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**Communicative Performances of Social Identity in an Algerian-French
Neighborhood in Paris**

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Neighborhood in Paris**

by

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Dissertation

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Mary Kay and Marc Tetreault, for their love and support.

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**Communicative Performances of Social Identity in an Algerian-French
Neighborhood in Paris**

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This dissertation examines cultural and communicative practices occurring in French *cités* (low-income housing projects) as part of an ethnographic inquiry into the relationship among subcultural style, social stigmatization, and expressive culture. Based upon ethnographic fieldwork in a *cité* located fifteen kilometers west of Paris, the dissertation argues that performances of social identity among individuals growing up both French and Arab are articulated in relation to widely circulating discourses related to ethnicity, spatial affiliation, and gender. In this regard, the author analyzes everyday verbal performances of social identity as creative responses to widely circulating discourses that alternately stigmatize and valorize Arabs and *la cité*. Particularly central to these performances are French discourses regarding immigration and *intégration* that measure racialized national subjects against a white, bourgeois norm. The dissertation analyzes speech genres, such as ritualized teasing and verbal play, to understand the ways that individuals articulate social identity through collaborative verbal performances. In this regard, local discourses and codes of behavior associated with *le respect* ('respect') alternately overlap and compete with a code of behavior termed 'reputation'. The author

defines *le respect* as a social code that prescribes adherence to behavioral standards including showing deference for one's elders and that is loosely based upon an age and gender hierarchy typical of Algeria and the Mediterranean more generally. In contrast to *le respect*, 'reputation' refers, in part, to the public display of verbal prowess that contributes to the presentation and management of personal identity among one's peers. Much like "respect," however, reputation was differently ordered or conceived for young men and women in Chemin de l'Ile. Whereas male speakers are expected to physically defend themselves and their reputations through physical fighting, female speakers attempt to emphasize their tough verbal styles and a public image that they are sexually unavailable and inactive (thus also preserving *le respect*). In verbal exchanges that blend cultural and linguistic expectations from traditional North African age and gender hierarchy with those that correspond to ideals about personal reputation, speakers elaborate their relationship, on the one hand, to their immigrant origins, and other the other, to an emergent urban subculture.

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Introduction

In 1983, the *Mouvement Beur* ('Beur Movement') marched across France to Paris 100,000 strong to protest police violence and widespread racism against North African immigrants and their adult children, who, at that time, colloquially referred to themselves as *les beurs*. Although this incipient political event has not, unfortunately, led to widespread political representation for French citizens of North African descent [Blatt 1997, Feldblum 1993], the past twenty years have demonstrated the nation-wide influence of North-African intellectual and cultural production upon French society.¹

Azouz Begag's novel *Le Gone du Chaâba*, ('The Kid from Chaâba'), a memoir on growing up in the *bidonvilles* (shantytowns) that housed recruited laborers from North Africa, is routinely taught in middle schools across France. Jamel Debbouze, the stand-up comedian who has starred in such films as *Le Ciel, Les Oiseaux, et Ta Mère* ('The Sky, the Birds, and Your Mother') and *Amélie*, is currently the highest paid actor in the country. Zinedine Zidane almost single-handedly won the World Cup for the French soccer team in 1998. Raï singer Khaled and the fusion band *Zebda* have topped the French music charts with such hits as *Aïcha* and *Tomber la Chemise* ('Make the Shirt Fall'), respectively. French filmmakers of North African descent are producing critically acclaimed artistic and popular films at break-neck speed; among the most prolific and talented contributors is Yemina Benguigui, who has written and directed *Memoires d'Immigrés* ('Immigrants' Memories'), *Vivre au Paradis* ('To Live in Paradise'), and *Inch'allah Dimanche* ('God Willing Sunday').

Undergirding the success of this new elite class of French intellectuals, artists, and athletes, a popular cultural and linguistic movement has emerged in multi-cultural,

¹ Blatt notes that the "success of the March stimulated concerted efforts in 1984 to organize youths of immigrant origin into a nationally based movement. [...] [However,] "The Beurs split over the strategic and ideological question of whether to pursue an ethnically inclusive movement involving other cultural communities and supportive elements of French society, or to construct an autonomous North African movement as a necessary first step to becoming a partner in a wider dialogue and movement" [Blatt 1997:44].

working-class *cités* (government subsidized housing projects).² As I describe in detail in Chapter One, the French history of immigration from North Africa, particularly Algeria, and the history of public housing in France have coincided and overlapped in many ways. These intertwined histories have contributed to the production of new French subjects; French descendants of North African immigrants prefer to call themselves *les rebeu*, through the phonetic reversal of the sounds in *arabe*. Just as these new French subjects have created a name for themselves that combines both French and Arabic origins, young people have combined North African and working-class French cultural and linguistic practices to form new styles of speech, dress, and music, associated with *cités* across France. In this regard, the spatial marginalization and social stigmatization of French *cités* have undoubtedly played a significant role in the formation of this youthful subculture. In turn, second and third generations of French who have grown up as *rebeu* in *cités* are contributing to significant linguistic and cultural change throughout France []. Researchers of French adolescents, for example, note that Arabic loan words, Arabic *raï* and American-influenced rap, and urban clothing styles have caught on outside of French *cités* and are now firmly located within the French mainstream [Abu-Haidar 1994, Boyer 1997]. But much as the widespread appropriation of AfricanAmerican popular culture and speech styles by middle class, white Americans demonstrates, the increasing degree to which *rebeu* and *cité* styles of speech, dress, and music are appropriated by middle-class French youth doesn't preclude the commonplace stigmatizing of these populations themselves as non-assimilated.

This dissertation examines cultural and linguistic changes occurring in French *cités* as part of a larger ethnographic inquiry into the relationship among style, stigmatization, and adolescent subjectivity. As theorists of adolescent cultural and linguistic practices note, subcultural styles are central, organizing features of adolescent peer groups and provide the means to express, reproduce, and sometimes subvert social hierarchies of class, race, and gender [Bucholtz 2002, Eckert 1989, Hebdige 1979, McRobbie & Garber 1975, Willis 1977]. This dissertation documents the particular

² It should be noted that several of the popular intellectuals and entertainers mentioned above grew up themselves in *les cités*, including Azouz Begag and Jamel Debbouze.

configurations of identity formation, linguistic practice, cultural change, and spatial/racial marginalization that characterize the emergent subjectivity of adolescents growing up both French and Arab in the stigmatized space of a *cit * called Chemin de l’Ile, located fifteen kilometers west of Paris. More specifically, I explore the ways that adolescent performances of social identity are articulated through everyday discourses related to ethnicity, spatial affiliation, linguistic style, and gendered practices.

A central aim of this dissertation is to explore how growing up *rebeu* in a *cit * is central to adolescents’ experiences of social identity. In this regard, I look to everyday performances of identity among adolescents to understand their creative responses to widely circulating discourses that alternately stigmatize and valorize *les arabes* and *la cit *. Stigmatized representations of *les arabe* and *la cit * in popular French media and discourse mean that adolescents’ appropriation of styles associated with these spaces involves complex and contradictory processes of identification and dis-identifications. For example, self-identifying or being labeled as being a *filles* or *mec de la cit * [‘girl or guy from the *cit *’] involves being identified with stigmatized or even ‘deviant’ behaviors such as drug dealing and violent aggression whether or not one engages in these behaviors.

Similarly, Goffman notes that stigma is created through the forging of a “relationship between attribute and stereotype” [1963:4]. In a sense, this dissertation relates to the ways that individuals understand and identify themselves as members of groups stigmatized within the larger French context, particularly *les arabes*, *les alg riens*, and *les jeunes de la cit * (‘youth of the *cit *) by articulating discourses of identity through and against circulating stereotypes. Whereas Goffman’s [ibid.] research on stigma focuses largely on the individual’s struggle with a ‘compromised’ identity, my own interest relates to how adolescents formulate group identifications in relation to stigmatizing discourses. Rather than address such identity formation, as Goffman does, from the perspective of the ‘normals’, who are supposedly empowered with the ability to represent and enforce limits of normality, I am interested in the ways that, as Foucault [1978] has demonstrated, norms exist and circulate through discourses which are historically and institutionally grounded. For example, the adolescents in this study

routinely incorporate anti-immigrant, and particularly, anti-Arab discourse into everyday verbal performances of identity, and, in so doing, challenge, refashion, and reproduce stigmatizing discourses.

Taken alone, however, the concept of stigma is far too limiting, negative, and one-sided (i.e. from the so-called ‘normals’ point of view) to serve as a conceptual foundation with which to describe the language and identity practices dealt with in this dissertation. Taking my cue from anthropology’s emphasis on using local categories to formulate theoretical analysis, I will concern myself primarily with the local discourse and code of behavior called *le respect* (‘respect’) which alternately overlaps and competes with a set of interactional expectations among adolescents that I shall call ‘reputation’. While these concepts are similar to the ideologies of “reputation” and “respectability” that, Abrahams [1975] used to articulate gendered verbal norms in working-class, urban African American communities the 1960s, the cultural and linguistic differences intrinsic to my fieldsite merit precise description. Whereas Abrahams tended to compartmentalize “reputation” and “respectability” in terms of public and private spheres and along male and female gender lines, my own use of *reputation* and *le respect* describes the two, mutually informing and sometimes competing codes of behavior that apply to both adolescent girls and boys, although, as I argue in Chapter 5, in ways contingent upon local gender ideologies.³

Initially I will define *le respect* as a social code that prescribes adherence to behavioral standards including showing deference for one’s elders and that is loosely based upon an age and gender hierarchy typical of Algeria, North Africa and even the Mediterranean more generally [Abu-Lughod 1986, Herzfeld 1985]. Reputation on the other hand, refers, in part, to the public display of verbal prowess that contributes to the

³ Morgan [1999:29] has critiqued Abrahams and other early scholars [e.g. Labov 1972] of African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) for their apparent assumption that African-American working class women were not central to community-shaped norms and practices for speech events. As Morgan notes, “Previous study of these practices...missed girls’ significance in the description of the African American community (Goodwin 1990 is an exception) and the importance of social face among women” [1999:29]. My approach attempts to look at the ways that adolescent girls are both concerned by and held to standards of social face or ‘reputation’ in interaction at the same time that they are sometimes excluded by their peers from the supposedly ‘masculine’ language and dress that these practices entail.

presentation and management of personal identity among one's adolescent peers.⁴ Here I draw from Goffman's [1959] notion of self-presentation as a series of public performances. In verbal exchanges that blend cultural and linguistic expectations from traditional North African age and gender hierarchy with those that correspond to ideals about personal reputation, adolescent speakers elaborate their relationship, on the one hand, to their immigrant origins, and on the other, to an emergent youthful subculture. I will return to the mutually informing yet competing social codes of *le respect* and "reputation" throughout this dissertation.

This dissertation addresses the above issues from the perspectives of adolescents who experience the tenuous identity of being both French and Arab. Insisting upon these adolescents' claim over Frenchness is a product of my own political position and my critique of French scholarship that so often claims that this generation is "neither/nor" (neither French nor Algerian; 'ni français, ni algérien'). For their part, the adolescents I worked with most often identified with their parents' countries of origins (i.e. "*je suis algérienne, moi*"—'I'm Algerian'), and never as "French" since for them the term connoted a racialized or ethnic identity (i.e. white or European).⁵ However, whether taken from my politicized perspective or from adolescents' existential perspectives, negotiations surrounding their positioning as either "Arab" or "French" occurred in everyday discourse, whether explicitly self-referential (as in 'I'm Algerian') or more loosely creative and performative. From a global perspective then, this dissertation explores how spatial, racialized, and class-based stigmatizing discourses shape experiences of adolescence among children of North African immigrants in Chemin de l'Île. Specifically, I analyze expressions of adolescents' social identity formation through everyday communicative interaction and how these relate to broader discourses about being "French" and "Arab" in the French national context.

⁴ I deal with the expression and social permutations of *le respect* and reputation in detail in Chapter Four.

⁵ Of course, such statements were made within the French national context. Several adolescents mentioned to me that on vacations to Algeria they were identified by friends and relatives as being French, even if they didn't personally identify as such. In this sense, the adolescents in this study should be interpreted as identifying against a normative, racialized definition of "French" within the French national context.

ADOLESCENT IDENTITY PRACTICES AND THE DISCOURSE-CENTERED APPROACH

The institutional structures, political policies, and dominant discourses that target Arabs and specifically the “second” generation of Algerian descent are central to how and to what end individuals within these communities improvise linguistic and cultural practices to elaborate their own social identities. As is the case with members of other stigmatized groups, adolescents of Algerian descent are, in part, constructing their “Arab” identity in response to dominant French discourses—discourses that have the power to label them as “Arabs” and to describe them in overwhelmingly negative terms.⁶ But it would be a mistake to depict linguistic and cultural practices of 2nd and 3rd generation Algerian youth as merely a response to French prejudice and discrimination. Rather, my analysis of these adolescents’ linguistic and cultural practices contributes, I argue, to an understanding of contemporary France itself and to other nations’ position toward immigration, both in terms of everyday experience and popular discourse. Descendants of Algerian and North African immigrants represent future generations of French citizens, who, while they might continue to be marginalized within the national context, will nonetheless, continue to inform and challenge dominant notions of “French” culture and “France” as national community.⁷

The discourse-centered approach provides a discerning tool for studying processes of identity construction and their enactment in everyday experience. Part of this acuity is due to the fact that discourse is so central to the construction of social difference and identity. In this regard, naming (assigning group names) is an important

⁶ Here I emphasize the experience of Algerian-French adolescents of Arab descent for two reasons. First, in my research site, there were very few adolescents of Berber descent, and these individuals claimed also to be Arab, probably due to the predominance of Arab culture and language in the neighborhood. Second, in the homogenizing, anti-immigrant rhetoric of the French media, “Arabs” are repeatedly chastised as the most problematic group, but the term is often mistakenly used to refer to individuals of Berber descent. I have discussed elsewhere the conflation between *Arabe* and *Algerien* in the French press; such a conflation works to elide the presence of Berber culture and language and to disparage individuals of Berber descent [Tetreault 1992].

⁷As Toni Morrison [1992] has argued with respect to the United States, understanding African American culture and, in particular, mainstream white representations of African Americans in literature, are necessary for understanding white American culture. That is, Morrison argues that the ‘margins’ of American national community actually define what is considered the ‘center’ or core of American identity, and not simply the other way around.

element of identity construction, both self-ascribed and other-ascribed. Shifting name ascription within the North African-French community is a prime example of both the centrality of discourse to identity construction and the dynamic relationship between dominant "French" discourse and discursive practices within North African communities.

During the oil crisis of the 1970s, the French media and politicians conducted highly negative coverage of North African immigrants in which the word *arabe* ('Arab') was repeatedly associated with the growing problem of unemployment in France. Then, in the 1980s, *le mouvement beur* ('Beur movement') was launched, partly to redress police violence against North Africans and to decry a host of economic and political injustices including job and housing discrimination. Activists' strategic use of the term *beur* in this political movement demonstrates their attempt to redefine their status in France, not only economically and politically, but also socially and symbolically. Forgoing the now stigmatized term *arabe*, they chose the popular street term for grown children of North Africans, *beur*, derived from the French word game *verlan* that inverts syllables of phonemes of words.

However, once *beur* became widely used in mainstream media and even political discourse, North Africans once again renamed themselves by performing *verlan* on the word *beur*, creating the word *rebeu*.⁸ This term is currently preferred among adult informants in this study, for instance. The centrality of naming to the process of identity construction and the ways that names take on different meanings in different contexts shows the importance of studying these issues through naturally-occurring discourse [Rymes 1996]. The case of North African communities in France renaming themselves in resistance to popular stereotypes demonstrates the dynamic relationship between dominant representations of stigmatized groups and their own collective performances of identity through self-naming, among other practices. This dissertation employs the

⁸ *Verlan* is a word game that predates the *beur* movement and comprises part of "traditional slang" in France [Goudailler 1997:18]. Further, many *verlan* terms are now conventionalized elements of mainstream French, such as *meuf*, the inverted form of the word *femme* ('woman'). Nonetheless, the use of *verlan* lends a casual, youthful tone to conversation and has become emblematic of *cités* in France, and specifically in the Parisian region [ibid:18]. The term *verlan* is derived from the French word *l'envers* ('reverse') by 'reversing' the syllables. Similarly, *beur* is derived from the word *arabe*, in which the vowels of the inverted syllables merge to create the monosyllabic word. *Rebeu* is thus an example of *le double verlan* ('double verlan') in which the syllables of a *verlan* word are inverted a second time.

discourse-centered approach to look at identity construction among French adolescents of North African descent as a dynamic process that occurs most importantly at the level of everyday interaction.

The discourse-centered approach offers a particularly fruitful perspective from which to study social identity among adolescents. As Sherzer notes, discourse resides at the nexus of culture and language and thus exists as a way to access shared knowledge among cultural members [1989]. Also underlying the discourse-centered approach is the idea that "culture is localized in concrete, publicly accessible signs, the most important of which are actually occurring instances of discourse" [Urban 1991:1]. Discourse, such as myths, rituals, or in this study, genres of teasing and verbal play, exists as publicly accessible forms, but this does not mean that they are shared in a monologic sense; rather, through performance, instances of discourse emerge as collective expressions of cultural experience [ibid:2].

For the growing field of linguistic anthropology of social identity, and equally for this study, a focus on emergent and collective uses of discourse facilitates the study of social identity as emergent in social interaction, rather than as static, predetermined social categories. For example, Bucholtz [2002] notes that current linguistic anthropological researchers working on identity should concern themselves with how social identity is enacted through talk, rather than as categories of social identity *a priori*. Proponents of this approach argue that social identity must be studied as actual instances of emergent discourse--that is, as sets of practices and stances in emergent discursive production.

