negative effect upon the indigenous French society, such as anti-immigrant sentiment, as well as the tightening of nationality laws. This research investigates the reasons as to why French-speaking West Africans in

Providence, Rhode Island have chosen to relocate to the United States as opposed to France by conducting face-to-face interviews.

Methodology

This research took the form of face-to-face interviews with members of the Francophone West African group that resided in the Providence, Rhode Island vicinity. There were three interviews conducted with one male and two females from three different Francophone West African countries. These participants were found due to their involvement with an agency that serves immigrants and refugees and a residential living facility, both of which are located in Providence, Rhode Island. There are limitations with this study, as there were only three interviews conducted.

Data Gathering

Data gathering began with a preliminary questionnaire given to the participant that asked the following items: name, gender, age, country of origin, level of education (ranging from middle school level to the doctoral level), and a reason or reasons for relocating in the first place. Specific reasons for relocation included "economic hardship", "political instability", "family reunification", "marriage", "seeking asylum", "education" and "other", which the participant was able to fill out. The participant was then asked a series this series of questions: "Where there other countries considered in terms of relocation?", "Did you consider France?", "Why was France not chosen?", "What were the primary reasons for choosing the United States?", "Has your opinion of the United States changed since your arrival?", "Did you have any difficulty in finding or receiving social services?" and "In retrospect, would you relocate to another country?".

Naturally, the topics of American citizenship were brought up, as well as hardships that the individual has encountered.

Data Analysis

The researcher analyzed the participants' stories individually and by finding commonalities and trends amongst the three.

Limitations/Author's Note

This study was intended to have at least five participants, but due to a lack of response from the community and a lack of adequate time, only three participants from two agencies were interviewed. Therefore, the findings are not entirely applicable to the French-speaking West African immigrant population as a whole. In addition to this, the few conclusions drawn have the possibility of being random coincidences due to the small sample.

Findings: Individual Data

Person "A" was a 48-year old male from Senegal. His highest level of education was at the bachelor's level. He indicated that he left Senegal due to political instability and due to his seeking asylum, and has been in the United States for twelve years. For safety reasons, "A" wishes that the circumstances of his asylum remain undisclosed. When asked if there were any other countries other than the United States considered for relocation, he said that his only other choice was France. "A" said that he did not choose France because "Senegal [was] a French colony…the two are very close. Senegal is the door from Africa to France." Due to political closeness and accessibility between the two countries, "it was more safe to get further away." Safety in distance was the primary reason why "A" chose the United States.

There were secondary reasons as to why he came here. “A” continued to say that everyone he knew in Senegal wanted to come to the United States for some reason or another, whether it be “basketball” or “to see the biggest country in the world…everyone wants to come here.” Racial discrimination was another secondary factor in his decision to come to the United States, as there are African Americans in the United States. Here, no one thinks him to be simply African, but instead African American.

When asked whether or not his opinion of the United States has changed since his arrival, “A” said no. He continued to say that “[here], you can be anything you want to be…you just have to be careful every second.” He stressed safety and being careful in this country, which is probably a habit left over from the political instability of his country. Despite his emphasis on safety in this country, “A” continuously emphasized his love for the United States. When asked if in retrospect he would relocate to another country, he said “no, I would come over here straight away.”

In terms of obtaining social services, “A” had no difficulties. He currently has a job as a sales associate and will have his American citizenship next year. Overall, “A” has had a positive experience with the United States.

Person “B” is a 39-year old female from the Ivory Coast. She has a master’s in French literature. She indicated that she left her country of origin due to a lack of employment. “B” has been here since 2000. She is currently married to an American citizen and is waiting for her citizenship papers to go through the system.

When asked which countries she considered relocating to, “B” thought of going to Spain and the United States. France was not an option. When asked why this was, she said that “immigration levels [to France] are so high that it’s very difficult to find a job.”

She continued to say that everyone from French-speaking Africa has immigrated to France or is wanting to go to France, making employment levels go down. “B” continued to say that “you want to bring something new to a job”; hence it would be difficult to do so when everyone is bringing the same sort of education to the same country. When asked why she primarily chose the United States, “B” said she already had a brother here. She “wanted to go somewhere where [she] knew someone.”

When asked if whether or not her opinion of the United States has changed since her arrival, “B” said “yes—when I came here, I realized it wasn’t what [I] thought…life is not easy. You can live fairly, but you have to work for it.” However, “B” said that she would not relocate to another country if she could redo it all.

In terms of social services, “B” said it was “very difficult to access” services. She said she “overcame it by working hard…you gotta deal with it.” When asked what was the most difficult part of coming to the United States, “B” said it was the education. “I came here with my master’s and I thought I could go far. I had to start at the bottom.” Higher education degrees in foreign countries are often not accepted in the United States. “B” is now continuing her education in nursing, but she had to obtain her GED. She found this degrading and humiliating, as she already had her master’s degree and had written a dissertation on French poetry. She had to overcome many hardships and stereotypes of being from a developing country. “If you come from another country,” “B” said, “people think you’re dumb.”

Person “C” is a 43-year old female from Guinea who has completed high school and has a diploma in secretarial work. She came to the United States in 1993 and married another immigrant here soon after. She has two children who were born in the United

States. “C” said that she left from Guinea because “there, after you complete school, you usually can’t find work.” “C” said “over here if you’re working, you make money”, which further illustrates this. When asked if she considered any other countries to go to, “C” said she only thought of going to the United States; France was not thought of whatsoever. She chose the United States because she “wanted to make money” and give her future children a “good education.”

