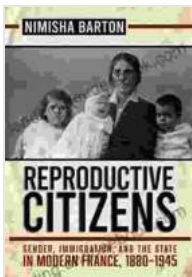


Gender, Immigration, and the State in Modern France, 1880-1945

The late 19th and early 20th centuries witnessed profound social, economic, and political transformations in France. Among these changes was a significant increase in immigration, which brought new challenges and opportunities for the French state. This article examines the intersection of gender, immigration, and the state in France from 1880 to 1945, exploring how these factors shaped each other and influenced the development of French society.



Reproductive Citizens: Gender, Immigration, and the State in Modern France, 1880–1945 by John Tirman

★★★★☆ 4 out of 5

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File size : 3487 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Print length : 400 pages



Immigration and Gender in the Late 19th Century

During the last decades of the 19th century, France experienced a surge in immigration, primarily from Italy, Spain, and Poland. This influx of foreign workers was largely driven by the country's rapid industrialization, which created a demand for labor in factories, mines, and other industries. Among

the immigrants were a significant number of women, who often worked in low-paying jobs in the textile and garment industries.

The arrival of these foreign women raised concerns among French authorities about their potential impact on French society. Some officials feared that immigrant women would compete with native-born French women for jobs and resources. Others worried that they might bring with them foreign ideas and values that could undermine French culture and traditions.

The State's Response to Female Immigration

In response to these concerns, the French state implemented a series of policies and regulations designed to control and limit female immigration. In 1880, the government passed a law that required all foreign women who wished to work in France to obtain a special permit. This permit was only granted if the woman could prove that she had a job and a place to live. In addition, the government established a system of border patrols to prevent undocumented women from entering the country.

These policies were only partially effective in controlling female immigration. While the number of foreign women entering France declined somewhat in the late 19th century, many women were still able to find work in the country, often in informal or underground economies.

The Interwar Years

During the interwar years (1918-1939), immigration to France continued to be a major issue. However, the focus of concern shifted from female immigration to the arrival of male workers from North Africa and other

French colonies. These men were often employed in the construction, mining, and transportation industries.

The state's response to male immigration was more restrictive than its response to female immigration. In 1932, the government passed a law that limited the number of foreign workers who could enter France each year. This law was intended to protect French workers from competition for jobs and to prevent overcrowding in the country's major cities.

Despite these restrictions, the number of foreign workers in France continued to grow during the interwar years. By 1939, there were over 2 million foreign workers in France, representing approximately 10% of the workforce.

Gender and Immigration during World War II

The outbreak of World War II in 1939 had a profound impact on immigration to France. The French government suspended all immigration, and many foreign workers were repatriated to their home countries. However, the war also created a new need for foreign labor, particularly women.

During the war, French women were mobilized to work in factories and other industries to support the war effort. This created a labor shortage in the domestic sector, which was traditionally filled by foreign women. In response, the French government recruited women from North Africa and other colonies to work as domestic servants and nurses.

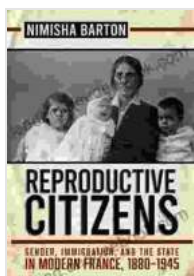
After the war, many of these women remained in France, where they continued to work in low-paying jobs. This led to a significant increase in

the number of foreign women living in France, which reached over 500,000 by 1945.

The intersection of gender, immigration, and the state in France during the late 19th and early 20th centuries was a complex and dynamic one. The state's policies and regulations regarding immigration were shaped by concerns about the potential impact of foreign women and men on French society and the economy. These policies often reflected the gendered assumptions and prejudices of the time, resulting in different treatment for male and female immigrants. Despite the challenges and restrictions they faced, foreign women and men played an important role in French society and economy during this period, and their contributions shaped the development of the country in the decades that followed.

Further Reading

- Anne-Catherine Pierrès, "'Aliens' and 'Nationals': Immigration and the Question of Citizenship in Nineteenth-Century France Revisited," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 124, No. 3 (2019)
- Leslie Page Moch, *Moving Europeans: Migration in Western Europe since 1650* (Indiana University Press, 2003)
- Sarah Fishman, "'Enemies within' or 'Useful Guests'?", *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 124, No. 3 (2019)



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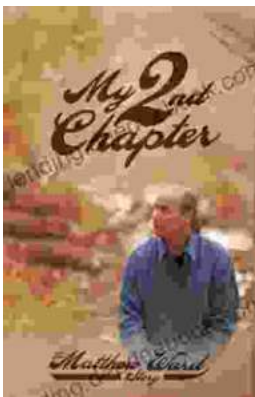
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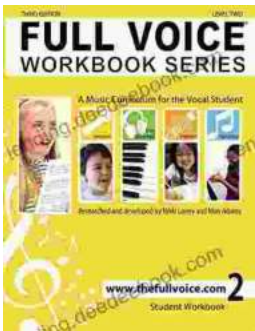
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