The study of youth has a long history in anthropology, but its focus has shifted to reflect changes in the discipline and in the ways that adolescence is experienced throughout the world. Among early American anthropologists, Mead [1928] established adolescence as central to key areas of study in anthropology such as ritual, initiation ceremonies, sexuality, and marriage. Bucholtz notes that "such research has usually approached adolescence from the perspective of adulthood, downplaying youth-centered interaction and cultural production" [2002:525]. Current anthropological studies of youth reflect the discipline's shift away from cultural monographs and adolescence as a life

stage toward the role of adolescent cultural agency in relation to processes of modernity and globalization.

Current literature on youth identity thus emphasizes adolescents' own agency and their varied cultural practices rather than adolescence as a "staging ground for integration into the adult community" [Bucholtz 2002:525]. In particular, cultural and linguistic anthropology have contributed ethnographic studies of youth cultural practices which challenge a previous emphasis in cultural studies on youth practices either as expressions of hegemony or resistance. Rather, the ambivalent quality of youth cultural practices are emphasized, in that they are analyzed as both expressions of social reproduction (i.e. of social classes, racial hierarchies, gender ideologies) and social transformation through cultural and linguistic innovation. This dissertation seeks to contribute to research on youth agency and culture through its emphasis on naturally-occurring discourse and its analysis of social identity as emergent in everyday interaction.

DISCOURSE-CENTERED SCHOLARSHIP ON NORTH AFRICAN AND ARABIC SPEAKING POPULATIONS

This dissertation is indebted to those scholars working on language and culture in North Africa, the Middle East, and among Arab populations in diaspora. Communicative performance being central to my analysis of emergent *beur* adolescent culture, work on poetic performance in North Africa and the Middle East is particularly important to this dissertation. A particularly extensive scholarship addresses the ethnographic context of poetic speech genres in North Africa and the Middle East [Abu Lughod 1996, Boucherit 2002, Caton 1990, Kapchan 1996, Reynolds 1995, Slyomovics 1987]. This literature examines the ways that poetic genres define and challenge social relationships and cultural categories through active performance. Abu-Lughod, for instance, notes the ways that Bedouin women's poetry, *ghinnawa*, subvert (albeit momentarily) the social values of stoicism and gender hierarchy among the Awlad 'Ali. The power of poetic performance to reorder the social universe is further echoed in Kapchan's and Slyomovics' scholarship. Kapchan notes, for example, that Moroccan women's success in the overtly masculine world of the *suq* ['market'] is achieved through their use of a hybridized discourse that skillfully navigates "oaths, formulae, axiomatic sayings, and...feminine testimony" as well as religious scripture and bawdy innuendo [1996:2]. Similarly, Slyomovics finds that "[U]pper Egyptians honor the words, not the person, of the poet" in her study of 'Awadallah 'Abd aj-Jalil 'Ali's success as a Hilali epic poet, despite his identity as "an outside, a gypsy, an outcast" [1987:264]. Attempting to complement these studies, this dissertation examines the power of speech genres and verbal performance to order and re-order the social world and systems of hierarchy among French adolescents of Algerian descent and within the French context generally. For example, the twin values of *le respect* and reputation that emerge in adolescents' communicative performances are reordered, on the one hand, by irreverent parental name-calling, and on the other by adolescent girls' bid for a non-traditional identity through their adoption of purportedly "masculine" styles of speech.

A further way in which I hope to complement scholarship on poetic genres among North African populations is through an emphasis on the creativity and spontaneity of verbal performance among *beur* adolescents. Although the verbal performances that I analyze are achieved largely in French rather than Arabic, there are clear similarities in tone and quality of the genres I address and those discussed in scholarship on North Africa and the Middle East more generally. For example, Caton's study of Yemeni poetry (*Balah*), emphasizes its competitive and spontaneous qualities, which the author describes as a verbal "game" in which performers collaboratively achieve an "undetermined outcome according to specific, collectively shared rules" [1990:79]. Similarly, in competitive verbal genres such as 'parental name-calling', *afficher* ('to display') and *mettre un coup de pression* ('to make a blow of pressure'), French adolescents of North African descent achieve collaborative performances that constitute both 'collectively shared rules' and poetic "act[s] of creation" [ibid.:79]. As well, the Moroccan Arabic genre of teasing that Kapchan describes as **tfliya** resonates with the types of teasing and verbal play that I describe, particularly the genre that I refer to as 'parental name-calling'. For, in both cases, "multiple meanings break through the surface structure of...speech in the use of alliteration, rhyme, and pun" [Kapchan 1996:245].

Scholarship dealing with descendants of North Africans in France has contributed to an understanding of how Arabic informs expressions of linguistic and cultural identity among Arabs living in diaspora. French research conducted in the 1980s and early 1990s tended to look at Arabic language retention using sociolinguistic and statistical methods. These studies document significant evidence of a decrease in Arabic proficiency among the so-called "second" and "third" generations as well as the use of French in practically all social contexts, including home [Abu-Haidar 1994, Billiez 1985, Dabène & Billiez 1987, Jerab 1988, Taleb Ibrahim 1985, Tribalat 1995]. Using extensive census data, Tribalat notes that among French-born children of Spanish, Portuguese, and Algerian immigrants, those children of Algerian immigrants are the least likely to speak their parents' native language (69% versus 84% of Portuguese origin and 91% of Spanish origin) [Tribalat 1995:53]. Among the so-called "third" generation (i.e., French-born grandchildren of immigrants), fluency in heritage languages tended to decline drastically

in all three groups: 24%, 29%, and 35% of Algerian, Portuguese, and Spanish origin, respectively [ibid.:53].

Much of the early studies on French-Arabic code-switching and Arabic proficiency exhibit a lack of data arising in spontaneous or “natural” speech. Notable exceptions, however, include an article by Taleb Ibrahimi [1985] which studies the speech of French-born youth of Algerian heritage living in Grenoble and another by Dabène [1990] which examines, in part, the practice of embedding Arabic loan words into French speech. What is particularly important about Ibrahimi’s work is that she compares speaking styles of Arab-French adolescents across communicative contexts, an uncommon practice in French research on language and immigration which has tended to privilege questionnaires and interview data.

Studies on language among children of immigrants have increasingly turned away from proficiency to symbolic uses of Arabic and to emergent French youth culture and language more generally. For example, Abu-Haidar [1994] focuses on language attitudes and the maintenance of Arabic loan words and formulaic expressions as a symbolic marker of identity among French of North African descent, despite a lack of Arabic proficiency. A similar approach is taken by Dabène and Billiez [1987], who compare linguistic practices and attitudes and among French-born of Spanish, Portuguese, and Algerian heritage. Whereas, among children of Spanish and Portuguese immigrants, a strong cultural identity correlated with a use of their parents’ native language at home and with friends, the reverse was true for Algerian-French youth. An espousal of strong cultural identity was most frequently found among adolescents who chose not to speak Arabic either at home or among friends of Arab origin, as evidenced by the striking words of one interviewee: “My language is Arabic, but I don’t speak it” [Dabène & Billiez 1987:65].⁹ Dabène and Billiez argue that Algerian-French youth attach a high symbolic value to Arabic but do not often speak it due to a complex relationship to Algeria, France, and their cultural origins. Dabène and Billiez report that adolescents’

⁹ “*Ma langue c’est l’arabe, mais je ne la parle pas.*” A notable exception was found among many girls, who reported speaking Arabic with their mothers at home, a pattern that I observed among many of the adolescents included in this study. However, because I did not conduct quantitative research on proficiency or use of Arabic, I cannot give more than this anecdotal observation.

infrequent visits to Algeria and, once there, being perceived as cultural and linguistic foreigners may account for the preference not to use Arabic. At the same time, the frequent stigmatization of Arab populations and Arabic in France would seem ample reason for Arab youth to reclaim their symbolic attachment to Arabic and their cultural origins as a point of pride. My own findings indicate that adolescents exhibit a symbolic attachment to Arabic and their cultural origins through the ritualized use of key expressions, discourse markers, and loan terms, not to mention speech genres and cultural practices which foreground a shared ethnic identity.

However, Arabic loan words and verbal genres that appear to be derivative of Arabic verbal genres are no longer limited to French youth of Arab descent. As Abu-Haidar notes,

First generation Algerian immigrants in France have shown loyalty to the mother tongue by maintaining it within their community. Their children, on the other hand, have proved their loyalty by promoting Algerian Arabic outside the community, and giving it greater prestige than it ever enjoyed as a minority, immigrant language. [1994:53]

In fact, Arabic loan words and discursive practices derivative of Arab culture have become widespread in multiethnic communities within French *cités*. As compared to the literature cited above, this body of scholarship takes the ethnically generic categories of ‘youth’ and ‘youth language’ as its objects of study. As I discuss in Chapter Three, many French studies of *cité* styles of speech take the form of the ‘slang’ dictionary, which often claim, despite clear evidence or rigorous demonstration, that a uniform *cité* ‘language’ exists [e.g. Goudailler 1997; Pierre-Adolphe et al. 1995, Seguin and Teillard 1996]. As both Boyer [1994, 1997] and I have noted [Tetreault 2002], much French scholarship on language in *cités* and popular journalistic depictions of these communities have frequently reproduced the same stereotypes of *cité* speakers, that is, Boyer calls “sociolinguistic deviance” that is, exhibiting *either* a relative lack of vocabulary or excess of ‘impenetrable’ vocabulary [ibid.:10-11]. In this regard, the so-called ‘slang’ *cité* dictionary proposes to its reader to “translate” the mysterious language of the “new” (i.e. non-normative) French speaker.

Of the several studies of everyday language practices within French *cités* that do draw engage in linguistic analysis, few are truly ethnographic. Calvet [1994] documents linguistic (grammatical and lexical) changes in French *cités*, without analyzing naturally-occurring interaction in context. Billiez [1990] and Seux [1997] describe language as a vehicle for identity formation among multiethnic youth in French *cités*, but rely largely on interview data, which can reproduce the social values and linguistic styles of the researcher [Briggs 1986].

LePoutre has conducted one of the few in-depth ethnographic studies of language practices within a French suburban population [1997]. This work is innovative for its extensive description and analysis of adolescent speech genres, linguistic rituals, and related cultural values, such as honor.¹⁰ However, detailed analysis of speech genres in context and interactional data are virtually absent from this work. Furthermore, LePoutre's emphasis on competitive verbal genres, slang, delinquency, and obscenities, combined with his focus exclusively on non-white, male adolescents serve to reinforce many of the stereotypes produced by mainstream French media with respect to violence, 'race', and masculinity.

The aim of this dissertation, in part, is to present ethnographic and interactional data to complement existing research, and also to contribute an analysis that considers the linguistic practices of girls as well as boys, both separate and in co-ed interaction. Another important contribution of this study is to contribute an analysis of identity and language among French adolescents of Algerian descent that takes into account both the social context of the *cit * and the cultural context of Algerian immigration. Most of the studies above focus exclusively on one or the other, whereas I hope to explore the relationship between adolescent language practices, the space of *cit *, and North African cultural influences. Finally, my work contributes a unique theoretical and methodological position to the existing research in that I analyze interaction within ongoing contexts of use in order to explore the ways that communicative practices shape and reorganize adolescent social relationships within peer groups and on a symbolic level with respect to cultural and national identities in France.

TRANSLITERATION AND TRANSLATION OF ARABIC TERMS

The adolescents that are concerned in these pages incorporate Arabic into their speech in ways that might be considered unconventional to a native speaker. Not only are adolescents using non-standard pronunciation and syntax as compared to their parents' colloquial Algerian Arabic, but they reinterpret the semantic meaning of Arabic terms to render them applicable to new social contexts and interactional aims. For these reasons, I have not only provided transliterations and translations of Arabic terms throughout the dissertation, but have also included a glossary to further explain meaning and usage. Arabic terms are bolded throughout the dissertation for easy reference.

Such innovation is part and parcel of the linguistic and cultural change that is occurring among French adolescents of North African descent and thus should not be viewed as 'mistakes' or linguistic incompetence on their part. Rather, this linguistic creativity is evidence of the novel ways that (mostly) non-native speakers express a connection with Arabic and a shared cultural heritage, while also giving voice to an emergent *rebeu* identity as Arabs in diaspora. In this way, adolescents' innovative uses of Arabic derive from the circumstances of its pragmatic use. That is, adolescents are pragmatically using Arabic loan words to index their identity as *French* speakers of Algerian descent and so 'correct' or fluent usage of Arabic is not the pragmatic aim of speakers. On the contrary, the practice of embedding brief 'emblems' of Arabic into French is what indicates, creates, and maintains the shared social identity of being *rebeu*, rather than fluent or 'correct' Arabic.

By and large, the use of Arabic in adolescents' speech is best described as the practice of borrowing loan words rather than code switching [Gumperz 1982a]. As such, there tends to be an emphasis on discourse markers, nouns, adjectives, greetings, and other easily inserted, brief "emblems" of the Arabic language which accommodate speakers of differing linguistic competence [Personal Communication, Keith Walters]. Additionally, Arabic verbs were not conjugated, further demonstrating the level to which adolescents were engaging in borrowing rather than code switching. Along these lines,

¹⁰ I discuss the relationship of 'honor and shame' to adolescent discourses in Chapters Four and Five.

the gender of borrowed Arabic nouns and adjectives do not necessarily match the gender of the original person or object described.¹¹

The use of such non-standard Arabic seems to derive from a combination of factors. First, although some adolescents discussed in this study were fluent in Arabic, fluency was by no means the linguistic norm or ideal. Rather, the local linguistic competence in Arabic that adolescents seemed to care most about was comprised of a limited set of expressions and loan words that were incorporated into everyday adolescent parlance. Second, even those speakers who were fluent in Arabic were generally illiterate in the language, as were their parents. Further, as colloquial Arabic is generally not written or taught in schools even in North Africa and the Middle East, there exists no standard orthography for local dialects. Classical Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic, respectively the official languages of religious and political spheres in North Africa and the Middle East, were generally not spoken by adolescents or their parents. Thus, their 'illiterate' status in Arabic was as much related to the type of Arabic they spoke as to a lack of schooling among those parents who had grown up in North Africa. While several adolescents in this study were taking Modern Standard Arabic as a second foreign language at school, this did not seem to greatly influence pragmatic use or pronunciation of colloquial Arabic in everyday conversation.

In order to be faithful to the pronunciation and usage of Arabic among the adolescents who participated in this study, I have chosen to transliterate Arabic terms in their dialectal form, rather than in Modern Standard Arabic. For Arabic terms that do not conform to dialectal standards of usage or pronunciation, I have decided to transliterate according to a representation of what was actually said, thus preserving the tone and

¹¹ The practice of neglecting conventional rules for gender agreement between nouns and adjectives is a common trend in everyday, working class French as well [Gadet 1996] and may explain some of the lack of gender agreement in Arabic terms in the speech of the adolescents in this study. Similar to Gadet's findings for everyday spoken French, I have found in my data that certain commonly used adjectives such as *con* ('jerk') are routinely left in the masculine form, regardless of the gender of the modified noun. This may be due to the frequent change in meaning when a term takes on the feminine form in French; whereas *con* is a slight insult that questions the intelligence of its referent, the feminine form *comme* adds a layer of negative sexual overtone. A similar pattern has been noted by feminists in the English language with respect to the shifting meanings between masculine and feminine forms of words, as in the case of "master" and "governor" which when feminine become associated with sexuality or the domestic sphere (i.e., "mistress" and "governess").

patterns of pragmatic usage among these adolescent speakers. The transliteration system for consonants that I have adopted corresponds generally to the system used in the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. However, I have incorporated aspects of Heath's [1987] transliteration system for Moroccan Arabic.¹²

To transliterate vowels, I borrow from both Heath's [1987] system and Kapchan's [1996] application of it. Kapchan notes that Moroccan does not employ long vowels as is the case in Classical Arabic (CA) [ibid.:xi]. Rather, Moroccan Arabic employs what Heath refers to as "full vowels" (a, i, u) which "have no one-to-one relationship to shorter counterparts, and ... are not especially prolonged phonetically. They do, however, commonly reflect CA long vowels...in inherited vocabulary" [1987:23]. In addition to full vowels, there are short vowels, which change according to their environment and are word medial [Kapchan 1996:xi]. Like Kapchan, I have used the schwa [ə] for simplicity's sake. Further, [ay] is a diphthong that is similar to the English pronunciation of "they."

The consonants not found in English are transliterated as follows:

q is a voiceless uvular stop

gh is a voiced uvular fricative, pronounced much like the French "r"

kh is a voiceless uvular fricative, pronounced like the "ch" in Bach

‘ is a voiced pharyngeal fricative, corresponding to the letter ‘ayn in Classical Arabic

’ is a glottal stop, the Arabic letter hamza

The emphatic consonants in Arabic are shown with a dot under the letter that it resembles most in English: ḍ, ṣ, ṭ, ḥ

¹² I am using Moroccan Arabic as the basis for my transliteration system for two reasons. First, Moroccan dialect is described systematically and in great detail by linguists whereas Algerian Arabic is not [cf. Boucherit 2002 for an important exception]. Second, as most of the parents of these adolescents migrated from western Algeria (Marghnia), they spoke a dialect more closely related to Moroccan Arabic rather than other dialects within Algeria, such as that of Alger, which borrows heavily from Kabyle.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used for collecting the data for this dissertation further reflects my theoretical orientation toward identity as emergent in everyday interaction. As ethnographers of communication have shown [Hymes 1972, Keating 1998, Sherzer 1983, Urban 1991], when speakers produce discourse in "natural" settings (i.e. outside interviews), they organize talk to fulfill a variety of purposes: to enact social relationships, to create and challenge social hierarchies, and, especially important for this study, to align with and disassociate from categories of social identity. Although the field ethnography of communication was originally focused on the empirical description of discursive genres, its major theoretical contribution has been to establish that natural speech represents the enactment of culture, rather than the production of discursive 'texts'.

The kinds of data I collected over eighteen months of fieldwork represent my focus on adolescents' agency to create social contexts for the expression of collective identity through everyday talk. While I occasionally visited the local middle school where the adolescents in this study were enrolled, I decided to focus my energies on adolescent-centered social networks and activities as often as possible. For example, although much of my time in Chemin de l'Ile was spent in the semi-institutional setting of neighborhood associations, most of the data that I ended up analyzing in the chapters that follow represent casual interactions among peers and between peers and adult mentors. These impromptu exchanges often took the form of highly creative group performances, wedged in between more structured tutoring activities or ongoing throughout a tutoring session.

In addition to the data that I collected in more institutional contexts such as the neighborhood association *Cerise*, I tape recorded in a local park with a core group of adolescents as frequently as possible. It was the habit of many of these 13-16 year old girls (and a few boys) to gather in a local park after school to chat and, weather permitting, I became a group member of sorts. These were adolescents with whom I had worked at *Cerise* and who were accustomed to my tape recorder and persistent questions. This group of primarily girls was also solicitous of my company because my presence

sometimes provided them the adult company needed for forays into other *cités* in other neighborhoods. The many roles that I assumed in relation to these adolescents afforded me both rich insight into their daily lives and a difficult line to walk between responsible adult and detached observer.

For example, I tried to be both as emotionally invested a tutor and as objective a researcher possible, but when the two roles collided, I was challenged to find a delicate balance. On many occasions I had to refuse to act as chaperone outside of the confines of local associations because to facilitate girls' illicit outings to the mall or other *cités* after school would abuse the trust that their parents granted me. As adults often quite marginalized from their children's experiences of school, parents often mistook me for a "legitimate" adult chaperone because of my role as a tutor at the neighborhood association *Cerise*. On the other hand, for better or worse, the adolescent girls I worked with accorded me no such authority over them, and so they were not deterred by my presence from behaving in ways that were typical of their peer group.

ORGANIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION

The dissertation is organized into five main chapters. Chapter One addresses the racial and spatial stigmatization of *cités* and emergent subcultural and linguistic styles through a historical overview of the relationship public housing policy and Algerian immigration. In so doing, I locate my fieldsite within the larger web of French politics of immigration and subsidized housing that encompass it. Rather than just providing historical “background,” this chapter analyzes particular patterns and effects of spatial and racial stigmatization in France. As well, the chapter contributes to the dissertation’s focus on everyday expressions of adolescents’ social identity as they relate to broader discourses about being “French” and “Arab” in the national context.

Chapter Two explores subcultural and linguistic styles locally and externally associated with the *cité* using examples from the press, films, and French scholarship. In addition to analyzing French scholarship and media coverage about (perceived) linguistic changes occurring in French low-income housing projects, I describe how and to what ends adolescents strategically use styles associated with the local *cité*. While the linguistic markers that are generally associated with the *cité* are not necessarily exclusive to these spaces, I demonstrate a growing consensus on what constitutes “language from the *cité*,” both within my fieldsite and in popular French representations. This chapter thus addresses how external representations of the *cité* and local representations and performances mutually inform this space. In this regard, adolescent responses to negative images of the *cité* involve a creative embracing of *cité* styles that valorize toughness and entrepreneurial skills as well as the improvisation of verbal and dress styles that reject a “French” (read ‘white’), bourgeois aesthetic [Bourdieu 1984]. For example, adolescents’ active appropriation and improvising of styles and genres typical of popular African-American culture such as rap and hip hop shows the connections that adolescents themselves forge between marginalized spatial and racial identities in France and those in the United States.

In Chapter Three, I further analyze adolescent responses to stigmatizing images of *les arabes*, particularly the recycling of negative stereotypes for elaborating their own in-group peer identity. For instance, I look at the ways that *cit * space is discursively constructed as “Arab” space, not only in the negative stereotypes in French media, but also in adolescents' own revalorization of these spaces as adamantly their own, no matter what 'the French' say. Stereotypes about *les arabes* used for humor, indicate the tensions surrounding these representations; as Basso [1979] notes, humor that tries to represent the world from the perspective of the dominant group (among the Apache, the ‘white man’) can be "dangerous." Similarly, adolescents’ attempts at using “French” stereotypes about *les arabes* sometimes backfire when older mentors and peers take offense at these negative depictions.

More globally, Chapter Three analyzes how adolescents deploy, construct, and challenge these social categories and stereotypes in everyday interaction. In particular, I address how adolescents re-voice dominant French stereotypes about “Arabs,” “immigrants,” and other racialized identities as a central resource for performing in-group affiliation and for disassociating from a mainstream “French” identity. By analyzing several types of discourse, namely narrative, teasing, and verbal play, I analyze adolescents’ multiple pragmatic uses of stereotypes and social labels. Cultural and racialized difference, both as tropes and as organizing modes of interaction are central for their central role in adolescent peer interactions.

Chapter Four deals with competitive parental teasing that is central to adolescents’ interactions and which contribute to their presentations of self among peers [Goffman 1959]. Rather than assuming salient categories of identification, I address how shared categories and symbols for identification emerge through individuals’ attempts to distinguish themselves in performance. Central to my exploration of shared and contested notions of self are adolescents’ own meta-discursive commentaries on cultural formations, such as their attention to and construction of *le respect*, a highly prevalent discursive trope for organizing interactional patterns. In particular, the genre "parental name calling" contributes to an aesthetic of interaction that draws its “local” meanings, in

part, from transnational forms such as rap and mother insults typical of North African Arabic.

By embedding the names of their peers' parents and through idealized (hypothetical) reported speech, adolescents find intimate ways to engage with being children of immigrants. Moreover, adolescents express social values evocative of their cultural origins and of their parents, such as *le respect*, in innovative new ways. For example, although nearly every adolescent I knew in Chemin de l'Île was "dating" someone, they all upheld a code for "respectful" behavior based upon keeping romantic involvement from their parents' view. At the same time, the practice of parental-name calling show the fissures in this system and the discursive power that adolescents exercise when calling out a peer in relation to their parents. These performances are layered with symbolic and social meaning. On one hand, they publicly express adolescents' fraught relationships with their immigrant parents. On the other, these displays are indicative of a larger peer-based system of sharing and withholding information about dating and other personal information considered inappropriate for parents' ears.

In Chapter Five, I look at the pointed ways that girls experience the constraints of *le respect* and demonstrate the contradictory expectations that both male and female adolescent peers demand of girls. Although some girls aspire to participate in *cit  * styles through the use of genres (such as rap and insult routines) and styles of dress (such as sweat suits and sneakers), they are criticized for 'wanting to be men'. Thus, performances of purportedly masculine verbal and dress styles represent both a means for girls to craft transgressive gendered identities for themselves and an opportunity for their peers to critique this subversion of expected gender norms. Ambivalent responses to girls' use of *cit  * styles reveal a more general ambivalence toward the role of girls in public space within the *cit  *. Further, the controversy that surrounds girls' use of supposedly masculine *cit  * styles demonstrates a larger struggle over the symbolic meaning of these interactional styles and the symbolic boundaries of gender categories in the community.

Resisting the conflation of *cit  * styles, toughness, and masculinity, adolescent girls strategically use purportedly masculine speech and dress styles to construct personal authority and contest local gender norms. In analyzing these performances and critical

peer responses to them, I explore local tensions between performative standards for “reputation” and constraints upon girls’ and women’s behavior related to local interpretations of *le respect*. I argue that tensions surrounding girls’ use of gender-marked styles reflect larger conflicts between cultural re-imaginings of “Arab” and Muslim “tradition” and emergent *cit * codes of conduct.

Chapter One: Space, Race, and Stigmatization: Ethnography in a French Cité

This chapter addresses processes of racial and spatial stigmatization in French *cités* through a historical overview of the relationship between French public housing policy and Algerian immigration. In so doing, I hope to locate the local community of Chemin de l’Ile within the larger web of French politics of immigration and subsidized housing that encompass it. More importantly, I hope to contextualize the performances and politics of identity that are expressed by individual adolescents in Chemin de l’Ile within a broader discursive context so that the reader may understand these performances as part of the larger experience of growing up Arab in French housing projects. Rather than just providing historical “background,” this chapter analyzes particular patterns and effects of spatial and racial stigmatization in France. Moreover, the chapter contributes to the dissertation’s larger focus on expressions of adolescents’ social identity formation through everyday interaction relate to broader discourses about being “French” and “Arab” in the French national context. It is my hope that an analysis of the centrality of both North African immigration and the *cité* to national French politics might demonstrate the ways that at communal, political, and representational levels, *les arabes* and *les français* are constructed as mutually exclusive and even competing entities.¹³ Furthermore, I hope to provide social and historical context with which to understand adolescents’ elaboration of the cultural value of *le respect* and their interactional emphasis on ‘reputation’ which comprise, to a degree, a response to the larger lack of “respect” that French society accords these adolescents generally.

In response to the increasing (often negative) attention that *cités* and North African immigrant communities have received in popular French politics and journalistic publications, French scholarship has intensified its production in these areas since the 1980s. Such research has dealt with a myriad of issues, and has usually been conducted

¹³ This discursive process is not unlike that which Pauline Turner Strong identifies in captivity narratives whereby “American” and “Indian” are counterposed as mutually-defining and yet mutually-exclusive entities that shape and reflect lived experience [1999:5-6].

in the field of sociology. A particularly important portion of this work deals with social exclusion, often analyzed in relation to French housing practices [Begag 1995, 1994; Ben Jelloun 1984; Bourdieu 1993; Sayad 1995].¹⁴

Youth has been a particularly important focus of much of this work [Begag 1999, 1990; Bordet 1998; Bouamana 1993; Decugis & Zemouri, Douville 1984; Duret 1996; Jazouli 1992; Lagree & Lew-Fai 1989]. By and large, however, this research has relied again upon interview research with fairly little in-depth ethnographic research. Exceptions to this include Duret's [1996] ethnographic account of fraternal relations among young men in a *cité* and Bordet's [1998] study of the role of stigmatization in adolescent social identity.

¹⁴ I deal with Bourdieu's reflexive methodology and innovative study of conflict in French suburbs in Chapter Three.

STIGMATIZING LABELS: ZEP, ZUP, HLM, AND CITÉ

My arrival in October 1998 to the particular *cité* in which I conducted my fieldwork occurred just after a decisive communal and political event: the successful strike to retain the neighborhood's status as a ZEP or *Zone Prioritaire d'Education* ('Priority Education Zone'). The strike had mobilized a variety of populations in the neighborhood, all of whom had different interests in whether the neighborhood continued to be classified as such. Teachers at the local middle and grade schools had mobilized in order to keep their salaries at a higher rate as well as to ensure the lower student to teacher ratio that the ZEP classification guarantees schools. Educators,¹⁵ working in local associations on a variety of issues such as school retention and anti-criminality among adolescents, also participated because of the higher municipal funding granted to areas designated as ZEPs. Students were encouraged by their teachers and educators to participate and local schools posted pro-ZEP slogans on the windows and posters outside the schools, even after the strike was over. School itself was cancelled several days in order to persuade local legislators to retain the 'ZEP' status, even though some parents grumbled that students would be behind for the year due to missed school. Nonetheless, many students and parents participated in the march in order to retain the higher funding connected with the designation.

Shortly after the strike, on a gray winter afternoon, I arrived at *Cerise*, the association where I tutored English, only to find that all the educators were off making visits to parents' houses and that the children were still in school. I decided to walk around the neighborhood to get a better mental map of its small streets, lined with

¹⁵ "Educator" or *educateur* is a French civil servant who combines social work and education—they are usually attached to a school or scholastic association. They provide psychological counseling as well as scholastic and career help. *Cerise*, an association where I tutored, had several educators working for it when I was there, who provided services to a variety of young people including middle school and high school students as well as high school dropouts.

pavillions or modest houses, which surrounded central sets of *tours* or high rise projects, each of which enclosed cemented courtyards and walkways.¹⁶

As I walked around the neighborhood, I noticed remnants of the strike.¹⁷ In the windows of the local middle school or *collège*, slogans were painted in the windows, such as *Gardons le ZEP!* or “Let’s keep the ZEP!” Graffiti, usually a rare occurrence in the neighborhood,¹⁸ also commemorated the success of the strike with spray painted catch phrases on the train station wall: *On a gagné!* or “We won!” As I walked by myself around the gray and desolate assembly of state subsidized housing, I began to wonder seriously about the complicated mix of ‘winning’ and ‘losing’ that such ‘priority’ status would entail for a community like Chemin de l’Ile.

As a newcomer to Chemin de l’Ile at the period of the aforementioned strike, I was surprised at the readiness and enthusiasm many people displayed in attempting to retain the classification “ZEP.” Along with other such official designations, e.g., *Zone Urbaine Précaire* or ZUP (Precarious Urban Zone), *Hébergement de Loyer Modéré* or HLM (Moderated Rent Housing), *Zones d’Education Prioritaire* or ‘ZEP’ have been demonized in the French media since the early 1980s. Much as the terms ZEP, ZUP, and HLM constituted official categories with which to describe (and attempt to redress) the social and economic marginality experienced in such areas, they also represent and even perpetuate the representational and material marginality of these areas. On the one hand, these spaces have been repeatedly associated with negative journalistic topics such as crime, immigration, drugs, and scholastic failure. On the other, they have become

¹⁶ Despite the varied appearance of *pavillions* and *tours* (houses and high-rises) most were, in fact, subsidized housing [Gilbert Rerat, personal communication].

¹⁷ My fieldnotes on Jan. 14, 1999 discuss the strike.

¹⁸ The rumor in Chemin de l’Ile about the lack of graffiti was that the ‘older brothers’ or *grands frères* had told younger community members not to *tagger* (‘tag’) or leave “a graffito using a word or words, especially the author’s name, rather than a picture” [American Heritage Dictionary 1992:1827]. I will return to the archetype of the ‘big brother’ later in the next chapter, but loosely defined, it means the older, unmarried young men who are most active in ‘business’ (illegal sale and trade of stolen goods and drugs). While these young men are not yet ‘respectable’ fathers and family heads, they have still have attained a significant measure of status and respect in the neighborhood by virtue of age and financial success. In contrast, ‘little brothers’ or *petits frères* refer to the younger set of up-and-coming male adolescents who usually ‘train’ for big brother status by working informally for *grands frères* by selling goods, running errands, etc. The system of ‘big’ and ‘little brothers’ is not specific to Chemin de l’Ile and has been documented in other *cités* by Pascal Duret [1996].

increasingly marginal in relation to industrial jobs, as France has largely shifted to a service economy.

For example, Gross, *et al.* [1994] note the attention that HLMs received in the French press with respect to nocturnal *rodéos* during the early 1980s. These urban battles with the police consisted of young men stealing cars and racing them, only to set them on fire so any evidence would be destroyed. These so-called *rodeos* were highly publicized in the French press, giving the HLM and *cités* a reputation for lawlessness and violence. In my own research on 1991 representations of *la banlieue chaude* (literally, 'the hot suburb', but which connotes negative representations of low-income housing projects or *cités*), I found an over-representation of North Africans, and particularly Algerians, in conjunction with representations of crime, scholastic failure, and drug addiction [Tetreault 1992].

These negative associations existed both in right-wing newspaper *Le Figaro* and left-wing *Libération*, except that the causality was framed in slightly different terms. *Le Figaro* implied that North African immigration and Algerians in particular were responsible for bringing crime and drug sales into "French" communities, hence causing *les banlieues chaudes*. On the other hand, *Libération* implied that immigrants and their descendants were only indirectly responsible for creating *les banlieues chaudes*, since French society was responsible for discriminating against immigrants and their children, neglecting their poverty, and thus pushing them toward feelings of alienation ('ennui', 'la haine') which, in turn, caused them to be violent and reject civil French society. The more reticent and intellectual newspaper *Le Monde*, however, refused to participate in the journalistic category whatsoever, and would only discuss specific suburbs and neighborhoods, rather than *la banlieue chaude* (the 'hot suburb') or even *la banlieue* ('the suburb').

The strike to maintain ZEP status in Chemin de l'Ile illustrates some representational and political complexity inherent to the ways that *cités* figure in larger geographical, social, and political landscape of France. These economically, spatially, and socially marginalized places have been subjected to intense media scrutiny. Just as the right-wing French press has blamed *cités* inhabitants for rising crime and

‘insecurity’¹⁹, the left-wing French press depicts this population as social victims [Tetreault 1992]. What did it mean, I wondered, for the neighborhood’s inhabitants in Chemin de l’Ile to strike in order to retain the classification “ZEP” that would function to keep some of both the right and left-wing stereotypes intact?

While retaining status as a ZEP meant several material advantages including small class sizes, , in symbolic terms, status as a ZEP held negative associations. “Winning” ZEP status (or in this case, maintaining it) meant that the stigma of need and poverty would be officially recognized, but only partially rectified since unemployment within the neighborhood would likely remain at 30%, more than twice the national average. Additionally, a large number of the mostly immigrant and working class French parents in the neighborhood would likely remain illiterate and poor—both negative predictors of their children’s success in school.

In addition, the adolescents I worked with had often expressed anxiety about the negative reputation of the neighborhood; they feared that using their own address would lessen their chances of getting jobs or internships.²⁰ Several high school students mentioned to me that they planned to use a relative’s address on their resume in order to avoid this spatial stereotyping. Chemin de l’Ile hardly deserves the negative reputation, as it is relatively calm; it has one of the lowest crime rates in Nanterre (the town in which Chemin de l’Ile is located)²¹. Despite this fact, its popular designation as a *cité* and its official status as a Priority Educational Zone or 'ZEP' were both an indicator of and factor in the material and representational inequities that many of its residents experience. Adolescents I worked with, who were predominantly of North African parentage, were particularly aware of the social, material, and representational consequences of the stigmatization of Chemin de l’Ile and other *cités* like it. For, unlike their parents, for whom *cités* have provided affordable living conditions, successive "French" generations

¹⁹ "Insecurity" (*l'insecurité*) is a term that has emerged in post-9-11 French politics which often serves as a pseudonym for ‘terrorism’ and forms the basis for the newest version of anti-immigrant sentiment voiced by Jean-Marie LePen, leader of the pro-nationalist political party, *Le Front National*.