“C” said her opinion of the United States has changed since her arrival here, in that this country is what you make it to be. “They say it’s number one and it’s true. If you don’t have problems, you don’t have problems,” she said. She had no problems in finding and receiving social services, she “began work no problem….began paying taxes.” The only problem “C” has encountered is obtaining her Green Card, which she has filed for since her arrival. A few years ago, Immigration Services wanted to deport her back to Guinea. After showing that she paid her taxes and was here on a work visa, they dropped her case. Currently, she is still waiting for her Green Card. Overall, it seems that “C” was most pleased with her choice of the United States.

Discussion

The three participants each had their individual experiences in coming to the United States, but there were themes that were shared between two out of the three participants. It is interesting to note that only “A” considered going to France instead of the United States, whereas “B” and “C” had the United States at the top of their lists. “A” and “C” had no problems at all in finding and receiving social services, while “B” found it very difficult to access them. The fact that all of the participants had to learn a new language upon immigrating to this country was not a daunting task to them, nor was it

even mentioned among any of them.

One common theme among the three participants was the fact that their opinions of the United States changed after their arrival here. All three expressed how they did not think this country was how they initially thought it was. The idea of the American Dream can be applied to this theme, in that the participants wanted to find it. Upon arrival to this country, however, they discovered that it is not as easy as it seems here. Another common theme found from the individual stories is the fact that despite some initial difficulties, they would not retrospectively relocate to another country. All three participants enthusiastically emphasized on the fact that the United States is a wonderful country of opportunity.

Table A

Participant	**Gender**	**Age**	**Country of Origin**	**Education Level**	**Primary Reason for Relocating**	**Reason for choosing the USA**
"A"	Male	48	Senegal	Bachelor's	Political instability	Racial discrimination in France
"B"	Female	39	Ivory Coast	Master's	Lack of employment	Brother was already here
"C"	Female	43	Guinea	High School	Lack of employment	Wanted to give her children a good education

Table B

	Common Themes Found During Interviews			
Participant	USA as 1st choice	Easy access to social services	Change in opinion of USA after arrival	Would not retrospectively relocate to

				another country
“A”		X	X	X
“B”	X		X	X
“C”	X	X	X	X

Conclusion

French-speaking West Africans are coming to the United States instead of going to France. It was hypothesized that French-speaking West Africans immigrate to France due to language and cultural commonality, previously established communities, and economic opportunity. This research was aimed at finding out why members of this group were immigrating to the United States instead of France by asking them questions pertaining to their choice of relocation. However, from talking with three members of this group, it seems that there was more economic opportunity in the United States, and that the language commonality with France was not a deciding factor for them. Having family in the country of relocation, however, did have some sway in the decision making process.

While these are interesting findings, this researcher contends that until more interviews are conducted with a bigger sample, these findings cannot be applied to the French-speaking West African population and their immigration to the United States. However, since there are a variety of common responses from the three participants, this could possibly indicate that there would be others that come to the United States for the same reasons.

This study provides implications for social work practice in that social workers need to research what is causing a particular group is coming to their country so that they can further aid their clients. For example, if a country has political instabilities that are causing immigrants to come to the United States, social workers need to be aware of all the information and problems that comes with political instability. Social workers also need to be able to have adequate knowledge of their client's culture and what expectations they have of the United States, in order to better understand their frame of reference and to help them readjust to their new environment. Additionally, this study concludes that social workers need to learn more about different cultures, be aware of global events and conflicts, and the global economy as a whole in order to better understand their clients and the reasons as to why they came here.

In terms of future social work research, this study suggests that social workers need to further investigate immigration trends to the United States and overall global migration trends. This also suggests that social workers need to research the likelihood of new immigrant groups arriving to the United States as well.

When speaking of future policies, social workers will need to advocate and create policies that are open-minded and beneficial towards various immigrant populations. Currently, there are varying attitudes towards documented and undocumented immigrants in the United States, which directly affects the services that are offered and given to immigrants. Social workers need to be aware of policies that affect immigrants of all sorts and what steps they need to take in order to advocate for their clients.

Appendix A

Preliminary Questionnaire

Name:

Gender:

Age:

Country of Origin:

Level of Education:

middle school

high school

some college education

bachelor's degree

master's degree

doctorate

Reason(s) for leaving your country of origin: (circle all that apply)

Economic hardship family reunification marriage political instability

seeking asylum education other:_____

Appendix B

Interview Questions

Where there other countries considered in terms of location?

Did you consider France?

Why was France not chosen?

What were the primary reasons for choosing the United States?

Has your opinion of the US changed since arriving here?

In retrospect, would you relocate to another country; etc, ?

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[i] West African countries would include: Benin*, Burkina Faso*, Cape Verde**, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea*, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast*, Liberia, Mali*, Mauritania*, Niger*, Nigeria, Senegal*, Sierra Leone*, St Helena, and Togo*. (* Denotes a Francophone nation; ** denotes countries that are not classified as Francophone, but people still learn French in school due to their proximity to Francophone nations) (Dixon, 2006).

[ii] Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo.