

BECOMING *BEUR*:
SOCIAL MARGINALIZATION AND THE EMERGENCE OF A COLLECTIVE IDENTITY
FOR PARIS' MAGHREBI YOUTH



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Introduction

In his 1984 book *Hospitalité Française : Racisme et immigration Maghrébine*, Tahar Ben Jelloun wrote, “Lethal racism and passionate rejection of the other are gashes being inflicted on the face of France.”¹ The comment stands as an apt reflection of a moment in which race had come to the forefront of much political discussion in France. This question of race and the “other” often centered on France’s population of Maghrebi youth in particular, who found themselves caught in the middle of heated arguments about race, immigration, and belonging in France, and participated actively in their own demonstrations such as the 1983 *Marche pour l’égalité et contre racisme*.² The demonstrations turned violent in the 1990s, when a wave of rioting broke out in the Parisian *banlieues* after the deaths of two boys of African descent (one Maghrebi, the other Malian). The riots caused a media storm that captured the world’s attention, turning a public eye on Paris’ racial tensions and perpetuating an image of the *banlieues* as being on the brink of explosion with their prevalence of crime, violence, and anomie.³

In the last decades of the twentieth century, with racial and socioeconomic tensions running high, it seems that everywhere in the *metropole* people were looking to redefine what it meant to be French in a post-colonial world. It is at this time, in the late 1980s and 1990s, that the term “*beur*” became widely used to

¹ Tahar Ben Jelloun, *French Hospitality: Racism and North African Immigrants*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 44.

² Commonly referred to as *Marche des beurs*

³ Tyler Stovall, “From Red Belt to Black Belt: Race, Class, and Urban Marginality in Twentieth-Century Paris,” *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 355.

describe the second and third generation children of North African immigrants in France. These Maghrebi youth were often defined as an “other” through terms like immigrant, Arab—words that connote or even stress their social marginalization. The *beurs*, in turn, tend to express themselves using a collective identity defined by this sense of social marginalization and otherness.

This thesis seeks to elucidate the concept of a Parisian “*beur* culture” as it surfaced during this period by examining the emergence of this collective identity as it is constructed both externally and within the group, with special attention paid to the ways in which it relies on a sense of social marginalization from mainstream France. The first chapter provides an overview of the history of Arab and North African immigration in France as its make up shifted over time, informing a complex set of policies and politics regarding North Africans, which in turn informed perceptions of the *beur* population of the 1980s and 1990s. Chapter 2 delves into the concept of *beurs* as a social minority, specifically examining levels of spatial segregation. In so doing, the chapter also introduces the centrality of the Paris *banlieues* to the understanding of *beur* identity. Chapter 3 primarily explores the artistic expressions of *beur* identity in the 1990s and the wave of Americanization, which appropriated African-American hip-hop culture to express a sense of social marginalization and lack of opportunity.

Chapter 1: *Beurs* and the Cultural Inheritance

Most French people equate a Maghrebi with an Arab with a Muslim... It is true that Maghrebis are often considered, not for that which they truly are, but for that which others suppose them to be, along with all the prejudices that the facts of the history of colonization carry with them, with all those stereotypes forged by men.⁴

-Mohand Khellil

The concept of collective identity is one so elusive to definition as to inspire years of scholarly debate. For *beurs*, the pin-pointing of any specific identity is no less of a complex process. The confusion regarding *beur* identity in the late twentieth-century—that is, the tendency to “equate a Maghrebi with an Arab with a Muslim”—is greatly informed by the complex history of North Africans in France—a history that encompassed colonization, brutal war, and subsequent waves of immigration. In this chapter, I seek to examine the history of North African presence in France, highlighting shifts in its make-up and the lasting legacies that it left in terms of reactionary policy and public perception that both still informed the creation of collective identity for the *beurs* many years later.

Early Arab Presence in Paris and the Roots of *Assimilation*

The term “*beur*,” which emerged in France in the 1980s and consists of an etymological slang derivative of the word *Arabe*, stands as a melding of two ethno-cultural identities in France: that of North African descendants and that of the white French. Behind this term exists a long history of French-Arab relations that would

⁴ Mohand Khellil, “Un phénomène migratoire,” *Maghrébins de France de 1960 à nos jours: la naissance d'une communauté* (Toulouse: Éditions Privat, 2004), 46. My translation.

come to inform the experiences, cultures, and identities of these *beurs*. The significance of these historic relations comes across most clearly with an understanding of the recent, twentieth-century history of North Africans as migrants in France. In examining the ethno-cultural identity of these *beurs* some understanding of Arabs' place in the history of Paris proves useful as it informs much of the later confusion of *keur* identity through the complex colonial and migrant history that fails to provide a context for the emergence of a clear or consistent political identity to North Africans in France.

The Arab presence has an extensive history in Paris. As early as the Napoleonic Era, a "small handful" of Arabs had settled in the city, comprising a group of intellectuals that made their way within the elite circles of Paris.⁵ Though small, this group labeled generally as "Arab" was made up of a diverse mix of Egyptians, Turks and North Africans, of whom there were Christians, Jews, and Muslims alike.⁶ Evidence suggests the existence of "close affective relations" between these Arabs and native Parisians and this seems hardly surprising, as their presence was based out of connections within small elite circles.⁷

France would not extend its colonial empire into North Africa until 1881.⁸ Nonetheless, towards the last years of the Empire a very early foreshadowing of modern-day relations between white and Arab Parisians seems to emerge. During this time, the Arab presence in Paris shifted to become "a growing heterogeneous

⁵ Ian Coller. *Arab France: Islam and the Making of Modern Europe, 1798-1831*. (Berkeley, CA, USA: University of California Press, 2010), 85.

⁶ Ibid 77

⁷ Ibid 83

⁸ Mary McAuliffe, *Dawn of the Belle Epoque: the Paris of Monet, Zola, Berhardt, Eiffel, Debussy, Clemenceau, and Their Friends* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2011), 110.

population flottante,” which included the settlement of several poorer groups of Arabs.⁹ This larger population begins to exhibit some of the attributes of poverty and heterogeneity that would become associated with later groups of North Africans and can even be used to characterize the post-colonial Maghrebis of the late 20th century. Around the beginning of the 1800s, as well, is when the policies of assimilation came to play a large role in colonial policy as it would come to dominate much of the dialogue surrounding immigration in later years.¹⁰

The French policy of assimilation aimed to subsume Algeria under the heading of “French Culture” by “civilizing” the natives.¹¹ In 1848 the French Republic declared Algeria an extension of French soil,¹² essentially “complet[ing] the attempt to assimilate the Algerian people” on a cultural level in addition to a territorial one.¹³ The irony within the political reality of assimilation is that “Muslims” (native Algerians) were separated from the white French *colons* through a hierarchical system that created complex sub-categories of “citizenship,” granting fewer political rights to Algerian “Muslims.”¹⁴

Assimilation may have aimed to subsume Algeria under the heading of French culture in a colonial “civilizing mission”, but the brutal reality was that native Algerians were at the bottom of a hierarchical system of status and had to

⁹ Coller 85

¹⁰ Saliha Belmessous, *Assimilation and Empire: Uniformity in French and British Colonies, 1541-1954* (Oxford: Oxford Scholarship Online, 2013), 117.

¹¹ Helen Drake, *Contemporary France* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 149.

¹² Algeria was the only colony granted this status.

¹³ Belmessous 124

¹⁴ Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 9.

appeal to the French government in order to gain full citizenship.¹⁵ Though formally granted citizenship in the 1940s, Algerian “Muslims” were still not given many of the political rights associated with the French Republic, putting them in a kind of political limbo that was not clarified by French officials until the Algerian Revolution.¹⁶ This gap between the purported ideology and the reality of assimilation policies created tensions that carried into the late twentieth-century, and the *beurs* would remain subject to accusations that they were an inassimilable group within French society even in these later years.

During the years of colonization in the mid to late nineteenth century, the issues of North African assimilation and Arab identity within the Francophone world were far from home—viewed as problems of the colonies rather than mainland France. In his book, *Arab France: Islam and the Making of Modern Europe, 1798-1831*, Ian Coller ventures to guess that even as the Arab population of Paris evolved to include a wider demographic range, their scattered settlement in relation to each other probably did not foster a fruitful environment for the development of any collective sense of Arab identity. Neither did it allow for any visibility of the Arabic language or Arab culture as a part of the broader Paris landscape.¹⁷ Temporally speaking, then, the emergence of a Franco-Arab culture in Paris appears to have taken place in the latter half of the nineteenth century. It is here that we see

¹⁵ Belmessous 125

¹⁶ Shepard, 45.

¹⁷ Coller 85

the first large wave of Arab immigration to Paris, coming in the form of North African migrants from the colonies.¹⁸

Early Immigration

North African migration to France in the late 1800s amounted to the first trickle of what would become a series of larger waves of industrial migrant workers coming to France from the Maghreb. This initial Maghrebi immigration took place mainly on the part of Algerians, and therefore, strictly speaking, was no true “immigration” at all as Algeria was considered an extension of France for the majority of its years as a French colony. Yet for all intents and purposes, these Algerians were treated as immigrants, even by the French government—a common miscategorization which serves as precursor for the continuing common use of “immigrant” to describe those of North African origin¹⁹ that has lasted up until the present. The fact that these earlier [French-] Algerians were characterized as immigrants is evidenced in a myriad of ways, but perhaps the simplest comes from the fact that the official French census up until 1961 placed those of its Algerian subjects living in metropolitan France under the category of “foreigners” (*étrangères*).

While the label of “foreigner” would stick with these populations for years to come, the composition of these “immigrant” groups changed many times over the

¹⁸ In both contemporary and historical discourse, “North African,” “Muslim,” and “Arab” tend to be used somewhat interchangeably. Many North Africans, however, were and are not ethnically “Arab,” but Berber—a distinction often ignored or over-emphasized depending on context and intent. This fact further complicates the already tangled study of those of North African origin in France, especially when this study is done through a racial lens.

¹⁹ And those of the other colonies and territories.

course of the 20th century. The majority of the early Algerian immigrants were unskilled migrant workers from the oft-mentioned region of Kabylia, a mountainous region on the coast of northern Algeria.²⁰ Using the Exoticist rhetoric of the day, Kabylia was long hailed by French colonials as a tourist haven, seen as both free from the “seductions of Islam” and as a glimpse into an exciting world of strange customs.²¹ The reputation would stick and Kabyles would continue to be differentiated from the rest of Arab Algeria even into the postcolonial period, when Berber culture, language, and music became popularized in France and the Maghreb as a reaction to post-independence Arabization movements in the former colonies.²²

By 1912, there were about 3,297 Algerians, the majority Kabyles, officially recorded as working in France, with the actual number likely being closer to 4-5,000.²³ These early migrant workers typically found work in the *metropole* in the olive oil and sugar industries of Marseille and the surrounding region of *Bouches-du-Rhône*, and in the mines of the *Pas-de-Calais*. The significant portion that resided in Paris worked in a variety of industrial enterprises, as well, including sugar refineries, railroads, chemical industries, and the *Compagnie general des omnibus*.²⁴ Over time, the demographic origins of North African migrants diversified and grew to include more non-Kabyle Algerians, Tunisians, and Moroccans, and by 1931, the total number of North African immigrants in France had reached about 102,000.

²⁰ André Nouschi, “Esquisse d’une histoire de l’immigration maghrébine,” *Nord-Africains en France* (1984), 39.

²¹ Emile Masqueray, preface to *Races berbères: Kabylie du Jurjura; préface de Emile Masqueray* by Jules Liorel (Paris: E. Leroux, 1893 [?]), vi.

²² Hisham D. Aidi, *Rebel Music: Race, Empire, and the New Muslim Youth Culture* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2014), 143-144.

²³ Nouschi 39

²⁴ Nouschi 40

This number would initially dwindle, probably as a result of the series of French decrees aimed at limiting North African immigration, but eventually these immigration levels would be dwarfed by the record-breaking levels of the post-war era.²⁵

Important to note is that during this period—indeed, until as late as 1974—the nature of most North African immigration was cyclical, with the overwhelming majority consisting of poor male migrant workers coming to France for seasonal work and returning home for the rest of the year.²⁶ This would change in the 1970s when the composition of the immigrant populations from the Maghreb changed to include larger numbers of families with permanent lives in France. The transformation from temporary cyclical male migrant workers to permanent families had a profound effect on the Maghrebi identity that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s. Not only did it prompt the building of the infamous *banlieues* on Paris' periphery to replace the enclaves of migrant worker slum housing embedded within Paris, but the transition also enabled a shift in self-created identity among the second generation. While first generation Maghrebi immigrants felt a strong sense of pride in their country and “did not see France as a potential home for their nation-ness,” their children and grandchildren—that is, the *beurs*—tended to view France as a permanent home, and by extension, to view themselves as primarily French.²⁷

²⁵ Nouschi 43

²⁶ Alec G Hargreaves, *Immigration in post-war France: A documentary anthology* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1987), 13.

²⁷ Rabah Aissaoui, *Immigration and National Identity: North African Political Movements in Colonial and Postcolonial France* (ProQuest Ebrary, 2009), 158.

Overall, pre-World War II migration from North Africa made up a rather small proportion of immigrants in France as a whole, the majority of which were of European origin. These years were crucial, however, in establishing the relations between white French and North African immigrants in France that would go on to inform the post-war atmosphere and later attitude towards Maghrebi immigration. Additionally, in the interwar period, France's high immigrant population prompted the French government to "enforce long-standing laws governing foreigner's residence and mobility with a new intensity," the likes of which had not been seen previously on the world stage at such a level of strict policing.²⁸ It is this period then that begins France's contemporary history of immigration policy, which had a profound role in shaping what would become France's prevailing politics and public opinion towards immigrants and outsiders more generally.

From Postwar to Postcolonial Immigration

Algerians were the central force of North African immigration to France in the post-WWII era, making up as much as 93% of North African immigrants in 1954 and 85% in 1962.²⁹ The reason for the post-WWII influx is often argued to be a result of French land expropriation in Algeria.³⁰ Contrary to that theory, Alec Hargreaves notes in *Immigration in Post-War France* that North African migrants typically came "from the very poorest parts of North Africa," and those regions that

²⁸ Clifford Rosenberg, *Policing Paris: The origins of modern immigration control between the wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), xiii-xiv.

²⁹ Nouschi 46

³⁰ Silverstein and Nouschi both make this claim. Nouschi very pointedly cites causes of Algerian emigration as including population growth and the prevalence of overworked land, "particularly in areas where colonization had killed hundreds of thousands of hectares of good land" (Nouschi 45).

“had been least touched by modernizing influences during the colonial period.”³¹

Niel MacMaster argues this point more explicitly in *Colonial Migrants and Racism: Algerians in France, 1900-62*, claiming that the map of emigration “shows an inverse relationship: the zones of maximum colonization and capitalist penetration were those from which there was a minimum of departures.”³² Instead, as MacMaster further claims, Algerian emigration stemmed from an agricultural production crisis, which “deepened dramatically during the war.”³³ It was primarily a result of this massive food shortage that, immediately following the end of WWII and the subsequent lifting of a ban on free movement, Algerians began streaming into the mainland, the beginning of the wave of immigration made up of the parents and grandparents of the *beur* generation(s).

In the aftermath of WWII then, about 350,000 Algerian men came to France to work. As before, most came from the non-Arab region of Kabyle and were typically poor, unskilled workers, even illiterate in both French and Arabic.³⁴ These migrants tended to work in the manufacturing and construction industries in Paris, Lyon, and Marseille.³⁵ Like during WWI, in the period following WWII, France was experiencing a deep labor shortage, encouraging immigration from the already starving Algerian population that needed little encouragement.

In the years following WWII, many major changes occurred in the nature of North African immigration to France. First, as opposed to the French government-

³¹ Hargreaves, *Immigration in Post War France*, 4

³² Neil Macmaster, *Colonial Migrants and Racism: Algerians in France 1900-62* (New York: St. Martin's Press Inc., 1997), 172.

³³ MacMaster, 180

³⁴ Nouschi, 46

³⁵ Paul A. Silverstein, *Algeria in France: Transpolitics, Race, and Nation* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004), 4.

regulated recruitment in the pre-war years, the post-WWII workers were typically recruited directly by employers and many Algerians arrived as *sans papiers* or undocumented workers.³⁶ This, in combination with the 1954 outbreak of the Algerian war, changed the nature of North African immigration in France, which shifted from consisting of primarily legal, seasonal workers to a larger group of undocumented workers and refugees. Here, the status of these Maghrebi immigrants as “temporary” in France began to creep slowly towards their establishment within the community.

The sharpest shift towards this change occurred later, in 1975. In the midst of economic recession and with high levels of unemployment, the French government placed heavy-handed restrictions on immigration. The move backfired and many families rushed to join their relatives in France before they could be locked out, cementing the trend towards their permanent establishment in the *metropole*.³⁷ By 1981, close to 1.5 million North Africans were officially recorded as living in France.³⁸

The Emergence of *Beur* Culture

The 1980s began the period in which the so-called *beurs* or “the second generation” would come of age. In the history of a constantly shifting make-up of the Maghrebi presence, the 1980s and 1990s can come to represent yet another shift in this series. The group was now larger than ever before and, unlike in previous

³⁶ Silverstein, 29

³⁷ MacMaster, 13

³⁸ Nouschi, 45

generations, often had no direct ties to the Maghreb and its members were, for official French purposes, often completely “French.” Yet *beurs* were still commonly defined by their ethnicity and ties to the Maghreb.

For the first time, as Tyler Stovall points out in “From Red Belt to Black Belt: Race, Class, and Urban Marginality in Twentieth-Century Paris,” by the 1990s, the majority of immigrants in France officially came from outside of Europe. Additionally, he says, the economic downturn that France experienced beginning in the mid-70s led to “chronic unemployment among young people in particular.” It is this mix of ethnic and economic factors that, according to Stovall, produced, “a new cohort of so-called second-generation immigrant youth (a term whose nonsensical character speaks eloquently to the prevailing confusion about race and citizenship in contemporary France).”³⁹ The *beurs*, then, can be seen to constitute a group defined by this history of immigration, policies of assimilation, socio-economic status, and by social marginalization.

As Stovall points out, the *beurs* emerged within a heated debate about race and citizenship in postcolonial France and the strong history of defining this group according to its ethnic difference makes the question of *beur* identity a complicated one as France does not officially recognize ethnicity as a marker of difference.⁴⁰ French scholars, too, tend to argue that race is an American obsession that has little to do with the history of France, which they claim is defined primarily by class

³⁹ Stovall, 354

⁴⁰ The French government bars demographic censuses from asking any questions with regard to either race or religion.

difference. Stovall refutes this argument, asserting that economic and ethnic factors both played dynamic roles in the shaping of the *beur* identity.

In “L’Invention de la ‘culture beur,’” Sylvie Durmelat further problematizes the “confusion about race and citizenship” that Stovall highlights. More precisely, Durmelat points to the problem of naming a group that is as diverse in its make up as the *beurs* (also variously referred to as “the second generation,” Maghrebi youth, and children of Arab or Muslim immigrants among many other terms).⁴¹ Durmelat emphasizes the socio-economic aspect of the *beur* identity saying:

... In newspapers and in some sociological works one often finds the expression “second generation” coupled with the word “immigrants” ... It is as if these people—born in France or having arrived there very young, and who in large part possess French nationality or have appealed to gain French citizenship—automatically inherit the immigrant status of their parents so that the majority of them have essentially “emigrated from nowhere.” It seems that this designation comes also from a desire to keep these children in the same socio-professional category as their parents (“Second generation of what? Of street sweepers?”) so as to reproduce the same class relations.⁴²

While Durmelat relates the problematic envisioning of the *beur* generation to class relations, the inability to name this group “in any satisfying manner” can also be taken, in line with Stovall’s argument, as a sign of anxiety surrounding ethnic recognition in France. The problem of this multiplicity of names further complicates the notion of collective identity, perhaps even further contributing to feelings of social marginalization with this absence of any politically correct term. Collective identity will be further discussed in Chapter 3.

⁴¹ Sylvie Durmelat, “L’Invention de la ‘culture beur,’” (UMI Dissertations Publishing, 1995), 9.

⁴² Durmelat, 33. My translation.

Chapter 2: The *Banlieues*, Spatial Isolation and the Making of a Social Minority

In “Black, Blanc, Beur,” historian Alec Hargreaves asserts that “North Africans are by far the most disliked minority in France.”⁴³ Indeed, as Hargreaves goes on to point out, it appears that North Africans tend to be vastly overrepresented in the political arguments renouncing the “problem” of immigration in France.⁴⁴ Furthermore, a 2007 Gallup poll showed Muslims as the group least likely to be wanted as a neighbor in France.⁴⁵ In the late twentieth-century as in the early twenty-first, their status as a “social minority” plays a major role in the understanding of *beur* identity was both inwardly and outwardly constructed. This chapter will then seek to explain in what ways *beurs* constitute a social minority along with some of the ways in which this status was informed. Important factors of this discussion include the spatial settlement of North African immigrants in the post-war period and how the spatiality of this group made its move from urban enclave to *banlieue* over time. The social reflections and ramifications of this spatial history are far-reaching, and help to explain a number of factors that play into the *beur* cultural identity of the 1980s and 90s. For this reason, particular attention will be placed on segregation and isolation—the classification of *beurs* as a minority in socio-spatial terms.

⁴³ Alec G. Hargreaves, “Black, Blanc, Beur: multi-coloured Paris,” *Journal of Romance Studies* Vol. 5, No. 3 (2005), 95.

⁴⁴ Hargreaves, “Black, Blanc, Beur,” 93.

⁴⁵ Chloe Picchio, “The Influence of Women on the Degree of Integration in France’s Maghrebi Muslim Communities,” (Paper for Gender and Migration by Professor José Moya, 2014).

Settlement patterns in Ile-de-France, 1962-1999

As seen in the series of maps below, the period from 1962-1999 in the region of *Ile-de-France*, which includes Paris proper and its urban and suburban surroundings, represents a gradual move out of the city center and into the surrounding *departements*. This is true as a general trend, representative of a broader move towards suburbanization; the trend is especially acute, however, as it pertains to the case of Paris' immigrant population, which was pushed out of the city as a result of a post-colonial resurgence in the building of social housing projects in Paris—the creation of the so-called *banlieues*. Much has been written in condemnation of *banlieue* housing, which consisted of huge estates or *cités* meant to house lower-income families and raise their standard of living in terms of improved amenities and reduced overcrowding—major problems of the *bidonvilles* that typified poor housing for many years before. Built solely on the periphery of the city, however, the new social housing quickly gained its notoriety for the major segregation of the poor that it entailed.

Looking at maps of the spatial settlement of immigrant groups in Paris after 1961, several patterns immediately emerge. By comparing settlement patterns of European immigrants and North African immigrants, these maps display the unequal level of segregation between immigrant groups and native French that existed continuously from 1961 to 1999. Because this comparison examines a discrepancy that occurs between two groups that are both largely made up of

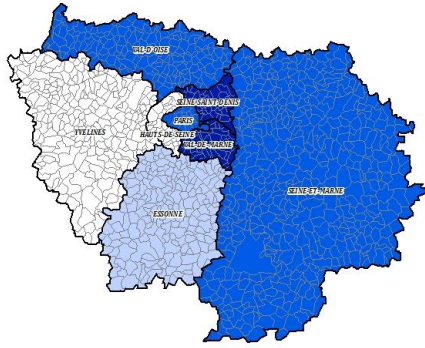
foreign unskilled laborers, the findings may point to a relationship between ethnicity and level of segregation in Greater Paris.⁴⁶

At the very least, the maps show that there is a distinct difference in settlement patterns between that of European immigrants and that of North African. Specifically, Maghrebis were most prominent in the departments of Seine-Saint-Denis, Val-d'Oise, and Hauts-de-Seine. Europeans tended to make up a much greater proportion of the populations of Val-de-Marne, Seine-et-Marne, Essonne, and Yvelines, almost an exact inverse to the North African population. This trend becomes further pronounced over time. The figures below provide a visualization of this trend, showing side by side where Maghrebi immigrants settled within *Ile-de-France* in comparison to European immigrants. Here, the color gradient represents increasing concentrations of the given ethnic group when compared to the total population of that area (that is, darkest blue represents the highest concentration of Maghrebis/Europeans and the white areas represent the areas least populated by Maghrebis/Europeans).

⁴⁶ Here, I use the term "Greater Paris" to mean the entire region of *Ile-de-France*, though my research at the communal level is limited to the *Petite Couronne*.

EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT

MAGHREBI SETTLEMENT

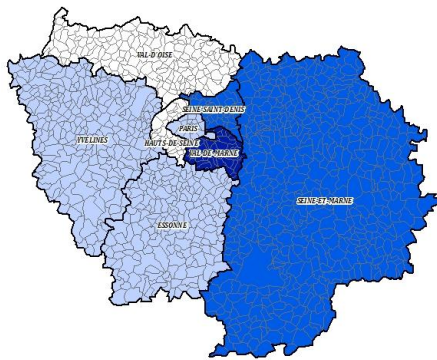


1962

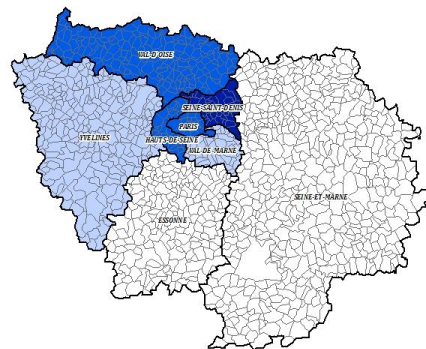
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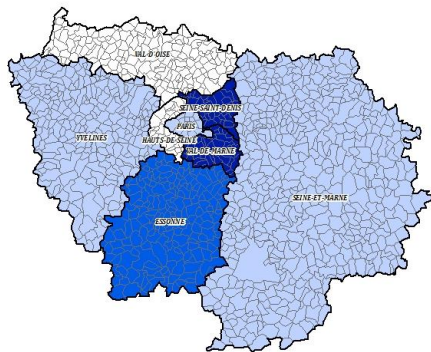
1962



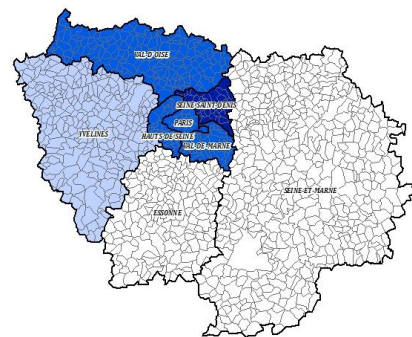
1982



1982



1999



1999

⁴⁷ All shapefiles sourced from *Actualitix*; for more information on data sources, see the appendix.

The departments in which European immigrants appear to make up higher percentages of the population are also the areas most populated by French citizens. This is not true of the North African population, which tends to make up a higher percentage of the population in areas in which there are fewer French. The indices of dissimilarity at the departmental level for 1962-1999 confirm this trend, showing that Maghrebi immigrants are consistently nearly three times more segregated from the French than are the Europeans.

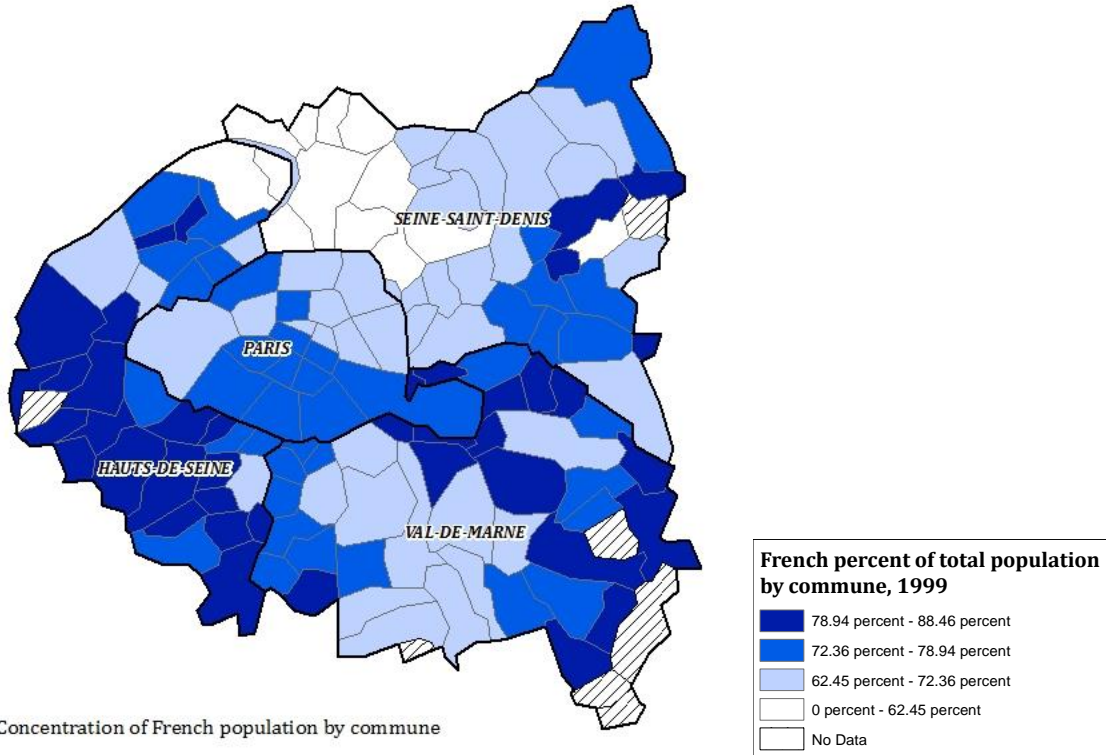
Year	Indices of Dissimilarity- Ile-de-France Region (departmental level)					
	1962	1968	1975	1982	1990	1999
Euro/French Index	5.42	4.95	5.75	5.02	6.22	6.26
Maghrebi/French Index	14.91	14.71	14.42	15.03	15.21	15.39

In accounting for the higher level of segregation between ethnic groups, there are many factors that may be at play. A very likely factor in the making of this segregation is the existence of differences in socioeconomic background, which may skew these results if the two immigrant groups were not of similar socioeconomic standing. Socioeconomic difference, however, does not appear to be the only driving factor in the making of this particular case of segregation.

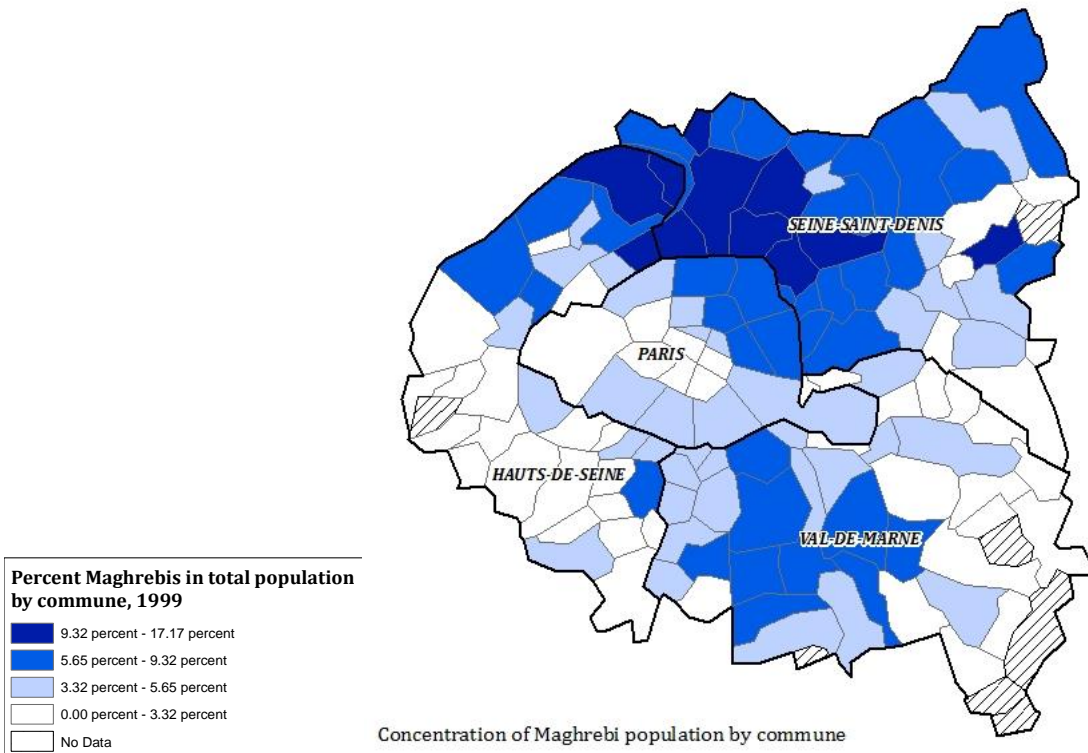
In the departmental maps from 1962-1999, the label “European” is applied only to Portuguese, Italian, and Spanish immigrants. These immigrants, particularly in the 1960s and early 70s were largely workers commissioned by the French state to work as lower-paid laborers, as were most of the North Africans living in France

at the time. Because this pattern of larger levels of segregation between North Africans and the French than between French and other Europeans emerges early on, these figures are suggestive of the existence of segregation based on ethnicity, even when socioeconomic background is accounted for as a segregating factor.

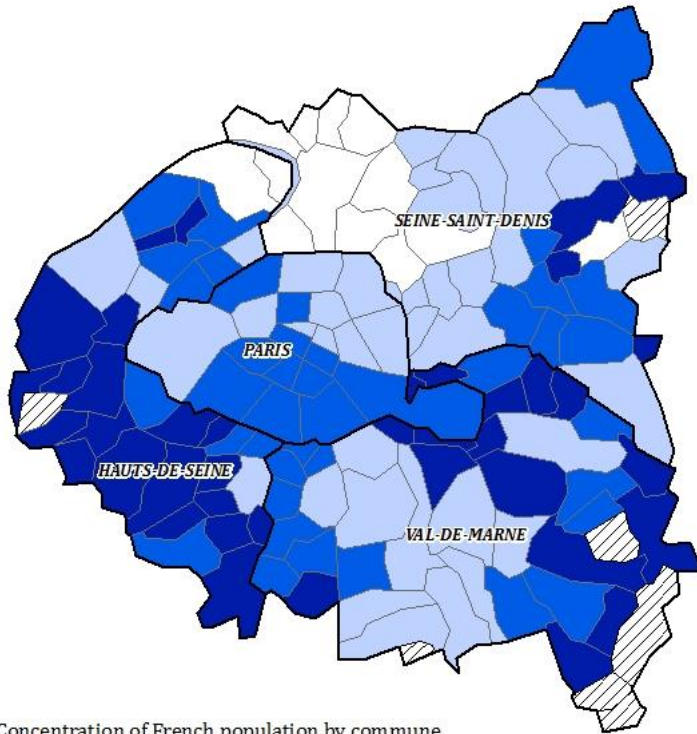
The maps below display data from 1999 by commune—data not available (or not open source) for earlier years. These more defined maps help to confirm the findings from the maps made at the departmental level by showing the existence of even higher levels of residential segregation between ethnic groups when viewed on this smaller scale. This time, we see a more even spread of the European immigrant population, probably due to the nature of European immigration at this later period, which is not necessarily defined by an influx of low-skilled laborers, as it was in the 1960s and 70s.