²⁰ Willis [1977:5-6] reported a similar practice among the working class 'lads' of industrial, working-class Hammertown who would use the neighboring city's postal code when describing where they lived to girls from other areas. However, the adolescents he worked with were so disenchanted with school and the working world that they reserved this practice for personal purposes, unlike adolescents in Chemin de l'Ile.

of children have experienced overwhelmingly negative long-ranging material and representational effects of growing up there, adding spatial prejudice to experiences of racial prejudice commonly faced by French Arabs in school and on the job market.²²

Adolescents' awareness of the neighborhood's stigmatized status coincided with their understanding of it as an "Arab" space: that is, a space predominated by Arab inhabitants. Early on in my fieldwork, for example, the students I tutored would ask me, "Chantal, do you like Arabs?" When I would reply "Yes," they would joke, "Well you must because that's all there is here!"²³ To me, it seemed that the act of noting such a thing to a non-Arab American such as myself contained a mixture of anxiety and pride that is common to children of immigrants living in a national context where they and their parents are the targets of racist discourse and discrimination.²⁴

In reality, Arabs are not the majority of the population in Chemin de l'Ile; numbering only about twenty percent, they are just more "visible" than many of their "French" neighbors because they use outdoor space within the neighborhood, unlike their "French" counterparts. As well, the stigmatizing of Arabs in French media means that they singled out in popular representations of housing projects. Similarly, the adolescents I worked with had the sense that there were 'lots of Arabs' in *cités*. Not only are

²¹ Personal communication, Michel Guirao, Neighborhood Coordinator, Mayor's Office, Chemin de l'Ile.

²² I would not dare claim that their immigrant parents did not experience or still experience discrimination; they clearly have. However, racism and discrimination may have played less of a role in their parents' experience of work in France because they (the men at least) were recruited specifically for manual labor after World War II and so their immigrant status was closely related to their function as workers to rebuild France. In contrast, due to the economic crash in the 1970s and their improved access to education, children of North African immigrants have been both less able and less willing to find the low-paying, manual labor jobs that their parents came to France to obtain. However, high rates of school failure, a poor economy, and racist hiring practices often impede these new French subjects from attaining economic security. Ironically, the difficulty that French citizens of North African descent experience finding work is often held against them as evidence that they do not fully wish to *intégrer* (or "integrate"). I will deal with discourses of *l'intégration* in detail later in this chapter.

²³ *Chantal, tu aimes les Arabes? Oui. Tu dois parce qu'il y a que ça ici!*

²⁴ Tribalat [1995] notes that adult children of Algerian immigrants are more frequently unemployed after finishing school, even though their levels of education are comparable to those of other adult children of immigrants. For example, Tribalat's 1992 unofficial census of 13,000 respondents found that 53% of adult males and 47% of adult females whose parents are of Algerian origin experience at least one year of unemployment between the ages of 20-29, as compared to 23% of adult males and 33% of adult females of Portuguese parentage [1992:177]. Tribalat notes that this discrepancy probably indicates discrimination on the part of prospective employers toward Algerians, a pattern that holds generally in her data in relation to French citizens of African origin (North and sub-Saharan).

adolescents aware of popular negative representations of *cités* as ‘Arab’ space, they are also keenly aware of the extended kinship and social networks that many of their families had forged within the neighborhood.

Central to France’s industrial boom in the 1950s and 60s, Nanterre has a long history with immigration generally, and with Algerian immigration in particular. Male Algerian workers, among them several grandfathers of adolescents in this study, were recruited by factories in Nanterre and lived in *bidonvilles* ('shantytowns'), located about a mile away from Chemin de l’Ile. Similar to migration patterns all over the world, many families in Chemin de l’Ile knew one another because they had often come from the same towns in their country of origin. In the neighborhood, there was a very high instance of families who were originally from Marghnia and El Oued, Algeria, in the northwest and southeast of the country, respectively. There was even a certain rivalry that went along with these identities in the neighborhood, that was demonstrated by adolescents’ self-identification as being from those particular towns, e.g. “*Je suis Marghnaoui, moi*” (‘I’m from Marghnia’) even when they had been born and raised in France. As well, women in the neighborhood would cook their regional specialties for open houses at the local associations, including *Cerise* where I tutored and would sometimes joke about each other’s strange ways of preparing certain dishes. Similar to immigration patterns throughout the world, migration to Chemin de l’Ile had also created diasporic communities at a highly local level. Since relatives and neighbors often provide newcomers with the sponsorship necessary for obtaining migration papers and other networks of support, communities of town and kin from the ‘home’ country extend to local communities in France.

Algerians, more than any other group, have migrated to France, due to the long history of Algerian colonialism and to various labor recruitment programs before and after de-colonization in 1962.²⁵ Yet despite, or perhaps because of, the long history of

²⁵ France colonized Algeria for roughly 130 years, creating both a kind of cultural intimacy and protracted conflict between the two countries and their citizens, which lasts to this day. Although technically Portuguese represented the highest immigrant group until recently, due to remigration to Portugal after the fall of Franco, Algerians currently represent the largest group of foreigners in France [Brubaker 1992:79]. According to census data from the 1982 census, individuals living in France whose original citizenship was Algerian numbered 800,000 whereas individuals from Portugal numbered 760,000 [ibid.:79]. As well,

colonialism and migration between places like Chemin de l’Ile and Marghnia, representational and political struggles abound over who can rightfully claim “French” space not only in *cités*, but within the larger imagined national community.²⁶ Anti-immigrant rhetoric and legislation have been a mainstay of French politics since the early 1980s, and Arab Algerians have been the most frequently targeted group for reasons I will elaborate in the next section.

While representational and political struggles over who is to be included within the imagined “French” national community are often waged in the media and in formal political rhetoric, similar struggles arise in people’s everyday discourse [Essed 1991, VanDijk 1987]. Some of these conflicts emerge, for example, as ‘culture wars’ over the linguistic, musical, and cultural styles emerging in French *cités*, including Chemin de l’Ile. For example, after the successful ZEP strike, I attended a celebratory potluck that teachers and educators working in the neighborhood had organized, held in a community center. Neighborhood parents and children of every national origin attended the party and enjoyed food and music together. By the time dancing began, however, the convivial exterior had begun to erode in a conflict about which type of music to play: “French” or “Arab.” The young, hip assemblage of educators and teachers of various backgrounds who had organized the party decided to play music by groups of North African origin or influence, such as Algerian *rai*²⁷ stars Khaled and Cheb Mami as well as Arabic-influenced French pop bands like *Zebda*. However, Farouk, a father of three grade-school children who had been very active in the strike confided in me that night that a “French” parent (i.e. European-French) had complained pointedly to him about the music: “This is still France!” (*C’est la France quand même*). Being originally from Algeria, Farouk took her comment personally and responded with a sexist (and ironically typically “French”) insult, claiming that she was *mal baisée*, or ‘badly fucked’. The two refused to speak to

immigrants from the former North African French colonies and protectorates (Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia) far outnumber any other regional or cultural immigrant group [Hargreaves 1997:8].

²⁶ I borrow from Benedict Anderson’s notion of the *imagined community* here to note the ways that the social identity “French” exists primarily in popular discourse and daily ritual, such as reading the paper and commemorating historical events, that creates the feeling of shared experience [1991].

each other afterwards. This seemingly banal conflict over what constitutes appropriate music for a neighborhood party demonstrates the overwhelming tension over Chemin de l'Île's ambivalent positioning *between* "French" and "Arab" identities, which are usually posed as mutually exclusive categories in popular representations of the French national community.

This discursive distinction, "French" or "Arab," lies at the heart of the ongoing controversy about the role of second and third²⁸ generations with respect to the French Republic, a controversy which is played out in political rhetoric, everyday experiences of racism, and everyday expressions of social identity. In particular, the polarity between "French" and "Arab" is at the center of elaborate debates and policies surrounding *intégration*, a set of French discourses and legislation designed to facilitate the cultural and economic assimilation of immigrants. In this regard, the essentialist position that "French" and "Arab" cultures are too different to be successfully compatible represents a form of what Balibar [1991] has termed "cultural racism." While increasing populations of North Africans have stayed in France and have produced children who are considered "French" by nationality, the categories "French" and "Arab" are still counterposed as mutually exclusive categories both within my fieldsite and outside it. Moreover, popular anti-immigrant discourses that specifically target North Africans essentialize "French" and "Arab" cultures as embodying traits that purportedly exist outside of historical context. These discourses thus attempt to erase the evidence that French and North African cultures have been irrevocably mixed and relationally defined for centuries, due to their historical and geographical proximity. For this reason, before delving further into an analysis of the ways that "Arab" identity is counterposed against a "French" norm, further background about the particular historical relationship between France and Algeria is required.

²⁷ *Rai* is a form of popular Algerian music that dates back to the early part of the 20th century. Its tendency to openly discuss matters of sex and romantic love have threatened the careers and physical safety of many Algerian *rai* singers, many of whom have immigrated to France in order to perform there.

²⁸ Second generation in French refers to children of immigrants, that is, persons who were born or raised in France. Third generation in French refers to children of the second generation. The adolescents in this study were often located between the second and third generations as they frequently had one parent who

ARABS OF ALGERIAN DESCENT AT THE CENTER OF DOMINANT DISCOURSES OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCE AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

In contemporary France, *l'immigration* has defined French political and cultural landscapes in the popular imagination and in scholarly and political production for over twenty years [Bonnafeous 1991, Brubaker 1992, Hargreaves and McKinney 1997, Noiriel 1988]. Political, journalistic, and scholarly constructions of *immigration* as a social “problem” in France reveal the complexity of ideologies of cultural, religious, and racialized difference as they pertain to the imagined national community. Characterized by frequent and often drastic changes in immigration legislation, each successive wave of policy and political fashion has consistently figured in tandem with another topic of intense political debate: the status of the French Republic and perceived threats to its sovereignty.

As scholars of national identity [Brubaker 1992, Noiriel 1988] remind us, France is a republic purportedly built upon the principles of the 1789 revolution, and therefore is ideologically constructed as a political body whose power resides in its individual citizens, rather than the special interest groups which controlled the country previously (i.e. clergy and nobility). Many politicians and academics have directly or indirectly argued that immigrants pose a “challenge” to the basis of membership in the French Republic in that they too might act as special interest groups politically and culturally. Ong, for example, discusses transnationalism, in part, as a set of political and cultural practices that marginalized individuals, including immigrants and ethnic minorities, actively use to circumvent the exclusionary policies and discourses of the nation-state. In her view, modern nations marginalize such groups through a system of “graduated sovereignty” which establishes “a series of zones that are subjected to different kinds of governmentality” [1999:7]. Ong notes that while these 'zones' do not necessarily correspond to political borders, they do serve to "contain ethnically marked class groupings, which in practice are subjected to regimes of rights and obligations that are different from those in other zones" [ibid.:7]. Similarly, as I will argue below, French

was born or raised in France that had married someone from the *bled* or home country, most often in this

discourses and political policies that fall under the catch phrase *intégration* function to hold North African immigrants and their grown children to a particular standard of cultural assimilation and to exclude them from full-fledged political and cultural membership.

Nevertheless, select scholars of national identity [Noiriel 1988, Brubaker 1992] argue that the paradox of France's national obsession with immigration is that French nationhood has been based upon "an expansive definition of citizenship...that automatically transforms second-generation immigrants [sic] into citizens, assimilating them—legally—to other French men and women" [Brubaker 1992:3].²⁹ In post-Revolutionary France, national community or "nationhood" has been, with few exceptions, constructed both politically and conceptually through *jus solis*, the process of assigning citizenship on the basis of one's birth within national boundaries [Brubaker 1992:81].³⁰ The relatively inclusive conception of the nation in French political theory has, ironically, created a space for debating national identity and cultural unity, debates that are taken for granted in nations like Germany where citizenship has, until recently, been constructed through blood lines or *jus sanguinis*.

Further, challenges to the inclusive ideology of French citizenship over the past twenty years demonstrate how colonial history, ideologies of bounded culture, and high political stakes contribute to making "nation building" an ongoing and contentious process. For example, in 1994, *les lois Pasqua* withdrew the right to automatic citizenship of second-generation residents at eighteen by requiring their application for

case, Algeria.

²⁹ I have inserted "sic" to draw attention to the fact that the term "immigrants" would seem to be a misnomer here, since Brubaker is discussing descendants (or children) of immigrants. But the mistake is revelatory of how this generation is not fully considered French, despite their legal access to French citizenship.

³⁰ Brubaker contrasts the French *jus solis* model of citizenship with *jus sanguis*, the model of citizenship practiced in Germany until recently [1992]. Until 1994, Germany granted citizenship based upon blood ties to other German citizens, and not upon residency or birth within the country. This system was responsible for the "guestworker" system that allowed millions of Turkish workers to reside in Germany but not to allow them or their children born in Germany to attain citizenship. After 1994, Germany moved to a modified *jus solis* system.

French citizenship, a process that often took months to years of waiting.³¹ And prior to the current fanfare about “immigration” in politics, scholarship, and journalism, up until the late 1960s and early 1970s migration to France basically consisted of a system of “guest workers” not overly distinct from the German *gastworker* system. Under the French system, a migrant’s visa or national identity card was, literally, his or her work permit, since this document allowed migrants to enter the country and remain there [MacMaster 1997].

In these examples among many others, the “inclusiveness” of the French nation is tempered by France’s role as a colonial and imperial power, able to change laws governing the flow of people according to the political and economic needs of the day. Thus to overemphasize the inclusive nature of French citizenship is to mistake the idealized humanist and universalist *République* that is often produced and maintained in French political theory and rhetoric to a higher degree than in actual practice.

Finally, even historians such as Brubaker who tend to essentialize French versus German characteristics of nationhood as either all-inclusive or all-exclusive respectively, acknowledges an ongoing “striving for cultural unity” in the French case: “Political inclusion [in France] has entailed cultural assimilation, for regional cultural minorities and immigrants alike” [1992: 1]. And indeed, the inclusive French model of universal, secular, and humanist citizenship is not anathema to cultural assimilationist practices since the expansiveness of French citizenship is predicated, logistically and symbolically upon state institutions such as school, national language, etc, in order to achieve the cultural unity of its citizens.

³¹ Although Lionel Jospin rescinded the Pasqua laws upon arriving in office as Prime Minister, some of the roadblocks to migration remained, including a increased waiting period for reuniting individuals married to French citizens in France.

THE CASE OF ALGERIAN MIGRATION AND ANTI-IMMIGRANT BACKLASH

Algerians' centrality to French immigration policies and debates can be traced to the French colonial legacy in North Africa. Throughout the colonial period, which lasted for Algeria from 1830 through the start of the war with France in 1954, "migration" for Algerians consisted of the relocation of colonized subjects to work in the *metropole*, a process that inversely mimicked the relocation of French settlers into colonial territories. Thus, Algerians' presence and related controversy in France predates de-colonization and thus "immigration" in the traditional sense. Already in 1946, the total migrant population in France totaled 1.7 million, a figure that would double to 3.4 million by 1975 [Blatt 1997:41]. Although the post-war government's policies favored "culturally compatible" immigrants from Europe, competition over these groups meant that immigrants from former colonies and developing nations such as Algeria necessarily filled the labor gap [Blatt 1997:41]. MacMaster notes, for example, the "push and pull" factors that brought Algerians, more than Tunisians and Moroccans, long before World War II—the "push" of the economic destruction from colonialism and the "pull" of France's labor shortage brought on by WWI casualties and falling birth rates beginning in 1900 [1997:3]. While North Africans only constituted 3.5 percent of the overall total foreign population in 1930, France was, at that time, the country with the highest per capita foreign population in the world [MacMaster 1997:4]. Furthermore, Algerians then, as now, were represented as the most problematic group to French society, according to publications of the time which referred to the "Arab problem" [MacMaster 1997:4].

MacMaster attributes the "social panic" over Arab migration in the first third of the 20th century (and, to a degree, in the present) to the troubling effect of seeing mass migration of colonized subjects moving into the space and cultural realm of the colonizers [1997:5].³² According to MacMaster, due to the large rotation of migrant workers from Algeria in the early 1900s, one in five men of working age (some 500,000

³² Similarly, Stuart Hall [1978] discusses the "social panic" that accompanies patterns of remigration from ex-colonies into the former colony's territory, deeming the pattern "The Empire Strikes Back."

people) had some experience living and laboring in the *metropole* [1997:5]. Anxieties about the mobility of colonized subjects were expressed most vehemently by colonial settlers, who complained not only of rising labor prices in the colonies but also of migrants becoming accustomed to the more liberal political atmosphere of continental France, including labor unions, communism, and the growing Algerian nationalist movement. And of course, this is, generally speaking, what did indeed occur, galvanizing the Algerian struggle for independence.

The Algerian-French war (1954-1962) holds another key role in the dynamic of anti-immigrant sentiment directed toward Algerians in France. Provocatively known as *la Guerre Sans Nom* ('the War without a Name') because of its taboo status, the Algerian war holds a place in French history not unlike that of Vietnam in American history. After eight long years of battle, the French lost much more than the war; France lost status as an imperial power and three million French soldiers, or as Hargreaves and McKinney note, almost an entire generation of French citizens experienced the violence and destruction of war [1997:18]. Furthermore, re-constructing "French" nationhood after the colonial period in Algeria was a project that was intimately related to defining which Algerians were "citizens" according to the changing boundaries of "France."³³ For example, the phrase *les avant 1962* ['Those before 1962'] refers to those Algerians who were born prior to decolonization at the end of the Algerian-French war. This group of individuals was automatically granted French citizenship and the right to vote under the principle that current territories of Algeria were under French rule. The classification of Algerian natives as French citizens further highlights the permeability of national boundaries with respect to the two countries.

Yet ironically, throughout the most recent media and political 'crisis' which casts immigration as a challenge to French sovereignty, Algerians have figured centrally in anti-immigrant French political rhetoric and negative media representations. Because of the French government's recruitment and general support of short-term immigration to stem the labor shortage, immigration as a politicized "problem" did not discursively

emerge until the late 1960s [Blatt 1997:41]. But immigration became politicized after 1968, when governments under Pompidou and Giscard d'Estaing restricted migration (and force unemployed foreigners to leave) in response to an economic downturn and “social conflict arising from the settlement of North African immigrants” [ibid.:42]. Political response by immigrants widespread, “militant protest campaigns against restrictive government policies, squalid housing arrangements, discriminatory workplace conditions, and widespread racial violence against Arab immigrants in particular” [ibid.:42]. Then, as now, however, the most striking element to the construction of Algerians in discourse and politics is their strategic use by French politicians as the *bête noire* in an attempt to further personal and national political aims, even to the disregard of economic benefit.

Currently numbering the largest immigrant group in France, Algerians have been particularly prone to anti-immigrant sentiment with respect to the economic downturn in France, beginning with the oil crisis in the early 1970s. While French census rules prohibit asking country of origin and religion make it impossible to accurately estimate either North African immigrants or peoples of Arab descent, the estimated Muslim population figures at four million out of a population of 58 million. Unofficial estimates of the population in France with North African (Algerian, Moroccan, or Tunisian) origins total anywhere between 4 million and 7 million. Regardless of exact population counts, however, Algerians have never enjoyed the facility with which Portuguese were considered “French” in one generation. Rather, adult children of Algerians have continued to mistakenly be referred to as *étrangers* (‘foreigners’) in popular French media.

Further, stereotypes that conflate these and other categories have emerged in conjunction with political and public discussion over immigration’s role in the construction of citizenship and national identity in France and across Europe. While migration itself is depicted as the “cause” of such debate and conflict over national identity, such journalistic and political discourses over *l’immigration*, and attendant

³³ This was somewhat true for other French colonies, but the extent to which territories of colonial Algeria were considered French were unsurpassed in other colonial territories. As De Gaulle advised the petit

representations of national community, have provided political opportunities and rhetorical fodder for many a public figure and would-be policy maker in France. Anti-immigrant policies and rhetoric became common after the oil crisis in the 1970s and the subsequent moratorium on economic immigration in 1974. However on both a political and symbolic level, French politicians of every ilk took to blaming immigrants in public discourses for a variety of social ills, including crime, drug sales, and violence, starting in the 1980s.³⁴ Prior to this time, socialist and communist politicians had supported policies geared toward the inclusion of immigrants in French civic society, such as proposed legislation allowing immigrants to vote in municipal elections if they had lived in France over five years. By the mid-eighties, however, reacting to political pressure exerted by the newly official anti-immigrant party *Le Front National* ['The National Front'], even former pro-immigrant socialist President Mitterrand had changed his stance on the immigrant vote, as well as a variety of other policies.

In the political rhetoric of Jean Marie LePen, head of political party *Le Front National*, hegemonic discourses about *l'immigration* have taken the most extreme form, and, in themselves are touted as a platform to justify the political aspirations of LePen and his political party. LePen has garnered both infamy and a devout following by making anti-immigrant political proposals such as returning all “foreigners” (including immigrants and their descendents) to 'their' countries of origin and by questioning the historical validity of the Holocaust. Although LePen was active in politics in the 1970s, his emergence as a prominent political figure occurred only after 1980, when *Le Front National* was recognized as an official national organization and allowed to participate in elections. From that point on, anti-immigrant rhetoric among all political parties, left and right-wing, emerged in France after the early 1980s, and this anti-immigrant discourse continues in France to this day. During the 1980s, the French left-wing, including Mitterrand's socialist party and communist party leaders, shifted positions from a pro-immigrant platform that authorized immigrants to vote in local elections to a position that questioned their presence in France at all.

bourgeois colonists of Algeria in his famous speech, “Let this be your France...”

Unfortunately, the aftermath of 9/11 has unleashed a new wave of anti-immigrant rhetoric and LePenist popularity. In 2002, Le Pen was one of two successful candidates for the presidential run-off elections, winning a larger percentage of the French vote than former Prime Minister Lionel Jospin and beating out many more moderate candidates. This time around, Le Pen's platform consisted primarily of discourse of fear regarding growing "insecurity" (*l'insecurité*) in France, the new code word for terrorism and thus a way to implicate, once again, Arab immigrants and their children as national scapegoats. In the end, although the other finalist Jacques Chirac won by a landslide victory, some French voters chose the pro-nationalist, anti-immigrant platform of Le Pen to express their dissatisfaction with current politics in France. Such dissatisfaction was furthermore expressed in pro-Chirac slogans which highlighted the economic and moral corruption of each candidate respectively: "*Votez pour l'Escrot, pas le Fasciste*" ['Vote for the Crook, not the Fascist'].

Jacques Chirac's own involvement in anti-immigrant policies and political rhetoric dates back to his tenure as the mayor of Paris. For example, in the early 1990s, Chirac crafted a very aggressive urban gentrification project in Paris to forcibly relocate poor and homeless families outside of the city in subsidized housing, rather than provide this service for them in the center of it. Neighborhoods like *La Goutte d'Or*, that have been traditionally inhabited by immigrants from North and sub-Saharan Africa, were renovated and reconstructed for the consumption of middle and upper-middle class French buyers. Also during his tenure as mayor, in a highly controversial speech in June 1994, Chirac decried the predicament experienced by the 'average' Frenchman [*français de moyen*"] living in subsidized housing, frustrated by the disturbing "noise and smell" (*le bruit et l'odeur*) of his immigrant neighbors, living with several wives and many children in a cramped apartment [Guyotat 1994]. Underlying Chirac's statement are racialized and cultural assumptions about the hypothetical 'uncivilized' immigrant neighbor, namely that 'he' is of sub-Saharan African or Arab origin, and thus necessarily polygamous, noisy, and smelly. Further, Chirac's underlying claim is that only 'average'

³⁴ Of course, the use of immigrants as a foil for national identity is not particular to France, but part of a wider process of externalization whereby national politics are generally asserted.

French citizens (i.e. working class, white, male, monogamous) can rightfully claim ownership of French *cités*. This scenarios of competition existing between 'average French' citizens and non-white foreigners has been reproduced in right-leaning newspapers such as *Le Figaro* and *France-Soir* and popular magazines such as *l'Événement* that depict brown and black *cité* inhabitants as the victimizers of nearby "French" inhabitants, rather than the other way around. Statistically, though, there has been more gratuitous violence committed against Arabs by white French citizens and police than the reverse.³⁵

In addition, the anti-immigrant rhetoric of Le Pen and Chirac that purports the non-assimilation of Arab and sub-Saharan African immigrants doesn't address the structural (economic, social) obstacles to they and their children being accepted as "French." In this regard, the history of how *cités* arose demonstrates the legacy of exclusion and racism that current immigrants and their children still face. Current *cités* are most often located today at sites where immigrant laborers lived when they were recruited to help rebuild France and re-launch industrial production in the 1950s and 60s. The *bidonvilles* (shantytowns) that initially housed Algerians and other immigrants during this period were without water, plumbing, and heat. Inhabitants were also prohibited from building homes or improving these veritable shacks, the conditions of which are documented in Azouz Begag's novel *Le Gone du Chaâba* ('The kid from *Chaâba*) and in the film *Vivre au Paradis* ('To Live in Paradise') by Yemina Benguigui. Facing public outcry over the living conditions of immigrant workers and, by the late 60s their families, the French government built temporary housing called *Cités de Transit*. Afterward, families were forcibly relocated into the *grands ensembles* (high rises) called *HLM* (low-income housing) in the 1970s. To a large degree, current *cités* or *HLM* are either from this period or resemble its vision for low-cost, industrial housing, located on the outside of French urban areas, sometimes by as much as 50 miles.

³⁵ As Hargreaves notes, drawing from evidence reported by the National Commission on Human Rights, "Almost 80 percent of violent acts officially classed as racist and more than 90 percent of racist murders in France are committed against Maghrebis, though they account for less than 40 percent of the foreign population" [1997:19].

INTÉGRATION

Frequently touted as the solution to the 'problem' of immigration, *intégration*³⁶ consists of a set of political discourses and state institutions that ensure the individual incorporation of immigrants, and especially their children into French civil society through participation in educational, economic, and political institutions. Traditionally in France, *intégration* occurred through the process whereby individuals of distinct regional, religious, and linguistic backgrounds came to participate in the national community through their participation in French institutions such as school, the workplace, and citizenship. Notably in the 19th century, this process is said to have created culturally French men and women within the culturally and linguistically distinct regions of France and, equally, among religiously distinct communities of Jewish inhabitants. And yet, in recent years, these traditional institutions have purportedly failed under the 'threat' of new cultural diversity, and assimilating institutions, such as the Ministry of *Intégration* in 1994, have been inaugurated to successfully manage and incorporate foreign groups and individuals.

In France, the notion of a national culture has a long history that coincides with how national identity has traditionally been conceptualized. Based historically upon a universalist (or Humanist) construction of the French subject, the French state has addressed questions of diversity (i.e. differing French regional cultures, religious practice, and ethnic identity) largely by inculcating a common language and culture through the federal French school system. While the process of inculcating immigrants and their children with French 'values' is thus often framed as operating at the level of the individual and irregardless of cultural background, current applications of *intégration* show that certain immigrant groups are singled out for legislation. Initially designed to incorporate individual subjects from France's many regions into the national community, *intégration* (i.e. schools, training programs, and the state's program of social aid) has

³⁶ *Intégration* is a concept and institutional formation particular to France that should not be confused with the American term "integration." For this reason, I retain the French term. An abbreviated definition of *intégration* might be a blend of cultural assimilation (through formal education, language, and

newly been reconfigured to “integrate” whole groups of foreign individuals. The shift indicates a change in focus from an (idealized) universal subject to an (equally idealized) *étranger* (or foreign subject).

For example, *intégration* has tended to be used, both in popular parlance and the French media, to connote cultural assimilation, that is, the taking on of French values to the exclusion of other cultural values, and particularly in reference to North Africans generally, and Algerian specifically. My past research projects have analyzed the popular French press and group interviews with French citizens respectively [1992, 1997]. I demonstrated that in both discursive contexts, “immigration” was a precursor to discussion about national identity, French culture, and, in particular, the purported difference between French and “Arab” (or “Muslim”) cultures. In both popular French press and in individuals’ accounts in interviews, “immigration” was inevitably paired with a discussion about *intégration*, and most often in relation to North African immigrants and their French-born children.

Although many academics and politicians claim that *intégration* operates institutionally and discursively at the level of the individual, and not the community, children of North African immigrants, including the adolescents in this study, are often the target of *intégration* legislation designed to “solve” the “problem” of immigration. Further, they also constitute the population, bar none, that has supposedly challenged the institutions of *intégration*, causing politicians, journalists, and academics to question whether the system had stopped functioning altogether. Just as children of North African, and particularly Algerian immigrants are targeted for the legislation of *intégration*, their supposedly insular communities and ‘backward’ cultural practices such as veiling are frequently noted as evidence of ‘failed’ *intégration*.

Scholars have discussed the centrality of Algerians to French immigration policies and political discourses as well as the centrality of Arab “second” and “third” generations³⁷ to *intégration* institutions and prescriptive discourses [Hollifield 1994,

intermarriage) and social participation (through employment, citizenship, political representation, and social mobility) [after Tribalat 1995].

³⁷ *La deuxième génération* has become yet another catch phrase to refer to children of North African immigrants. Although literally it means 'second generation' and thus the French-born children of any

Schain 1993, Silverman 1992, Wihtol de Wenden 1991]. This growing body of research also contends that policies and politics of immigration and *intégration* are central to changing conceptions of France as a national community; many describe the Republic itself as dependent upon and renewed through processes of immigration and cultural assimilation. Because of the social, political, and even moral weight accorded policies and politics of immigration and *intégration*, political controversies and ambitions have been played out in highly public political debate, legislation, and normative rhetoric. Much as Algerians have been constructed as the most problematic immigrants, popular and scholarly discourses construct adolescent children of Algerian descent as the biggest hindrance to successful *intégration*, or the transformation of "foreign" (*étranger*) populations into cultural and political French citizens. Not only are ideals of the French Republic and French culture defined and contrasted against a metaphorical Arab-Muslim Other, but the very policies and institutions that are currently the bulwark of *intégration* are themselves shaped in relation to the perceived culturally essentialist profile of Algerian immigrants and youth.

This discursive and policy shift is particularly apparent in national French mandates for cultural and religious practice. *L'affaire du foulard* ('the scarf incident'), is a concrete example of how current *intégration* policies get applied to whole groups. In 1989 in the town of Creil, two French teenage girls of Arab origin were forbidden by their principal to wear the hijeb at school (a religious headscarf worn by some Muslim women). At that time, the principal's decision was overridden by the State Council (*le Conseil d'Etat*), which then turned the decision over to individual school superintendents to decide. In 1994 however, the current Minister of Education Mr. Bayrou mandated that students refrain from "ostensible signs" of religious belief in the schools. At the annual meeting with CRIF (a coalition of French Jewish organizations), the current Prime Minister Edouard Balladur made the public statement that the yarmulke (skull cap worn by some Jewish males) was not included under "ostensible signs" (*Le Monde* on-line, Nov. 30, 1994). Thus, unacceptable foreign religious symbols were

immigrant from any provenance, the phrase has been repeatedly used in conjunction with negative descriptions of the adolescent or grown children of North African immigrants in the French media.

publicly defined by the Prime Minister as exclusively Muslim. This incident demonstrates the double-bind of French *intégration* and its changing uses in immigration politics. Although *intégration* was initially conceived for incorporating individuals into the secular French nation, its application shows a singling out of Muslim religious practice rather than religious practice more generally.

An understanding of the cultural context for this conflict is possible by analyzing current constructions of *immigration*, especially in conjunction with *intégration* and constructions of North Africans in the media and politics. North Africans are repeatedly represented in French media and politics as the single group that defies successful and speedy *intégration*, and depicted as either willfully resistant to blending carefully into French society or less capable of it because their culture is supposedly more “foreign” than cultures of other immigrant groups. The claim that North Africans have the hardest time “integrating” is usually explained in terms of cultural “distance” (*distance culturelle*) and that North Africans have “farther” to go in order to become French.

This position highlights the commonplace construction of *intégration* as cultural change that involves trading in old ways for new, in other words, cultural assimilation. As the group most often stereotyped as “foreign” in terms of religious practice, styles of traditional dress, and physical features (in racialized representations), North Africans are doomed to fail at *intégration* in the popular French imagination; they often exhibit or even literally “wear” their difference publicly, a difference that then gets encoded as “failure” to “integrate.”³⁸ Etienne Balibar [1991] has argued current anti-immigration rhetoric in France amounts to a “new cultural racism,” because the exclusive rhetoric essentializes cultures rather than races to claim that insurmountable differences separate “French” from “Arabs.”

³⁸ As one of the Moroccan-French interviewees put it, “I’ve been to French schools, speak French as my first language, and my father even took a French family name for us when he became a citizen. How should I ‘integrate’--through my blood?” [Tetreault 1997]

FRENCH CITÉS AS CONTESTED SPACES OF INTÉGRATION

Just as Algerians in particular and North Africans generally have become central to debates about failed or successful *intégration*, *cités* are the spaces that occupy these debates at the levels of both discourse and policy. In a similar fashion to the ways that "developing" nations are both the target of development projects and bemoaned as perpetually 'underdeveloped', *cités* represent both the *raison d'être* for *intégration* and its perpetual *bête noire*. Low-income housing projects are thus a terrain in which *intégration* policies are launched as well as a perpetual site of "failed integration" due to high rates of unemployment and school attrition, as well as their frequent association with crime, violence, drugs, and immigration in the media.

Further, because *cités* consist of housing subsidized by the French government, immigrants' access to space in these neighborhoods has been frequently challenged on administrative, political, and symbolic levels. Quotas limiting the percentage of immigrant groups by country of origin have been in effect for most of the history of *cités*, although French housing administrators have not always openly admitted this fact [MacMaster 1989]. The rationale behind these quotas belies the contradictions inherent in many (if not all) French *intégration* policies. On the one hand, the restriction of the overall percentage (usually 20%) of immigrants living within most *cités* is justified as "protection" against ghettoisation. The logic runs thus: if certain immigrant groups are "allowed" to form distinct communities, they will never *intégrer* ('integrate') into mainstream French society and institutions. On the other hand, the ways that *cités* are constructed well outside the boundaries of major French cities and the manner in which they are quite distinct both physically and spatially from other architectural structures in these neighborhoods practically ensures the social and economic exclusion for their inhabitants.³⁹ By limiting the percentage total of any one immigrant group to any particular *cité*, but containing them outside of 'mainstream' French space, the inherent

³⁹ With the recent (1999) demolition of *Les Quatre Chemins* an infamous *cité* outside Paris, the French government has been changing its position on the physical or spatial exclusion that *cités* tend to promote.

contradiction of *intégration* policies are revealed. Immigrants are ultimately held responsible for their own (lack of) *intégration* even though the administrative housing practices themselves exclude them from physically and economically central French space.