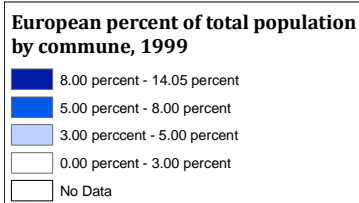
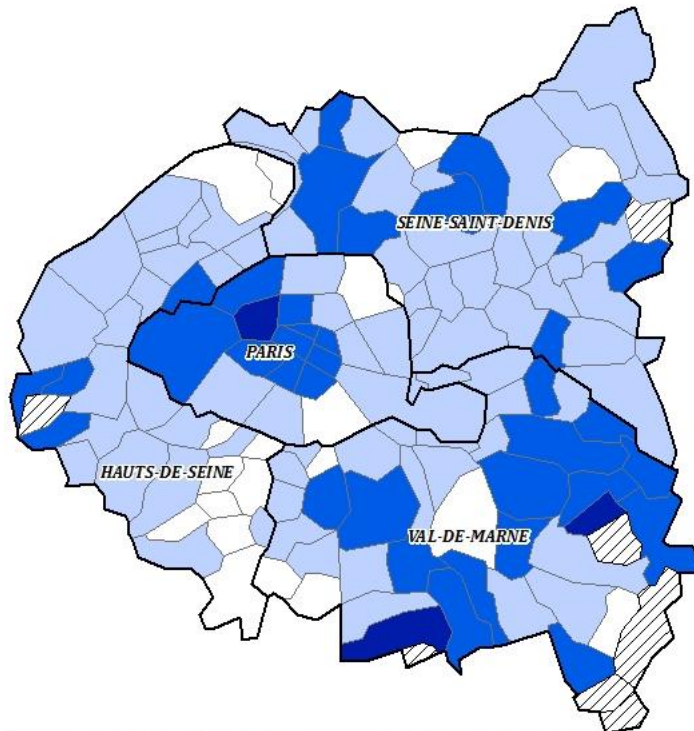
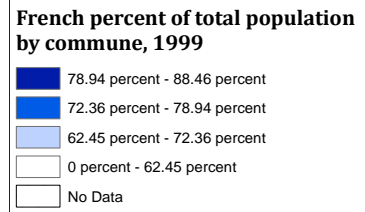
Concentration of French population by commune



Concentration of Maghrebi population by commune



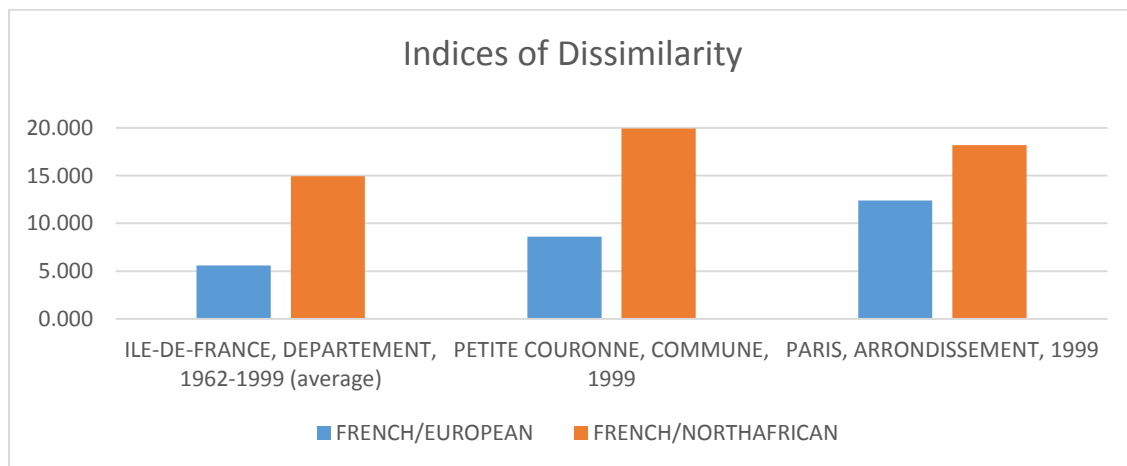
Concentration of French population by commune



Concentration of non-French European population by commune

While the European immigrant population appears to be more evenly spread than before, the index of dissimilarity for this data implies a similar difference between the departmental and communal levels of dissimilarity for the Maghrebi population as for the European. The map of the Maghrebi population clearly indicates a higher concentration in the communes that make up *Seine-Saint-Denis*, the same communes that tend to have the lowest percentages of French citizens. The indices of dissimilarity at the communal and *arrondissement* level further support this evidence of segregation—showing, as before, a disproportionate level of segregation between Maghrebi immigrants and French citizens versus European immigrants and French citizens. This continuous difference between the European and Maghrebi immigrants is visualized in the graph below.

Indices of Dissimilarity	<i>Petite Couronne</i> , 1999 (communal level)	Paris, 1999 (<i>arrondissement</i> level)
Euro/French Index	8.59	12.4
Maghrebi/French Index	19.91	18.18



The 1999 indices of dissimilarity show that Maghrebis were disproportionately segregated from the French in comparison to European immigrants at local levels as well as departmental. Predictably, the communal

comparison shows a much higher level of segregation with the level of dissimilarity standing at 19.91. This level is much higher than that of other European immigrants in Paris, showing that Maghrebis were much more segregated than their European counterparts. Even so, 19.91 is a relatively low number when compared to indices of dissimilarity for many other cities. Especially when compared with black/white segregation in American cities, Parisian segregation seems extremely low.⁴⁸

Indices of Dissimilarity in US Cities, 2000 (black/white)	
City	Dissimilarity
New York	84.3
Chicago	83.6
Philadelphia	76.9
Miami	75.8
Los Angeles	70.5
Dallas	64.4

The American racial divide, however, is an extreme case. When compared with indices of dissimilarity for other European cities, my findings ranked more similarly:⁴⁹

Indices of Dissimilarity, 1991 (native/foreign-born)	
City	Dissimilarity
Barcelona	32
London	27

Even when compared to other European cities, however, Paris appears to rank low on an index of dissimilarity, but this changes when comparing my findings

⁴⁸ "United States Segregation: Dissimilarity Indices, US Metro Areas Ranked by White/Black Dissimilarity Index," *CensusScope*.

⁴⁹ Bevin, Joel Serra, "A comparative analysis of spatial segregation in three global cities: Barcelona, London, and Melbourne," (Universidad de Pompeu Fabra, 2011).

with other sociological analyses. In his findings, Edmond Préteceille shows Maghrebi segregation at a rate that is higher than my findings and higher than the general (foreign/non-foreign) numbers given for Barcelona and London in 1991, as well. The discrepancy between Préteceille's numbers and mine is explained in his article, "La ségrégation ethno-racial a-t-elle augmenté dans la métropole parisienne ?" Here, Préteceille explains his numbers as inclusive of an estimation of unofficial migration—that is, migration not recorded by the French census and therefore not included in my calculations. The discrepancy between my calculations and his, therefore, is likely explained by this difference in methods. Préteceille's findings add further support to my hypothesis, showing that Maghrebi segregation is not only higher than that of other ethnic groups in Paris, but generally high when compared to segregation in other European cities.⁵⁰

Indices of Dissimilarity of immigrant groups in the Parisian metropole (1982-1990-1999)			
ID	1982	1990	1999
Northern Europe	30.9	31.3	30.8
Eastern Europe	29.5	28.1	25.9
Italy	18.6	19.3	18.6
Spain	24.6	23.1	20.2
Portugal	19.7	18.7	19.7
Algeria	31.7	31.9	33.4
Tunisia	36.8	36.0	33.2
Morocco	34.9	32.7	33.3
Sub-Saharan African	35.7	33.3	33.0
Turkey	43.1	44.8	47.0
DOM-TOM⁵¹	28.4	28.7	29.5

⁵⁰ Edmond Préteceille, "La ségrégation ethno-racial a-t-elle augmenté dans la métropole parisienne?" *Revue Française de Sociologie*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (Jul.-Sep., 2009), 489-519.

⁵¹ *Départements d'outre mer; Territoires d'outre mer* (overseas departments and territories)

Préteceille's work supports evidence of an ethno-racial divide in Paris that is more deeply felt by the Maghrebi population. There are several factors that may provide an explanation for these findings, however, that exist outside the question of racial discrimination. In *Immigration in Post-War France*, Hargreaves also examines the spatial settlement of North African immigrants in post-war France noting that in Paris by the early 1980s, North African migrants had settled largely in the "inner-city area" of northeast Paris. Hargreaves also claims that this population was more segregated within Paris proper than other European immigrants, but attributes this to the immigrants' field of work, claiming that it was because North Africans were largely employed in the industrial sector that they figured more prominently in the populations of the "run-down working-class districts" of *Goutte d'or*, the eighteenth arrondissement, and *Belleville*, "in the area where the tenth, eleventh, nineteenth, and twentieth arrondissements meet."⁵² The Spanish and the Portuguese, on the other hand, often worked as domestic staff and according to Hargreaves, lived closer to or within the well-off neighborhoods in which they worked.