Contradictions inherent to the ideology of *intégration* are furthermore exemplified in another common justification for limiting the total percentage of immigrants in public housing, referred to by French politicians and bureaucrats the *seuil de tolerance* ['threshold of tolerance']. Using the logic of these policies, the limit on foreigners to roughly fifteen percent in public housing is justified by the notion that the 'average' French citizen could only accept a limited amount of foreigners, although there is little evidence of such public support [Schain 1985:181]. MacMaster, [1997] however, critiques French politicians' use of this "pseudo-scientific" concept as a means to legitimize discrimination against foreign populations. MacMaster notes that although French social scientists have repeatedly rejected the idea that high percentages of foreigners leads to "an almost automatic process of hostile rejection by the indigenous population" [ibid.:14], the *seuil* concept has repeatedly reproduced and validated in French public policy. While the concept fulfills no scientific purpose, MacMaster argues that "[T]he continuing dynamism of the concept suggests that it has fulfilled some major requirement or need" [ibid.:14]. In fact, such practices in France date from the 19th century to control working class 'ghettos' that were dispersed by demolition as well as road and railway.

Since the 1960s in France, *seuil de tolerance* has been employed primarily in relation to control immigrants' and their children's access to services related to government funding (housing, schools, etc.). Prior to this point, both France and Britain used quotas in relation to employment, limiting the overall percentages of each nationality [ibid.:16]. In part, the shift can be traced to early strict government controls over economic immigration that dictated access to work permits and often contracts. But MacMaster argues that the pattern of applying quotas in relation to the consumption of state services needs to be understood in the larger context of the post-war preference for 'guest-worker' system in France which recruited men, but left women and children in

'home' countries. MacMaster notes that this system exploits the maximum economic benefit from imported laborers because it leaves the “social costs of reproduction” to the home countries. After the moratorium of economic immigration to France in 1974, the familial resettlement law allowed migrants currently living in France to relocate their families to France, offsetting France’s initial economic gain from the guest-worker system.

In addition, MacMaster cites the “Calvez Report” of 1969 as the turning point toward a “threshold” (*seuil*) rhetoric which was articulated in terms of the social problems to be incurred by a growing immigrant population, and specifically an ‘unassimilable island’ of Algerians that would reach 2.5 million in 2000. MacMaster notes that while this report and the central French government fostered "a racist discourse of spatial exclusion and control," [ibid.:16] the legislation and implementation for spatially distributing immigrants has generally fallen to local governments, along with the costs of housing, schools, and other services. Since 1964 immigrant quotas and access to subsidized housing has been a central gatekeeping device for controlling foreign populations’ entry into local schools and other institutions [ibid.:17]. Prior to this time, most immigrants were restricted to the worst of private housing either in run down inner city tenements (as in La Goutte d’Or in Paris and Le Panier in Marseille) or in the infamous *bidonvilles* [shantytowns] in Nanterre which were, as I mention above, subsequently replaced by *cités de transit* (temporary housing) and the permanent *Hebergement de Loyer Modéré* or HLM (‘low income housing’), also referred to as *Grands Ensembles* (literally, 'big together') and *les cités*.

MacMaster links the development of *HLM* to the emergence of quota-based, “spatial or territorial exclusion” in two ways [ibid.:14]. First, he notes that, through their control of public housing, municipal governments and *HLM* housing boards have gained inordinate control over shaping local space in terms of racial and economic profiling. These boards are especially instrumental in local government’s management and allocation of resources for so-called “priority” areas, such as *Zone Urbaines Prioritaires* (ZUPs). Second, MacMaster notes that anti-immigrant movements and corresponding political goals are often strategically aimed at local leaders and administrations, because

it is understood that they wield power over municipal resources. Regarding the quota-based policies that such boards often end up imposing, MacMaster note that,

The fundamental goals are not access by minorities to better housing, but to dissolve any concentrations and to render them invisible. There is an assumption that social integration and/or assimilation can be achieved through a spatial scattering. Such assumptions take little account of the wishes of minorities themselves... [ibid.:24].

The paradox of the “threshold” theory and its application is that a large percentage of immigrant groups live primarily in *HLM*, revealing the hypocrisy and double standard of policies that purport to better "integrate" immigrants, with particular historic concern over Algerians, but which only "spread" them over many suburban communities.

Ultimately, however, due to a lack of other housing options (financially and because of ongoing housing discrimination in the private sector) immigrants are often “stuck” in *HLM*. Within the Paris region (Ile-de-France), by 1975, roughly 30% of Algerians were living in *HLM* and this figure continued to rise through the 1980s [Schain 1985:170-1]. Although exclusionary housing practices limit the total number of immigrant and “foreign” occupants in *cités*, these areas nonetheless continue to be one of the only available housing choices for the low-income families that generally comprise these social groups in France. As a result, *cités* are marked as spaces that immigrants, and particularly, *les Arabes* inhabit, creating a representational conflation between negative depictions of these stigmatized spaces and negative depictions of *les immigrés* and *les Arabes* as stigmatized groups.

CONCLUSION

The representational polarity between the social categories *français* and *arabe* is the result of a long historical legacy in France. Resulting from 130 years of French colonial presence in Algeria, as well as French immigration and *intégration* policies that target Arab populations, North Africans in general and Algerians in particular are located at the center of ongoing debates about French national identity and sovereignty. This chapter has examined the centrality of Algerian immigration and discourses of *intégration* to changing conceptions of France as a national community. By examining the politics of immigration and public housing in France, I have demonstrated that second and third generation French citizens of North African descent are central to how French national identity is realized through institutions and discourses.

The ways that politics and discourses of national sovereignty have been posed against an Arab ‘Other’ has created a dialectic of identity with long ranging effects. For example, in Chapter Three, I examine how this dialectic informs the perspective of those located *between* the polarized categories of *français* and *arabe*. Drawing upon the above discussion dealing with the racialized legacy of colonialism and post-colonial immigration policy, I demonstrate that dominant “French” representations of national identity, ‘race’,⁴⁰ immigration, and cultural assimilation are central to how adolescents of Algerian descent experience and perform their own social identities.

⁴⁰ I follow Gilroy’s [1987] convention of placing ‘race’ in single quotes to demonstrate the concept’s usefulness for describing experiences and patterns of social exclusion and discrimination, rather than ontological fact.

Chapter Two: Style and Stigma: Representations of ‘Race’, Space, and Cité Culture

As explored in the previous chapter, the centrality of *cités* to the history of North African immigration and the marginalization of these spaces have contributed to the formation of new linguistic, dress, and musical styles. In this chapter, I examine the formation of "*cité* style" as practices that encompass both economic consumption and cultural production in Chemin de l’Ile and other *cités* across France. Adolescent performances of these verbal and embodied styles are important to my discussion of *reputation*, since practices of self-presentation in Chemin de l’Ile revolve around their use. That is, as in other *cités* across France, crafting a personal *reputation* in Chemin de l’Ile is largely achieved through the use of speech, dress, and musical styles that embody the aesthetic of the urban space and subculture of the *cité*.

Theorists of adolescent culture note that linguistic and subcultural styles are central, organizing features of adolescent peer groups because they provide a way to express, reproduce, and sometimes subvert social hierarchies of class, “race,” and gender [Bucholtz 1999; Eckert 1989; Mendoza-Denton 1994, Willis 1977]. Because the stigmatized status of *cités* coincides with negative representations of *les Arabes* in popular French media, adolescents’ appropriation of styles associated with these spaces often involves complex and contradictory processes of identification and dis-identifications. Although individually expressed and achieved, adolescents managing their personal reputations in part through the adoption, elaboration, or rejection of a code of behavior that is referred to as *se comporter comme une fille ou un mec de la cité* (“to act like a girl or guy from the *cité*). Self-identifying or being labeled as being a *fille* or *mec de la cité* [‘girl or guy from the *cité*’] involves identifying with stigmatized or even “deviant” identities as they are represented and produced in mainstream French discourses as well as in everyday discourse in Chemin de l’Ile.

As noted, Goffman has described “stigma” as the process whereby social identities become negatively marked as deviant, or as falling outside the range of

“normal” [1963:4-5]. Although the adolescents in this study are considered to be officially “French” in terms of nationality and by Republican standards of civil participation within the French state, they are not considered “French” in terms of received notions of “race,” ethnicity, or culture. My research documents that in everyday talk, adolescents in Chemin de l’Ile use the term “French” to describe individuals who are of “traditional” French cultural background and who are white. In their speech, *arabe* or more often the slang term *rebeu*, is an identity that is constructed as exclusive of the category *français*. Hyphenated identities such as “Algerian-French” don’t exist in French parlance and to my knowledge no other means exists in French for communicating putatively divergent ethnic and national identities, as in the case of “ArabAmerican.” In this way, adolescents growing up as children of “Arab” immigrants in French *cités* often find themselves on the discursive as well as spatial margins of a normalized “French” [i.e. Parisian] bourgeois identity.⁴¹

At the same time, as in many places in the current global economy, adolescents in Chemin de l’Ile consume styles of music and dress that exist within a global “capitalist culture” largely dominated by American corporations such as Nike and Levi’s [Foley 1990].⁴² Ironically, many styles of clothing, jewelry, and sneakers that are identified within Chemin de l’Ile and elsewhere as part of a localized, *cit * stylistic repertoire are appropriated from the circulation of transnational goods and styles emanating from multinational conglomerations. The Nike *swoosh*, for example, was ubiquitous, and appeared in everything from jewelry to *henna* markings on hands during Ramadan, the high Muslims holidays. In this way, adolescents in Chemin de l’Ile and other *cit *s

⁴¹ As is the case in many other European countries, regional identities in France such as *Breton* sometimes politically and culturally supercede national identity for the region’s inhabitants. However, through mandatory federal schooling beginning in the 18th century, the French government eradicated most regional languages, to the exception of *Breton*, which has recently gained minority language status and is taught in schools as a ‘second’ language. In terms of experiences of “Frenchness” by adolescents in Chemin de l’Ile, their proximity to Paris and the overwhelming predominance of Parisian culture and language in French politics, education, and media means that Parisian stands in for “French” in terms of style of speech and regional affinities. However, as I discuss later in this chapter, adolescents in Chemin de l’Ile often expressed more affinity to a Southern French, i.e. Marseillais identity, particularly with respect to soccer teams, styles of speech, and music, showing that they dis-identify against a Parisian ‘norm’ to identify with the minoritized southern identity of Marseille.

⁴² Adolescents constitute the largest target of corporate advertising, because companies want to produce consumers who establish brand loyalty early in life.

appropriated status symbols of transnational capitalism and used them for their own cultural and communal purposes.⁴³

Adolescents living in the stigmatized spaces of French *cités* are not alone in the practices of co-optation and re-valuation of symbolic capital, however. In a pattern similar to the mainstream appropriation of AfricanAmerican styles of speech and music by the white mainstream in the United States, popular French media has, of late, expressed a national fascination with North African music, such as *rai*, and *cité* styles of dress and speech. For example, Albert [2001] has documented that French, middle class, white adolescents are appropriating *cité* styles of speech and dress to craft tough, 'authentic' identities from *la rue* ('the street'). On the whole, however, French media, politics, and scholarship have consistently fueled a "moral panic" [Hall 1978] about violence and crime in French *cités* and have either censured or demonized musical, dress, and linguistic styles popular in *cités* [Terrio 1999].

Academic research and journalistic publications have been at the forefront in describing and analyzing this emergent, youthful *cité* identity and its attendant dress, music, and speech styles.⁴⁴ These new French subjects, generally called *jeunes de la cité* ['youth of the *cité*'], are depicted as overwhelmingly male, non-white, that is, generally Arab or Black, and violent. The most commonly reproduced image of this 'youth' is the hyper-masculine and violent figure of the *racaille* 'street tough', a stereotype reproduced in popular French media as well as in everyday discourse. Later in this chapter, I discuss how patterns of consumption, illicit economic production, and stylistic markers coalesce in the figure of the *racaille* to form the most powerful and most stigmatized symbol of these urban spaces.

⁴³ However, the reverse process is also occurring in that religious experience is increasingly expressed through mass-produced material culture. For example, Metcalf discusses the increasing overlap between Muslim religious expression and mass-produced iconography, noting "the ever-increasing array of objects distributed by Islamic shops and catalogues: posters, hangings, mugs, bumper stickers, key chains, jewelry, and so forth..." [1996:3]. She argues that such representations and objectifications reflect Islam's temporal and spatial shift toward post-modernity and diaspora. Thus, being Muslim in both the Middle East and "the West" (Europe and North America) increasingly "entails self-examination, judging others, and judging oneself" [ibid.:7].

⁴⁴ Increasingly, depictions of *cité* life are being produced by inhabitants of these communities themselves, including films, novels, and academic publications. However, most representations of *cités* are still produced by individuals living outside them.

As Bourdieu [1984] notes, style or “taste” is intimately tied to patterns of consumption and social stratification. In particular, Bourdieu surveys consumption of food, music, and leisure activities as “an economy of cultural goods” that “corresponds to a social hierarchy of the consumers” [ibid:1]. According to Bourdieu, this hierarchy of taste favors a modern “cultural nobility” [the *bourgeois*] that has replaced the social nobility of pre-Revolutionary France. Namely, bourgeois tastes and affinities are shaped by the process of “distinction” that neatly separates them from working class patterns of material and cultural consumption.

Although Bourdieu focuses mostly on the social construction of *bourgeois* taste, his theory can aptly be applied to working classes in France and elsewhere. For, not only *bourgeois* but all social classes are defined and reproduced through the structuring structures of taste and preference: “Consumption is, in this case, a stage in a process of communication, that is, an act of deciphering, decoding, which presupposes practical or explicit mastery of a cipher or code” [ibid:2]. Just as everyday consumption practices exemplify a *bourgeois* aesthetic, adolescents’ identification with urban styles from the United States including rap, hip-hop styles of dress, and mainstream American films demonstrate how expressions of social class status emerge through everyday consumption and production of popular culture, despite the “global” nature of adolescent consumption today. In this regard, the work of Penny Eckert [1989] and Paul Willis [1977] is of central importance because they both specifically analyze the relationship between the stylistic production and patterns of consumption among working class youth with their subsequent reproduction of working class economic status.

Representations and performances of linguistic, musical, and embodied styles (i.e. dress, hair, and gesture) are integral to both the ways that French *cités* are represented in popular French culture and media, as well as how subcultural styles are produced among *cit * inhabitants. However in sociolinguistic literature, the term ‘style’ has traditionally indicated exclusively level of formality of speech. For instance, Labov’s innovative use of interviews to produce differing styles of speech among speakers relied upon making the formal context of the interview more informal through shifts in topic [i.e. danger of death], and through increasing familiarity of the interviewee with the interviewer [Labov

1972]. As Mendoza-Denton notes [2001], the benefits of such research were its reproducibility—research in distinct regions and among distinct cultural and linguistic groups [in English] demonstrated similar patterning with respect style in relation to a variety of “cross correlations” including formality of context, socio-economic class, and gender. Part of the problem with such highly controlled interview settings and the limited amount of sociological factors considered to influence speech is the reluctance to consider “that linguistic features do not have a one-to-one correspondence with either social identity or functional meaning” [Mendoza-Denton 2001:236]. That is to a degree, linguistic styles, like styles of dress, can be taken on and off by users to perform identifications with or against particular social groups [LePage and Tabouret-Keller 1985; Rampton 1995].

Current sociolinguistic research on style, however, is “driven by an explosion and rearticulation of its definition” [Mendoza-Denton 2001:235]. That is, this literature deals largely with naturally occurring language and takes into account other aspects ‘style’ than formality or informality of speech, to include other symbolic practices such as verbal performances, leisure activities, and embodied practices, such as dress and make-up [Bucholtz 1999; Eckert 1989; Mendoza-Denton 1994]. In my own description and analysis of adolescent participation in *cit * styles in this chapter, I will take into account a variety of practices that draw from popular media such as music, everyday speech styles, and embodied culture such as dance and dress.

POPULAR REPRESENTATIONS OF THE *CITÉ*: FILM, MUSIC, AND LANGUAGE

A recent outpouring of scholarship in Europe and North American deals with popular culture emanating from French *cités* and popular forms of cultural, linguistic, and political expression among *les rebeus* (French of North African descent) and North African immigrants. By and large, such scholarship has demonstrated the growing influence of "post-colonial cultures" upon popular culture, language, and political movements in France [Hargreaves and McKinney 1997]. For example, in the field of popular literature, the so-called '*beur* novel', exemplified by such writers as Azouz Begag, Tahar Ben Jelloun, and Leïla Sebbar, has illustrated for French readers the "bi-cultural condition" of growing up French of North African (and usually Algerian) heritage [Hargreaves 1997:228].⁴⁵ Similarly, the more popular genres of film and music have received attention from scholars who note not only increasing production by *rebeu* artists, but also increasing influence of their work on French popular culture [cf. Bensignor 1993, Bosséno 1992, Daoudi *et al.* 1996, Gross *et al.* 1994, Sherzer 1996]. According to McMurray [1997], such artists have, with increasing frequency and intensity, brought the urban spaces and sounds (i.e. rap and *raï*) of *cités* into the French mainstream.⁴⁶

At the same time, scholarship on grass-roots and transnational political movements among North African immigrants and their descendents have charted the ways that ethnically-informed political movements, such as *le mouvement beur*, have attempted (with varying results) to redefine and challenge the French republican model

⁴⁵ Nationally acclaimed novelist and sociologist Azouz Begag has contributed such works as *Le Gone du Chaâba* [The Kid from Chaâba 1986] and *Béni ou le Paradis Privé* [Blessed or the Private Paradise 1989]. The former novel has been adopted as a middle school text by France's national educational system was also made into a feature film. Ben Jelloun has published such novels as *Ange Aveugle*. [English version, '*State of Absence*' 1994] and *L'Auberge des Pauvres* ['Inn of the Poor' 1999]. Sebbar is known for such fictional works as *Marguerite* [2002] and *Silence des Rives* ['*Silence on the shores*' 2000].