Edmond Préteceille's work directly supports this notion. In his article, Préteceille describes his previous research, which helped to expose a tradition of over-exaggeration of socioeconomic segregation in Paris. His measurements show that there was a "low index of segregation for the majority of social categories," but a high index between the occupation *cadres* of enterprise and factory work. Overall, he says, there was an increase in segregation at the polar extremes—"rising social

⁵² Hargreaves, *Immigration in Post-War France*, 4.

exclusivity of the *beaux quartiers*” and “net rise in joblessness and job insecurity in one part of the lower-class quarters”—but the general trend was towards social mixing. His conclusions from this previous research, however, “say nothing of the evolution in ethno-racial segregation.”⁵³ In other words, the previous work of Prêteceille helps to rule out the notion of socioeconomic difference as the main driving force behind segregation of the majority of the Maghrebi community however; his findings heavily support Hargreaves’ argument that the ethnic divide was also partially a byproduct of class difference.

While my research provides additional support to the mounting evidence of ethno-racial discrimination as a factor in this spatial segregation, there are many other factors to consider before any conclusions can be drawn. An important alternate hypothesis relies on the theory of chain-migration, which dictates that immigrants’ communities of origin tend to dictate the neighborhoods in which they settle, thus creating immigrant neighborhoods that are somewhat homogenous in terms of immigrant origins. One way to test the hypothesis of chain migration, at least in part, would be to look at the differences in settlement patterns between Tunisians, Moroccans, and Algerians, respectively. Segregation between these groups would support a chain-migration hypothesis. If the groups are relatively mixed, however, it would seem more likely that this Maghrebi segregation is more ethnically-based.

While it is unclear whether the spatial marginalization of the second generation was encouraged primarily due to economic or ethnic factors, or even

⁵³ Prêteceille, 490-91. My translation.

whether this marginalization is due to any kind of negative discrimination at all, the experience of living outside the *Périphérique* greatly informed the *beur* experience. As shown in Chapter 3, the reproduction of imagery using the *banlieues* as a symbol for social marginalization informs much artistic cultural expression. Their spatiality is inherently informative of the *beurs'* identity as an ethnic group that perceived itself to be subject to negative ethnic discrimination.

Chapter 3: Performing Identity Through Hip-hop

The 1980s and 90s witnessed the coming of age of those children of France's post-colonial wave of North African immigration and with it, the blossoming of what has been called a *beur* movement. Taking place largely in the *banlieues* of Greater Paris, this movement consisted of a boom in cultural, political, and artistic expression concerning the identity and treatment of *la seconde génération*. This "second generation" was often born in Paris, grew up in Paris and called it their home—only to be commonly labeled as immigrants and outsiders.⁵⁴ The focus of this chapter will be on the emergence of a new identity, which consisted largely of a reaction against perceived ethnic discrimination and social marginalization as it was represented through a flourishing arts scene that unfolded with the *banlieue* as backdrop, a spatial center for its angst.

While the 1980s and 90s produced a flurry of Maghrebi cultural and artistic expression through a variety of mediums, this chapter will look specifically at the mediums of film and hip-hop, produced and popularized primarily in the 1990s. The cultural and media representation of the *banlieues* in this period consisted of an aesthetic highly reminiscent of black, inner-city America. That is, the use of American hip-hop style, slang, and rap music as an expression of cultural identity became exceptionally popular among France's marginalized groups in general, and its Maghrebis in particular. The Americanization of the *banlieues* was so widespread that it even became common parlance to speak of blighted areas as "*Le Bronx*."

⁵⁴ Hargreaves, "Black, Blanc, Beur," 93.

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, is that this appropriation of style, far from an empty aesthetic, was used to illustrate the same themes of socio-economic hardship, ethnic tension, and social marginalization and isolation as its original American counterpart.

Envisioning the *Banlieue*: Film Matthieu Kassovitz' *La Haine*

In the spirit of the “ghettoization” of the French *banlieue* culture, the 1990s produced a number of films that used hip-hop style to voice issues of ethnic identity, prejudice, and isolation. In fact, the Paris suburbs have since come to be seen on their own as an artistic symbol of marginality.⁵⁵ With reference to Maghrebis, the North African youth of the *banlieue* found in hip-hop culture a style that resonated with their sense of being viewed by France at large as delinquents, social misfits, and “an inassimilable racial substratum of society.”⁵⁶ Clearly, the *banlieue* is intricately linked with cultural conceptions of the issues surrounding Maghrebi identity and belonging.

The interconnectedness of their themes and aesthetic makes it difficult to separate what might be called *Beur* Cinema with that of *Banlieue* Cinema. As Rosemary Wakeman notes in “Independent Filmmakers and the Invention of the Paris Suburbs,” there is major overlap between the world of so-called *Banlieue*

⁵⁵ Stovall, 355

⁵⁶ Stovall, 354

Cinema and that of Maghrebi or *Beur* Cinema.⁵⁷ In “Re-presenting the Urban Periphery: Maghrebi-French filmmaking and the Banlieue,” Will Higbee suggests a practical reason for this crossover in his claim that, “Though political mobilization of “*beur*” associations (community groups or collectives) at national level in the early 1980s had proved unsustainable, local organizations continued to provide a valuable support network, particularly within the working-class *banlieues* of the larger French cities.”⁵⁸ Higbee credits these local *associations* with helping to establish a collective identity among the Maghrebi youth of the *banlieues* in particular.⁵⁹ It seems fitting then, that a number of *banlieue* films produced during the late 1980s and 1990s also addressed issues of Maghrebi identity. Many of these films, including Karin Dridi’s 1997 *Bye-Bye*, Thomas Gilou’s 1996 film *Rai*, 1997 film *Ma 6-T Va Cracker*, and the most successful, Matthieu Kassovitz’ 1996 film *La Haine*, use the *banlieue* as the backdrop for an exploration of themes of *beur* ethnic identity and social marginalization in contemporary France.

Shot in poetic black and white, Matthieu Kassovitz’ *La Haine* follows a day in the lives of three friends. There’s Vinz, a Jew, Hubert who is black, and Saïd, an Arab. The trio hails from a Paris housing project and the film captures them in the midst of a moment abound with political turmoil and violent tensions, especially between police and *banlieue* inhabitants. The film is a prime example of this Americanization—or hip-hop-ization, if you will—of the *banlieue*, first and foremost

⁵⁷ Rosemary Wakeman, “Independent Filmmakers and the Invention of the Paris Suburbs,” *French Politics, Culture & Society*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (2013), 86.

⁵⁸ Will Higbee, “Re-presenting the Urban Periphery: Maghrebi-French filmmaking and the “Banlieue” film,” *Cinéaste*, Vol. 33, No. 1. (Cinéaste Publishers Inc., Winter 2007), 39.

⁵⁹ *ibid*

with its aesthetic. The film is rife with references to American popular culture, from Cassel's famous imitation of Robert De Niro in Martin Scorsese's 1976 film *Taxi Driver* to the use of a hip-hop soundtrack, and various images copied from the American hip-hop aesthetic, like DJing and breakdancing, not to mention the street style of sneakers, athletic wear, gold chains, and wife-beater tank tops.

In addition to borrowing directly from American hip-hop aesthetic tropes, the film's dialogue utilizes the *verlan* of the suburbs, a type of slang originating in the Paris suburbs that carries many of the same connotations as America's inner city lingo, but with a twist that renders it metaphorically apt as an expression of cultural difference. That is, *verlan* is a language of the streets, but also a literal inversion of the French language—"beur," for example, being derived from a reversal of the word "Arabe." This inversion of language by those who speak in *verlan* works to express a feeling of cultural difference in the clearest of ways; the rejection of the French language serves, too, as a rejection of mainstream French culture.

Much like American inner-city slang, *verlan* is associated with a younger, more ethnically diverse crowd, and often too with a kind of vulgarity, but it is not only the widespread use of slang and a visual aesthetic of hip-hop in *La Haine* that speaks to the film's appropriation of American hip-hop culture. The themes that the film explores—those of isolation, living in a world of dead-ends, a rough world where police and discrimination are the enemy—are comparable to such American inner-city tropes as are present in the classic rap from Grandmaster Flash, *The Message*, which features such lyrics as, "God is smilin' on you but he's frownin' too/ Because only God knows what you'll go through/ You'll grow in the ghetto livin'

second-rate/And your eyes will sing a song called deep hate.”⁶⁰ It is with these themes about the dead-end road of “ghetto” life that *La Haine* makes a direct connection between the *banlieue* and the African-American ghetto.