⁴⁶ While many of the currently popular *raï* stars live and perform in France, Schade-Poulsen [1995] notes that the original explosion of this musical genre began as a political youth movement in Algeria, and more particularly Oran. Mobilizing youth through liberating lyrics that deal with elicit romantic love, the political import of such work stems not only from loosening social mores, but also from giving voice to the disenchantment of Algeria's youth with oppressive political leadership.

which posits the individual as the basis for national citizenship and belonging [Blatt 1997, Feldblum 1993, Rosello 1993, Silverstein 2002, Wihtol de Wenden 1988 & 1994].⁴⁷ Such work critiques the possibility of a culturally 'neutral' subject as the basis of French citizenship, and cites the numerous ways that the republican model of citizenship privileges a French, white cultural norm. However, since the national march that marked the beginning of the *beur* movement in 1983, very few French of North African descent have been elected to public office or become political figures of national stature [Feldblum 1993, Blatt 1997]. As Blatt notes,

...post-colonial ethnic minorities in France have succeeded in recent decades in forging a space within the national culture through their production of a rich and influential output in a wide range of artistic and cultural domains. By contrast, in the political arena, ethnic minorities have had limited success in establishing a recognized presence. [1997:40]

Rather, Arab-French politics are often played out in the everyday, for example, in the neighborhood association movement [Jazouli 1992, Wihtol de Wenden 1994] and in cultural practices such as veiling [Bloul 1996]. Even so, the immigrant association movement has been plagued by ongoing struggles between the constraints of state-financing and "paternalistic treatment by French solidarity associations that reproduced colonial relations" [Blatt 1997:43]. Meanwhile, Bloul [1996] notes that central place that veiling has achieved as a site for political struggles over cultural expression has been marred by an overemphasis in mainstream French media on the perspectives of male French politicians and male Muslim clerics and political leaders. Such research

⁴⁷Silverstein [2002] emphasizes the need for scholars to understand the ongoing political conflicts in Algeria as a civil war that is waged at an ideological level through conspiracy discourses which circulate among Algerian expatriate communities in France. As such, his work contributes to an understanding of how political sensibilities transcend linguistic, cultural, and economic divisions among Algerian expatriates through the formulation of transnational knowledge. This process is not dissimilar to the ways that *beur* political activists have created a shared political sensibility through their positioning against a normative "French" subject.

demonstrates the tensions inherent to an ethnicized *beur* political movement and the constraints and exclusions of the republican French model of national belonging.⁴⁸

In the following sections, I will select just a few of these new sites of cultural production to address in further depth. I have chosen to focus on film, music, and language because these are forms of expression that the adolescents in this study valued as the most important in their everyday consumption and production of popular culture and language.

⁴⁸ In Chapter One I discuss the exclusionary logic behind the French republican model of *intégration* as a means to incorporate new populations into the national political body.

Film

French *cités* have been depicted most often in film rather than in television, partly because of the relatively small amount of television that is filmed and produced in France. Dramatic narratives and situational comedies are generally bought from American television producers and the French market tends to produce mostly talk and variety shows. Representations of French *cités* in film, however, have been more commonplace and show an interesting shift in how populations of these spaces are depicted. Early films in the 1980s that depicted *cités* in France, such as *Rai* and *L'Hexagone* depict North African populations fairly exclusively, with an emphasis on the "second generation," (children of immigrants) then popularly referred to as *les beurs*. A more recent classic that documents historical changes within a North African community in Lyon can be found in *Le Gone du Chaâba* ("The Kid from Chaâba"), the cinematic adaptation of Azouz Begag's autobiographical novel by the same name. Directed by Christophe Ruggia, the film won the Grand Prize in the Cannes Film Festival's Youth category in 1997. Centering on the protagonist Omar's difficulties resolving the contradictions inherent to navigating French schools and a culturally North African household, the film achieves cinematic realism on growing up poor and *beur* as well as nostalgia for Begag's youthful memories of shantytowns and housing projects in 1960s France.

More recent films that chronicle life in French *cités*, such as *La Haine*, *Le Ciel*, *Les Oiseaux et Ta Mère*, *Petits Frères*, *Salut Cousin!*, and *Wesh Wesh* emphasize the multicultural and multiracial make-up of *cités*, and depict a common *cit * culture that is emerging from them. This shift in representations may be due, in part, to the fact that, more and more, current filmmakers depicting *cités* have often grown up in *cités* themselves.

Mathieu Kassovitz is a French director of Jewish parentage who grew up in a *cit *. He has subsequently acted in and produced films such as *Caf  au Lait* which depicts the famous multiracial Parisian neighborhood, la Goutte d'Or, where Jewish, North African, and sub-Saharan African populations live together. Kassovitz subsequently directed the

critically acclaimed and widely distributed film *La Haine*, named after the sentiment "hate" or "revolt" that inhabitants of *cités* are depicted as feeling due to unemployment, police violence, and racism. This film depicts a multi-racial band of three male friends, who are respectively of North African, European, and African descent, all living in a violent French *cit *. The film opens with actual news footage of riots between police and inhabitants of French *cit s*, which were common throughout the 80s and 90s, often following police brutality, including various shootings. *La Haine* proceeds by fictionalizing a similar event--the brutal killing of a young man by police after riots, and the trio of friends' response to the event with violence as well.

Similarly sobering depictions of life in French *cit s* are found in the films *Wesh Wesh* ("What's Up"), directed by Rabah Ameut-Zaim che and *Salut Cousin!* ("Hi Cousin!"), directed by Merzak Allouache. *Wesh Wesh* deals with the devastating effects of a violent and crime-ridden *banlieue* (suburb) on the various members of a North African-French family. Just as the older brother is released from prison the younger brother is entering into his career as a small-time drug dealer. *Salut Cousin!*, selected in both the Cannes and New York Film Festivals of 1996, describes the racially divided environment of a Parisian suburb. Mok, the film's male protagonist, is making a name for himself as a rapper, but his reputation is stymied by his naive cousin Alilo, who arrives unexpectedly from Algeria.

A more comedic view of life in French *cit s* is depicted in *Le Ciel, les Oiseaux et Ta M re!* ("The Sky, the Birds, and Your Mother!"), which is directed by French comedian Jamel Debbouze and parodies overly violent representations of *cit s*. The film narrates the madcap adventures of three friends, again, a white, black, and Arab young Frenchman, after they win a trip to the C te d'Azur for making a documentary that exaggerates experiences of violence and drug addiction in a *cit *. As comedic as the representations of these young men are, the film's message is one of multiculturalism and cultural inclusiveness; the Arab protagonist falls in love with a young Jewish woman, and rejects her initially because he is Muslim. In the end, the film preaches tolerance not only for the working-class *cit * kids, who feel desperately out of place on the C te d'Azur, but also for their own tolerance of those unlike them, namely the Jewish middle-class.

Unfortunately, films on French *cités* have generally featured male protagonists and many even have very few peripheral female characters, leaving a marked representational gap for young women from these spaces. Nonetheless, these depictions provide stylistic role models for young women in the form of clothing, language, and social attitudes.¹ Notable exceptions to the lack of depictions of women and girls are exemplified by the films *Petits Frères* (“Little Brothers”); *Inch Allah Dimanche* (“God Willing Sunday”); and *Liberté, Égalité, Samia* (“Liberty, Equality, Samia”). In *Petits Frères*, the young, female protagonist Paris, runs away to hide out with friends in a *cité* in order to escape an abusive stepfather. There she encounters a group of adolescent boys who both befriend her and treat her as an outsider, stealing her beloved pit bull to sell to the ‘older brothers’ in the *cité* for sport. The female protagonist of *Inch Allah Dimanche* consists of one of the least represented personas in films about French *cités*: the adult woman with children. Directed by prolific filmmaker Yamina Benguigui, also known for her excellent film *Vivre au Paradis* (“To Live in Paradise”), this film’s plot centers on Zouina’s (successful) struggle for independence from her domineering mother-in-law and abusive husband. Finally, *Liberté, Égalité, Samia* was directed by Philippe Faucon and based on Soraya Nini’s autobiography, entitled *On Dit Que Je Suis Une Beurette* (“They say I’m a Beurette”). The teenaged protagonist, Samia, struggles against a controlling older brother to gain the freedom to express herself in ways that her parents interpret as ‘acting like French girls’, including her choice of European styles of dress and male peers as friends at school.

Films depicting everyday life in French *cités* are crucial to the reproduction and consumption of linguistic and subcultural styles among young audiences, who subsequently elaborate their own styles in reference to these popular representations. This dialectic process might take the form of adolescents using quotative speech from films that connects cinematic dialogue to everyday contexts in through reported speech [Bakhtin 1981]. For example, *La Haine* reproduces a famous scene from Scorsese’s *Taxi Driver* in which Al Pacino stands before a mirror with a gun repeating compulsively to an imaginary antagonist: “You lookin’ at something?” These lines are repeated by the white protagonist in *La Haine*, while he brandishes a handgun and looks in the mirror at an

imaginary adversary. Similarly, I have recorded instances of mimicry of this aggressive verbal posturing by adolescent girls who are performing a mock challenge to their male peers (see Chapter Four). So, the fact that all of these representations are heavily weighted toward depictions of men and masculinity doesn't mean that adolescent girls don't identify with the masculine roles and posturing depicted in these films. Rather, as I argue later in the dissertation (see Chapter 5), many adolescent girls emulate forms of dress, language, and demeanor that they feel exemplify the *cit *, even if these require "acting like men" (*se comporter comme des bonhommes*).⁴⁹ As well, the frequent referencing of American films in French cinema depicting *cit s* demonstrates the ways that American popular culture influences adolescent identities in these urban communities.

⁴⁹ Participation in these expressive forms/performances did not preclude many of these same girls proclaiming their "love" for the few available male public figures who are North African, including comedian Jamel Debbouze and footballer Zinedine Zidane, who seemed to singlehandedly win the World Cup for France in 1998.

Music

Music is another site that shows the emergence of *cité* styles in terms of both consumption and production. Following a period of censorship on French radios lasting throughout the 1980s, [French radio announcers' motto was *pas de rap, ni d'arabe* ("no rap, and no Arabic music")], the French music scene has since exploded with a new fusion of influences, including American-styled rap, popular North African *raï*, and traditional music styles from North and sub-Saharan Africa. African-French rap artist MC Solaar is largely regarded as the vanguard of this movement, whose intellectual, poetic lyrics paved the way for the American-styled 'Gansta' rap period that followed in the late 1990s and which continues currently in France.

Much like representations of *cité* populations in the films discussed earlier, musical groups that are influenced by these urban spaces are multiracial and multicultural. French rap groups such as the famous *IAM* draw together French rappers of North African, European, and African background. In addition, this group's popular image is cemented by a strongly southern French accent, hailing from the rough suburbs of Marseilles.⁵⁰ The most famous of *IAM's* founding members, Joey Star, was even immortalized as a character on the French TV show *Le Belette Show*, a comedic performance of current events with the use of puppets. Joey Star's likeness performs alongside puppets of President Jacques Chirac and former Prime Minister Lionel Jospin. Characterized as tough and dim-witted, speaking in sentences punctuated with the word *quoi*, (literally "what," but functionally similar to American use of "like"), Joey Star represents the ways that *cité* styles and spaces provide an opportunity for both fascination and ridicule for middle class French audiences.⁵¹

On the other hand, musicians that incorporate North African influences, such as Khaled, "King of *raï*," and other groups that hail from French *cités* have achieved

⁵⁰ The use of a "north-south" polarity for orienting identity was central to cultural practices among adolescents in French *cités*. For example, although all of the adolescents discussed in this study grew up and lived outside of Paris, they systematically supported the Marseilles soccer team over the Paris team, because of its location in the South.

⁵¹ Part of the delight in ridiculing Joey Star relates to his criminal history: he served jail time for physically abusing his girlfriend, events that were made much of in the French press and media.

national fame. Even aside from rap's multiracial participation and message, other musicians are experimenting with blending genres including the pop group *Zebda* which combines rap, raï, and rock and the fusion group *Orchestre Musicale de Barbès* (OMB) which mixes Moroccan *gnawa* music, jazz, and pop. *Zebda*, in particular, boasts their connection with Algerian migration to France through the veiled reference in their title—*zebda* is the Arabic word for “butter,” or *beurre* in French. As I discussed in the previous chapter, the homonym *beur* is a common designation for French born of Algerian or North African parents.

Zebda garnered national commercial success after their most recent CD “*Tomber la Chemise*” [‘Make the Shirt Fall’], which was considered popular, but fairly apolitical. However, their previous, less popular and more political CD was provocatively entitled, “*Les Bruits et les Odeurs*” [“the Noises and the Smells”], and recycles the infamous quote from Jacques Chirac, the current President of France who was Mayor of Paris at the time. By provocatively reclaiming Chirac’s words, *Zebda* championed the right of Arab and African French to herald their own cultural production, no matter how offensive their ‘noises and smells’ are to *bourgeois* French tastes.

Language

Depictions of *cit * styles of speaking have been quite prevalent in France, to the degree that there is a monologic stereotype about how *les jeunes de la cit * speak. As I mentioned above, this style is embodied in the figure of Joey Star, on the *Bebette Show*, and consists of a guttural accent, aggressive speech, punctuated by the word *quoi* ("what") and *verlan*, the practice of inverting syllables of words. The recent resurgence of *verlan* is largely attributed to *cit * youth, although, as mentioned above, it predates these communities by several decades. .

French academic scholarship on linguistic practices in *cit s* has been no less guilty of such generalizations and stereotyping. For one thing, much of the French scholarship on language is not conducted by trained linguists, and so the analysis remains based in *ad hoc* observations. As well, as I note in Chapter One, very few such researchers conduct in-depth ethnographic research. Academic scholarship on language in French *cit s* generally takes the form of the slang dictionary. This literature contributes to the notion that there is a uniform 'language' emerging in *cit s* across France, and that its speakers are predominantly male [e.g. Goudailler 1997; LePoutre 1997; Seguin and Teillard 1996]. The frequent emphasis on adolescent males' use of vernacular and competitive interactional genres is strikingly similar to how early American sociolinguists constructed "language varieties of adolescent male gangs as authentic or core" in African American communities in the 1960s [Morgan 1999].

While select, stylistic markers are popularized as typical of *cit s* in French media, there is no strong evidence that a clearly authentic *cit * 'language' or uniform style exists. Rather, the variety of slang collected by the above researchers points to the diversity of language practices within French *cit s*. Most adolescents in Chemin de l'Ile can emulate the popular stereotype of *cit * language by ironically performing this linguistic and social identity. But the linguistic styles in the neighborhood that adolescents themselves associate with a local *cit * identity are stylistically and pragmatically more complex. For example, competitive, interactive genres that are popular in many *cit s*, but not necessarily exclusive to them, are used in Chemin de l'Ile by girls and boys alike to

negotiate moments of conflict and to build personal reputations among peers. In daily interactions, adolescents in Chemin de l'Île use competitive bragging, slang, and ritualized insults associated with the *cité* for a variety of purposes, demonstrating the multiple ways linguistic style can be appropriated and thus symbolically transformed. In this way, even if a uniform style were emerging in French *cités*, its use by different speakers and for different purposes would prevent it from attaining symbolic uniformity.

Unlike representations of *cité* speech in mainstream French media and scholarship, what was often most important to adolescents in this study was proficiency with particular Arabic loan words, discussed in more detail in the Introduction. This emphasis on particular Arabic loan words was true even for adolescents who were not of Arab descent, who showed proficiency in comprehension of certain loan words even if they were sometimes reluctant to produce these terms because of fears of being teased for their mispronunciation of them. In this next ethnographic example, for instance, competence with key loan words in Arabic is held up as evidence of insider status.

One day at *Cerise*, the association at which I conducted tutoring, a group of adolescent girls, a Tunisian-born educator of about 40 named Kamel, and I sat talking in the kitchen.⁵² During our conversation, one of the girls present used the word **kaḥəl**, which in colloquial Arabic intermixed with French is used to mean "to get the better of someone" (*faire avoir quelqu'un*). When Kamel asked what the term meant, one of the girls present exclaimed, "*Mais t'es pas un vrai Arabe ou quoi?!*" ["Hey, are you a real Arab, or not?!"]. An interesting pattern emerged in the ensuing conversation: this very word, **kaḥəl**, was used at least 3 times again by different speakers in the gathering, including Zahra, a female educator from Algeria. This type of repetition among adolescents and their Algerian mentor is fascinating for the ways that a particular term **kaḥəl** takes on the status as a marker of in-group identity within the immediate context. The adolescents present seemed to use the term to distance themselves from Kamel, that is, to highlight his outsider status. In contrast, Zahra seemed to use the term to align

⁵² Kamel and the other names used in this dissertation are pseudonyms.

herself with the adolescents present and to highlight her in-group status as someone who holds relevant insider knowledge.

So, particular uses of Arabic loan terms are associated with "Arabness" for the adolescents in Chemin de l'Ile. As well, the accusation that Kamel is not a 'real' Arab, while by no means reserved for him only, was an effective way to shame him for not knowing information central to these adolescents' own daily expression. While I myself did not know this term at the time (even though I know some Arabic), the same insult would not be leveled against me, not only because I'm not "Arab," but in not being Arab, there's no expectation for me to be linguistically and culturally knowledgeable. Ironically, however, the fact of being "Arab" does not make Kamel any more privy to this linguistic information as he didn't grow using Arabic in a French *cit * and is from Tunisia, where this term isn't prevalent. This exchange shows that adolescents are distinguishing themselves from other 'Arabs' based upon in-group definitions of belonging, including their own notions of linguistic competence in Arabic loan words.