The vision of the *banlieue* as ghetto and an economic, racial, and social “other” to Paris proper is played out in various scenes throughout the film. When the boys make a trip into Paris, crossing over from their neighborhood into the city, they are visibly out of place, not at home. Immediately, the viewer sees the change in scenery where classic, bustling Paris is starkly juxtaposed against the barren landscapes of the *banlieues* in an excellent portrayal of “the *fracture sociale*, the yawning socio-economic-cultural rift that has increasingly developed in France between those who have and those who do not, which all too frequently also means those who belong and those who do not”⁶¹ As the film shows us, this “socio-economic-cultural” difference between those of the *banlieue* and those of the city does indeed represent more than just poverty; this difference also represents a sense of cultural estrangement and marginalization from mainstream France.

As the film continues and the evening in Paris carries on, the trio enters an art gallery. This scene, too, displays this socioeconomic sense of difference that spills over into cultural difference in that Saïd and his friends feel no connection to the avant-garde artwork, so ludicrously abstract as to seem trivial when compared to the very real plight of the three *banlieusards*. The trio creates a virtual *chiaroscuro* of harsh crassness and violence against the background of the stuffy, white gallery and the old white gallery director, who is as bewildered by and disconnected from the

⁶⁰ Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, “The Message” (Sugar Hill Records, 1982).

⁶¹ Joan West, “Review of *La Haine*,” *Cinéaste*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (Winter 2007), 76.

three friends as they are from the city of Paris.

While the film finds its primary focus within the experience of the *banlieue* life more generally, it is also directly relatable to the *beur* experience in its major themes and its treatment of the character of Saïd. As Wakeman claims, “As a Maghrébin, Saïd is the stereotyped disenfranchised ethnic ‘other’ in Kassovitz’s film. He codes suburban space as a site of masculine ethnicity and delinquency.”⁶² I take issue, here, with Wakeman’s claim that Saïd is “the” ethnic other, as each character represents a category of ethnic other unto himself and the film features Saïd not as its main character, but as a side character—a player in the overall theme of otherness and unbelonging, but by no means the only example.

That being said, *La Haine* relates specifically to the issues of the second generation through the character of Saïd. His character’s interactions with the police, in particular, are used to show the second generation’s vulnerability to police brutality, as well as their unique sense of unbelonging and exclusion from French culture. Early on in the film Saïd makes this point, saying, “*Un arabe dans un commissariat ne dure plus qu’une heure.*” [An Arab in a police station doesn’t last an hour].⁶³ The comment sets the viewer up to make sense of the sense of ethnic discrimination exhibited in the police’s treatment of both Hubert and Saïd.

Later on in the film we find Saïd and Hubert being interrogated by the police. One cop takes a look at Saïd’s identification before spitting, “*Saïd, c’est français ça?*” [Saïd, that’s French?].⁶⁴ This last comment, nearly lost in the blur of epithets and

⁶² Wakeman, 86.

⁶³ Matthieu Kassovitz, *La Haine* (France: Tartan Video, 1995). My translation.

⁶⁴ Kassovitz. My translation.

slurs that the police hurl at Hubert and Saïd, is perhaps the most powerful message in the film's commentary on ethnicity and belonging in Paris. Of the three marginalized characters, Saïd is the only one subject to the accusation of not being French. Furthermore, it is not his religion or even his skin color that is taken issue with, but his given name, a marker, not of religion, social class, or immigration status, but of a historical ethno-cultural identity. Saïd's character, then, can be seen as an expression of social exclusion and isolation, based in large part on *beur* ethnic identity perceived within France as representative of an "other."

Rapping "*Le Bronx*": Rap Music and Lunatic's

As we saw in Kassovitz' film, hip-hop music plays a direct role in the Americanization of *banlieue* identity and the many Maghrebis who live there. Similar also to Kassovitz' film, the lure of hip-hop music seems to come from that fact that *beurs* apparently identify with its themes of ethnic and social marginalization. Politicization of popular music in France, however, especially among the Maghrebi community, is not limited to rap. The North African community in particular has tended to make use of reggae music as a means of "launching musical attacks on Islamism, Arab nationalism, and the policies of difference North African states."⁶⁵ That is, a "gnawa-reggae fusion" that became extremely popular in the *banlieues* and in Maghrebi urban centers alike in the 1990s, served as a rebellion against the post-colonial Arabization of North Africa in favor of a pan-African political stance.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Aidi, 143.

⁶⁶ *ibid*, 144-145.

Nonetheless, it is rap music and an American hip-hop aesthetic which became more widely associated with the *banlieues* where so many *beurs* resided. Evidence of the extent to which American hip-hop had, by this point (mid-1990s), infiltrated the French scene is in a new law instituted in 1994, which limited the amount of outside music that was allowed on French radio stations.⁶⁷ In his book *Rebel Music: Race, Empire, and the New Muslim Youth Culture*, Hisam Aidi attributes the institution of this law directly to the rise in popularity of American hip-hop, also noting the French public's apparent fear of Americanized rap as a perpetuator of violence and social ills.⁶⁸

While it is certainly true that rap music—French and American alike—often exploits violent rhetoric, there is nonetheless a powerful message of identity to be found in the reading of *keur* rap as text insofar as rap itself serves as a powerful medium for activism and expression of cultural identity. As David Foster Wallace notes in *Signifying Rappers: Rap and Race in the Urban Present*, “The pop tradition by which rhythm and lyric became melody’s supporting cast is [in the case of rap music] inverted. The rap is primarily *the rap*: that which is *said* must in hip-hop be the intraScenic locus of assessment, appreciation, complaint... The outside listener must not only take the rap ‘on authority’; he must *read* that rap as *story*”⁶⁹ Indeed, French rap has served as a particularly effective canvas for artists to paint their social woes.

⁶⁷ It should be noted that the French law limited all outside cultural imports, not just American ones however; the law did, in effect, target American cultural imports insofar as the US tended to (and still does) produce the vast majority of globally consumed film and music.

⁶⁸ Aidi, xxvii.

⁶⁹ David Foster Wallace and Mark Costello, *Signifying Rappers: Rap and Race in the Urban Present* (New York: The Ecco Press, 1990), 97.

Perhaps more than most popular American rap, French rap often uses lyric as social commentary to its fullest extent and engages in serious activist dialogue. Such is the case with groups like *Les Sages poètes de la rue*, who use rap specifically as a medium for political activism, particularly with regards to race relations in a post-colonial world. Still, others are more popular and more typical of much American rap in their approach, especially with their use of misogyny and violent imagery reminiscent of “gangsta rap,” and a simultaneous expression of social woes. The issue of Maghrebi identity is evoked through likes of a multitude of popular rap groups hailing from various *banlieues* like Lionel D from Vitry, Supreme NTM from St. Denis, and MC Solaar from Villeneuve St-Georges.⁷⁰

One chart-topping French rap track from 1996 was *Le Crime paie* performed by the rap-duo Lunatic, which features the two *rappers*, Ali or Daddy Ali and Booba. These artists hail from the Paris *banlieues* and both are of Maghrebi origin, though Booba is half Senegalese, half Moroccan.⁷¹ The duo stands on the popular rather than activist side and yet, their tracks speak to Maghrebi/*banlieue* issues of race, belonging, and lack of opportunity through the use of an American-style hip-hop genre and an appropriation of certain aspects of hip-hop culture such as criminality and “street style.” *Le Crime paie*, in particular, addresses Maghrebi youth identity through its lyrics highlighting these issues of race, isolation, and lack of opportunity for success, all while summoning an American rap aesthetic.

⁷⁰ Stovall, 355.

⁷¹ Dominique Rebellini, “Petit ours mal léché du rap français,” *Arte* (January 26, 2013).

Le Crime paie openly addresses the issue of race, with Booba making it a central focus of the rap by expressing his self-identity using racial markers:

*Voici le métis café crème
L'MC cappuccino, criminel au m-i-c
Si t'es pas de chez nous, c'est
Nique le taf, le biz fait briller les G's
Les beaufs claquent, mon style craque, reflète une ZAC*

[This is me, mixed, coffee with cream,
The cappuccino MC, criminal at the m-i-c
If you're not from the hood, it's
Fuck working by the hour, hustlin' makes a G shine
Bite it, white trash; my style is sick, it shows I'm from the projects] ⁷²

Booba underlines his “mixed” status using the word “métis,” a specific reference to “the classical colonial stereotype of the métis, or the tragic mulatto” who “represent[s] a self-destructive hybrid threat to the racial status quo.” In “From Red Belt to Black Belt: Race, Class, and Urban Marginality in Twentieth-Century Paris,” Tyler Stovall compares this stereotype directly to *beurs* with the assertion that *beurs* form an ethnic group of “social misfits.”⁷³ Booba’s reference to colonialism in his self-identification as an ethnic other supports the notion that a collective *beur* identity rests on feelings of social marginalization through ethnic otherness.

Not only do the lyrics of *Le Crime paie* evoke a colonial stereotype in their racialized self-representation, the rap goes on to address racial discrimination more directly. As quoted above Booba says, “Bite it, white trash; my style is sick, it shows I’m from the projects.” The use of *beauf*, which is roughly translated to “white trash,”

⁷² Lunatic, *Le Crime paie* in *Hostile Hip-Hop* (Hostile Records: 1996). My translation.

⁷³ Stovall, 354.

evokes the image of one who is white, poor, typically politically conservative, and racist. Booba's attack is one characteristic of both American and French hip-hop—an accusation of racism combined with the defensive embrace of his own “hood.”

Booba directly addresses the issue of racism through this defensive style:

*Mon rap, un poème sans poésie
Et puis quoi, ça fait quoi, dit-moi toi qui sais tout
Si tu kiffes pas re-noi t'écoutes pas et puis c'est tout
Seul le crime paie dans les villes du neuf ze-dou
Face à face, que des regards froids y'a pas de yeux doux*

[My rap, a poem without poetry
and then what, what does that do, tell me—you, who knows everything
If you don't like niggas, don't listen and that's it.
Only crime pays in the 912
Face to face, nothin' but cold stares, there ain't no friendly looks] ⁷⁴

With his line, “if you don't like niggas (“re-noi”), don't listen,” Booba exudes a sharp edge, yet the next line betrays some strain behind the hard exterior, “Face to face, nothin' but cold stares, there ain't no friendly looks.” This mixed portrayal of life in the ‘hood as both difficult, a constant confrontation with discrimination *and* as a place of belonging and defensive pride, is highly reminiscent of American rap music. Furthermore, these lines continue to use race and ethnic discrimination as essential themes in the expression of identity—the themes that have largely been deemed invalid markers of identity by French scholars and by mainstream France.

Rejecting mainstream France, the duo repeatedly imitates American-style rap to explore notions of identity:

*Seul le crime paie, si t'es pas de chez nous
T'as rien appris, les vrais re-frés savent bien*

⁷⁴ Lunatic. My translation.

*Comment l'argent se fait, (décidés) à miser
 (Tout) dans le biz est passé au-dessus des lois et ça sans visa
 Vise la dégaine de ceux qui ont traîné leurs semelles plus d'une fois sur le
 bitume
 Tout comme le veut la coutume de ceux qui n'ont rien*

[Only crime pays, if you're not from tha hood,
 then you ain't learned nothin', the real brothas know
 How to get tha money, gamble
 When you're hustlin', everything is under tha radar—no papers
 See those fools who been 'round tha block,
 It's the daily grind for who ain't got nothin']⁷⁵

Here, Ali claims both that “if you're not from the hood, then you ain't learned nothin',” but also admits that the hustlers of the *banlieues*, “ain't got nothin'.” Similar to its American counterpoint, the rap is both proud of its hardness and woefully aware of the entrapment and social marginalization that life in the *banlieue* represents.

Finally, the last line leaves the listener with the strongest impression when Ali bemoans the trap that is crime in a life of poverty:

*Protège ton dos, les couteaux sont aiguisés
 Les frères déguisés pour des thunes peuvent te briser
 Comment mépriser l'argent quand tu n'en as pas ?
 Le crime est un piège, mon Dieu j'ai mordu l'appât.*

[Watch your back, these knives are sharp
 Masked brothers will break you over cash
 How can you hate money when you have none?
 Crime is a trap, and God I took the bait].⁷⁶

⁷⁵ *ibid*

⁷⁶ *ibid*

In his most powerful message about life in the *banlieues*, Ali says, "Crime is a trap, and God I took the bait." The kinship that this duo from the Paris *banlieues* appears to share with African American hip-hop culture is largely founded on this feeling that crime is both the only option and also a trap for those who, like them, live on the outskirts of society. For the duo Lunatic and many of their contemporaries then, the *banlieue* is a trap of social marginality, economic hardship, and racism akin to that of the American 'hoods of Chicago or the Bronx.

Looking at these examples in film and rap music from the 1990s, it is apparent that *beurs* saw something of themselves in black American culture. The feelings of social marginalization on account of ethnic and socio-economic otherness spurred this appropriation of African American hip-hop culture as a means of expressing a collective *beur* identity. The Maghrebi youth may have borrowed heavily from these American hip-hop themes and aesthetics, but they created their own French versions of the American art forms that were able to speak to *beur* issues in particular; their work addressed their own very recent history of colonization and rejected mainstream France in favor of a multicultural, multiethnic space.

Conclusion

By the 1990s, the *beur* population of Greater Paris had made its mark on the cultural scene using hip-hop as a medium to express a sense of social marginalization distinctly tied to ethnicity and a long history of racial tensions with France. The group may have found their collective identity of the period by associating themselves with the African American ghetto, but realistically this notion of a French ghetto is, in the words of sociologist Loïc Wacquant, a “sociological absurdity.”⁷⁷ The issue of the “ghettoization” of the *banlieues*, and the *cités* in particular would become the subject of much political dialogue as the *cités* were increasingly portrayed as “swimming in anomie and on the brink of constant rioting.”⁷⁸ The fact remains, however, that “empirical observation reveals a yawning gap between the everyday reality of the *cités* and this media projection, not to speak of the situation in the black American ghetto in the early 1990s, where violent crime reached pandemic levels worthy of an incipient civil war without parallel on the European continent.”⁷⁹ The conflation of the French *banlieues* with the likes of many of America’s inner city neighborhoods is deeply misguided and the two situations are sociologically incomparable however; this does not change the fact that the *banlieues* were perceived both by outsiders and those who inhabited them to be akin to the American ghetto in their racial tensions, violence, and a deep sense of social marginalization on part of the *banlieusards*. Wacquant’s insistence that one

⁷⁷ Loïc Wacquant, “French Working-Class Banlieue and Black American Ghetto: From Conflation to Comparison,” *Qui Parle*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (2007), 26.

⁷⁸ Wacquant, 5.

⁷⁹ Wacquant, 23.

must remember not to conflate the *banlieue* with the American ghetto in fact only serves as further proof that by the end of the 1990s, the *beurs* had firmly established a sense of collective identity through their use of black American inner city culture.

This thesis has attempted to shed light on *beur* identity as it relates to feelings of social marginalization within the Maghrebi community by examining the history of North African presence in France, spatial marginality in the Paris suburbs over time, and by looking at artistic cultural expressions of *beur* culture. The question of identity is a complex one and, as Adam Krims notes in *Rap Music and the Poetics of Identity*, “‘cultural identity’ is not a tie with some pure and distant past, so much as it is a matter of continual appropriation, revision, and creation in the present, with an eye toward the future.”⁸⁰ For the *beurs*, part of this appropriation and revision of culture is reflected through their use of hip-hop aesthetic and music.

Nevertheless, for the very reason that identity is a dynamic social construct, an interplay between outsiders’ perceptions and internal reactions over time, an understanding of collective *beur* identity as it existed in the late twentieth-century requires an understanding of some of the historical factors that came to shape that identity. For *beurs*, this sense of social marginalization can be seen, at least in part, as a product of race relations as they have played out historically in France. Their collective identity existed in and around the 1990s largely as a reactionary expression to the historically-created circumstances they were born into. It is not surprising that *beurs* tended to identify with their colonial past, seeing themselves as subject to continued negative ethnic and racial discrimination in addition to their

⁸⁰ Adam Krims, *Rap Music and the Poetics of Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 94.

literal spatial marginalization in *l'Île-de-France* outside Paris' *Périphérique*.

Furthermore, the media firestorm and artistic expressions of culture which connected *beurs* with American black culture, misguided as it was, must necessarily be seen a major component in the ever-changing, dynamic construction of identity insofar as the concept of "collective identity" is made up of actions and reactions, self-identification and imposed exonyms.

Appendix

All data used in the maps, tables, and graphs from Chapter 2 are taken from the French census website, INSEE, unless otherwise noted. This data is relatively limited in terms of level of detail, at least of the data that is open source. Therefore, when looking at change over time, I was forced to use departmental-level data, which gives us a very rough estimate of the true indices of dissimilarity. Distinct patterns still emerged however, and those patterns were further supported by my later 1999 data, which I was able to map at both a communal and arrondissement level.

I used created variables for the maps by adding the individuals from Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco to create the category “Maghrebi”; for the category of “European”, I combined statistics of Italians, Portuguese, and Spanish immigrants for the maps representing departmental data. For the maps using communal-level data, I looked at immigrants from all E.U. countries. This significantly changes the socio-economic make up of the “European” immigrants for the communal-level map and thus, more outside sources will be relied on here to rule out socio-economic status as the main driving factor of segregation

In addition to the problems encountered with the spatial level of information available, this project had the added issue of trying to measure ethnic segregation in a country that does not officially recognize or measure race or ethnicity. Therefore, all the numbers here are derived from measurements of *nationality*. This measure, then, omits a significant number of French citizens that are also ethnically North

African and so in all likelihood, the appearance of segregation according to these maps and indices of dissimilarity is lower than in actuality. Algeria was considered an extension of metropolitan France during the colonial period and many Algerians chose French citizenship over that of Algeria upon Algeria's independence from France in 1962. Additionally, by the 1980s if not before, there emerged this *beur* community comprised of second and third-generation "ethnic" North Africans. Many of these people possess[ed] French citizenship and are therefore not included in the "Maghrebi" category.

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