The expectation of cultural and linguistic similarity among North African-born educators and tutors on the part of adolescents in Chemin de l'Ile constituted, in fact, a poignant conflation of regional, cultural, and linguistic identities. A similar conflation occurred when adolescents interacted with adult mentors who were of North African descent, but who did not grow up in the neighborhood or any other *cit *. Mina was a tutor who lived with her parents and brothers in non-subsidized housing in a nearby neighborhood of Nanterre. Like many of the adolescents in this study, however, Mina's parents migrated to France from North Africa (Tunisia) and were not formally educated. Yet because she grew up in housing and a neighborhood that was economically and culturally mixed, and as she was quite successful in school, Mina speaks standard French and teaches French language and literature for a living.⁵³

Mina and I often worked on transcribing my audio recordings together and during an informal conversation with her, I asked her if, in her eyes, the kids at *Cerise* used a lot of Arabic in their speech. She hesitated, but then replied "Yes, a lot." She claimed that

⁵³ The non-standard French grammar [cf. Gadet 1996] that adolescents use in Chemin de l'Ile isn't particular to Arabs or the *cit *, but to working class French of many backgrounds.

among her friends, people used less Arabic, and corrected that among her Maghrébin friends, speakers used less Arabic loan words when speaking French. She used the example of her younger brothers, and said that they only interspersed a few Arabic terms into French occasionally, not nearly as much as the children and adolescents that she tutored at *Cerise*. My question reminded Mina of an anecdote that she thought was relevant to my study: when Mina first arrived to tutor at *Cerise*, the children she worked with were astounded that her name was Mina,⁵⁴ because she didn't speak like them. They informed her that she spoke with an accent: "*Mais tu parle pas comme nous--t'as un accent.*" ('You don't talk like us. You have an accent.')

Mina explained it differently, of course. She told me that she didn't have the "*accent maghrébin*" (Maghreb accent) when she spoke French, which is basically non-standard (i.e. working class) French with some phonological similarities to Arabic. This particular accent is the same that also gets represented as a "*cit *" accent in popular representations. For example, the puppet of Joey Star and actors in films like *LaHaine* speak a version of the style that Mina describes as "*maghr bin*." Of course here, the relevant point is that *cit * and *maghr bin* (or "*arabe*") styles are relevant to each other and even conflated due to the stereotype that many Arabs live in French *cit s* and because many, in fact, do. That is, the "real" linguistic effect of the concentration of children of Arab immigrants in French *cit s* and often pejorative stereotypes about their linguistic competence exist side by side and inform one another.

In terms of adolescents' stylistic performances, linguistic and other, they are conscious of pejorative stereotypes about *les Arabes* and *la cit * and sometimes participate in them even though they are also critical of them. For instance, adolescents' treatment of both Kamel and Mina as cultural foreigners demonstrates the conflation of Arabness with *cit * styles is similar to the most stigmatizing LePenist rhetoric--that is that *cit s* have become 'taken over' by Arabs. (As I mentioned in the last chapter, the percentage of immigrant households in Chemin de l'Ile is relatively low at roughly 20%.) Another way that adolescents participate in the reproduction of *cit * styles is in their use

⁵⁴ I assume that this reaction indicates that the children were surprised that she is Arab since her name is an Arabic name.

of dress and verbal styles that specifically represent the *cité* as tough and urban, particularly in the contexts of a school dance performance and a singing contest at the neighborhood *Fête du Quartier* (Neighborhood Fair). In the next section I look at how performances of clothing and linguistic styles in these contexts are ways that adolescents participate in the production and maintenance of an emergent *cité* subculture [Hebdige 1979].

LOCAL PRODUCTION OF CITÉ STYLES: DANCE SPECTACLE AND FÊTE DU QUARTIER

Dance Spectacle

Toward the end of my stay in Chemin de l'Ile, I attended the local middle school's annual dance performance at the *Salle des Congrès* in Nanterre, along with other employees and volunteers from *Cerise*. This event was one that I had attended before, toward the beginning of my fieldwork. However, this year I found the event fascinating for its overt themes of cultural "difference," a catch phrase for the anti-racism movement in the early 1990s, spearheaded by the group SOS Racisme and their *Droit à la Différence* campaign (i.e. "The Right to Difference"). For example, a young woman of sub-Saharan African descent beautifully performed a song with the refrain "Quand on pense des différences--quelles différences?" (When we think of differences-what differences?). Likewise a spoken word and dance performance by younger middle school students culminated in the spoken chorus: "On est pareil dans nos différences" (We are the same in our differences).

In addition to multicultural rhetoric, the use of styles of dress and dance typically associated with the *cit * were also foregrounded, compared to the previous year. Indeed, although the performance was primarily executed by female dancers, many were dressed in the baggy sweats and high tech sneakers that characterized masculine *cit * style. Further, these styles were said to index the street-smart, tough figure of the *racaille*, a *cit *-based street tough that figures in popular media and in everyday discourse in these spaces.⁵⁵ In one particularly interesting piece, girls assumed roles as individual performers of hip hop moves, a rarity in popular French media representations. For instance, two black adolescent girls, Miriam and Ingrid, came on stage first, both in Gilligan hats and tennis shoes. Miriam wore a tight fitting pants and a long tunic top, typical feminine *cit * gear except for the hat and shoes, and Ingrid wore standard *cit * masculine gear: sweatpants and a T-shirt, which, if combined with a sweatjacket is called *surv tements* or, in slang, *le surv t*. In this way, the girls seemed to take on both the 'masculine' and 'feminine' roles in heterosexualized pairings, as one girl in each pairing

was dressed in masculine *cit  style (surv t) and the other in feminine cit  style (tunics with tight polyester pants). It seemed that girls were dancing both 'masculine' and 'feminine' roles, thereby engaging in gender crossing [cf. Rampton 1995, Thorne 1993].*

The dance routine began when the two girls approached the audience doing a combined routine of 80's-style Michael Jackson moves (e.g., elastic band arm and moon walking) and breakdancing steps.⁵⁶ Next, they were joined by a series of other girls of various ethnic or 'racial' backgrounds, each of whom executed a particular set of moves by herself, in a kind of dancer showcasing typical of American rap videos and concerts from the early 90s. These moves were at times quite physical, moves that one rarely sees girls do at public events in *cit s* or elsewhere, and included hip hop moves, moon walking, and 'doing the worm' (i.e. throwing themselves down on their stomachs and undulating on the ground). As each girl completed her routine, she filed off stage individually, reemphasizing her role as individual performer.

Although, as individual performers girls often took on dance and dress styles typical of masculine *cit * subculture, when they were paired with male dancers in other routines, girls were again cast in a feminine role, both in terms of their romantic heterosexual dance steps and their style of dress. For example, in one mixed-gender routine, each girl was paired with a boy, and the more acrobatic or athletic dance moves were reserved for the male partner. In one such number, boys and girls performed choreographed hip hop dance moves, but only boys did breakdancing, spinning and posing on their heads. In a synchronized exchange, the girls in each couple would bust a move and the boys would follow. Another mixed-gender dance piece was composed of several heterosexual couples, in which the boys were again dressed in *surv t* and the girls were in spandex type tank tops and palazzo pants. The dance contained many classic romantic moves: couples repeatedly fell into each others' arms, girls were lifted by the boys either above their heads or held in swan-like position on the boys hips, and there

⁵⁵ I deal with the figure of the *racaille* at length in another section below.

⁵⁶ Breakdancing has never really gone out of style in France, as it has in the United States. Groups of breakdancers (all male in my experience) still frequently perform in an area of *Les Halles* the shopping center beneath Beaubourg (Centre Pompidou) in the center of Paris. To my knowledge, breakdancing performances continue in France currently, and were certainly in evidence during the period of fieldwork (1998-1999).

was even quite a bit of rolling around on the floor. In the final pose, each boy's head reclined near a girl's breast (just above, her shoulder) in a maternal caress.

The heightened (hetero-)sexualized dance steps of that routine and the hyper-feminine roles that girls fulfill exist in stark contrast to girls' roles in other routines throughout the performance. Not only did girls dance individually as 'masculine' *cit * performers, and together in both the masculine and feminine roles of *cit * styles, they also danced in one routine in sets of sisterly twins. In this particular piece, girls of similar ethnic backgrounds were dressed in exactly the same colored pants and T-shirts and did symmetrical, supportive "sisterly" moves as couples, some of which mimicked moves in the romantic number with dancers of both sexes.

The representations of 'race', gender, and style are fascinating throughout this performance. First, the predominance of female dancers who were of sub-Saharan African parentage outweighed the participation of girls of North African descent, a striking discrepancy given that adolescents of North African descent outnumbered adolescents of sub-Saharan descent. This is an interesting testimony both to the fact that there are far more prescriptions against Arab girls participating in public performances than there are for 'black' French girls. However, the emphasis on black girls embodying *cit * dance styles derivative of American hip hop and breakdancing styles seemed to involve a case of racialized mimicry on the part of the French white schoolteacher organizer. Much as this schoolteacher was apparently making connections between 'race' and *cit * styles, adolescents in Chemin de l'Ile of ethnicities, but especially Arab or black, themselves frequently adopted African American popular culture as part of their identification with the *cit * and related styles.

In terms of a disparity of gender roles, boys not only numbered far fewer throughout the different dances, but also maintained only one gendered role: that of the athletic and strong "man" in relation their female dance partner who was feminized by her dress and dance styles. For example, at no time did male dancers pair up in quasi-romantic couples as did the girls throughout the performance. The static quality of this presentation of masculine identity contrasts sharply with the multiple ways that female dancers were represented, as tough, street smart (and thus masculine-styled) *cit * kids, as

quasi-lovers in paired, mixed gender couplings, and as sisterly 'twins'. It would seem that, as Thorne observes [1993], girls "cross" gender lines more easily than boys do. In addition, this disparity in gender flexibility is interesting for what it seems to indicate about popular styles within French *cités*. That is, dominant *cité* styles themselves tend to be masculine, which does not necessarily exclude girls, but which seems to require them to engage in gender 'crossing' to participate in them. However, as I will explore by analyzing the rapping and singing contest at the *Fête du Quartier*, girls are subject to criticism when they attempt to participate in these styles. It would seem that the highly feminine context of a dance performance legitimized girls' participation in these styles in a way that the highly masculine context of the *Fête du Quartier* did not.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ I also analyze the notion of crossing and girls use of purportedly masculine linguistic styles in Chapter Five.

Fête du Quartier

The *Fête du Quartier* ('Neighborhood Party') constitutes an important site for the local production of *cit * styles in Chemin de l'Ile. Hosted each June, this type of public event was common to other *cit s* and neighborhoods within Nanterre and across France generally, and provides the occasion for local residents to participate in a variety of public activities, including games and sports activities for children. In rural areas of France, these touristic events are designed not only to entice visitors from nearby villages but inhabitants of major cities and foreigners who are vacationing in the region. In these rural contexts, the sale of local gourmet foods and artesanal products are a way to ensure attendance. Being a "low-income" urban neighborhood of predominantly public housing projects, Chemin de l'Ile's *Fête du Quartier* is characterized by a high degree of participation by local public administration and associations. For example, each year at a bazaar-like fair, local associations set up booths that promote both public relations and organizational fund raising. *Cerise*, the primary association I worked with, sold a couscous dinner and sweets homemade by mothers of the students we tutored. In addition to raising money for the association, the director used the opportunity to engage parents in an organized debate about the state of the French education system.

By and large, however, the Chemin de l'Ile *Fête de Quartier* provided the opportunity for young people, children and adolescents, to participate in organized activities. And, like other *Fêtes du Quartiers* in nearby *cit s*, the event provided an opportunity for adolescents from other low-income neighborhoods to come to compete and 'check each other out' at events including a singing contest and deejayed dance, both organized by the *SMJ* or *Salle Municipale de Jeunesse* ('Municipal House of Youth'). In the second year of my fieldwork, several singers and rappers from other neighborhoods competed in this singing contest, including a group of girl rappers from a *cit * outside of Chemin de l'Ile. While the female vocalists from other towns were greatly appreciated by the audience, several girls and boys from Chemin de l'Ile told me later that they thought it 'wasn't good' for girls to rap, implying that it was unfeminine or unseemly. In this

instance, girls who were publicly participating in rap—a verbal style central to *cit * life and identity in France—were considered to behave in gender-inappropriate ways.⁵⁸

However, of the male rappers, a local duo--Ahmed and Ali, fourteen and fifteen years old, respectively--performed an original composition that was greatly appreciated entitled "Les Zilinas," named for the particular *cit * in which Ali lived. As shown by participation in the rapping and singing contest in Chemin de l'Ile, adolescents are interested in participating in creative performances of *cit * styles that foreground their experiences as inhabitants of them. I include the text of this rap below for further analysis of the ways that boys build personal reputations through evoking the *cit * and their own personas as tough, urban, and culturally hybrid. The rap is named for the Youth Center (*Salle Municipal de Jeunesse*) in which it was performed.

Example 2.1: Rap SMJ

1	M�me le Pr�f�t B�nnet	1	Even the Prefect B�nnet
2	a d� se faire serrer, incarc�rer	2	got locked up, incarcerated
3	par ces putains de kisd�	3	by these whores of cops
4	Moi j'ai fait moit�	4	Me, I did it half way
5	j'ai lâch� passer le BEP	5	I dropped out of high school
6	23 ans, 4 enfants	6	23 years old, 4 kids
7	Mama Mia	7	Mama Mia
8	Mais n'oublies pas	8	But don't forget
9	Casba Zilinas	9	Casba Zilinas
10	Fracasse-moi Paris de coup bas	10	I hit Paris below the belt
11	Rest� mythique-tik	11	Stayed mythic-tik
12	Emmerder la pol�mique	12	Screw the controversy
13	et faire de moi un homme chic	13	and make me a chic man
14	Wash bik chic	14	What's your problem, chic
15	J'suis dans le move khuya	15	I'm in the groove brother
16	Mais t'inqui�tes pas pour les mecs des Zilinas	16	But don't worry for the guys of Zilinas
17	Partout o� je passe passe	17	Everywhere I go go

⁵⁸ The judgement of adolescent girls who rap and do other "masculine" things is another way that aesthetic choices are infused with social distinctions; here, stylistic expectations fall along gender lines.

18	les méchants trépassent	18	the tough types flee
19	je glisse sur la glace	19	I slide on the ice
20	car je suis l'as des as	20	because I'm the ace of aces
21	Mais n'oublies pas	21	But don't forget
22	Nanterre chaud, quartier chaud	22	Nanterre 'hot', 'hot' neighborhood
23	Reputé chaud, chaud l'artichaut	23	Reputed 'hot', hot artichokes
24	Fais gaffe à ta peau	24	Watch out for your skin
25	Mama mia	25	Mama mia
26	Y'a ta reunda	26	There's your mom
27	aux Zilinas	27	in Zilinas
28	en Djelleba Coste-La	28	in a LaCoste djelleba
29	rends d'la Zetla	29	selling drugs

This rap encompasses many of the styles of speech and social discourses that I address throughout the rest of the dissertation and, as such, provides a condensed ‘blue print’ for exploring them briefly. First, this rap, and conceivably all rap, as noted by [Morgan 1996], repeatedly evokes the local space of a neighborhood *cité* through references to “Zilinas” [lines 9, 16, & 27] as well as the local town of Nanterre [line 22], which is repeatedly described as ‘hot’ [lines 22 & 23], meaning tough or violent. Through the repeated reference to the local neighborhood and its purportedly tough reputation, Ahmed and Ali attempt to craft an identity for themselves and the neighborhood as tough and authentically urban, or *de la cité* (‘from the *cité*’). Their claimed identity as tough rappers from a tough *cité* is counterposed against a bourgeois Parisian identity through the boast, “I hit Paris below the belt” [line 10], meaning that they are both tougher than Parisians and better rappers than Parisians. Through evoking the ‘hot’, violent suburb, Ahmed and Ali are co-opting the widely-circulating, negative discourses regarding *la cité* that have appeared in French media. (I discuss these stereotypes and discourses in detail in Chapter One.) In so doing, they adopt these stigmatizing discourses and adapt them to their interactional needs at the moment: to appear as authentically tough urban rappers.

The stereotypical themes of urban decay and social exclusion continue throughout the rap, in the form of references to prison [lines 1-3], scholastic failure [4-5], struggling

families [line 6], allusions to tough guys and fighting [lines 16-20. 24], and the sale of illegal drugs [line 29]. The last reference to illegal drugs is particularly interesting for its form and for the cultural references that it irreverently mixes. The claim that the rapper saw the audience's mother selling drugs constitutes an embedded verbal challenge to their interlocutors' respect: "There's your mom...selling drugs" [lines 26-29]. Further, 'your mother' is described as wearing a brand name LaCoste djelleba, that is a supposedly French-made costume of traditional North African dress. In this way, cultural mixing or hybridity is overtly achieved through discursive references, thus referencing more largely the cultural hybridity that these adolescents experience in their everyday existence.

Finally, gender ideologies inform the entirety of this performance, both in form, style, and content. As I mentioned above, rap is constructed in the neighborhood and in France more generally as a masculine speech genre, which excludes 'nice girls' from participating in its performance. As well, the tough, violent reputation that Ahmed and Ali evoke throughout their rap is indicative of normative social values for masculinity. Finally, the theme of 'respect' that emerges in the final mother insult, "There's your mom...selling drugs," is indicative of the ways that adolescents in Chemin de l'Ile evoke the importance of the cultural value of *le respect* through the public undermining of their interlocutor's female kin.

The SMJ event at the *Fête du Quartier* provides an important social event for adolescents to exhibit and engage with verbal and dress styles both within their own *cité* and across *cités* generally. As I mention above, these event were attending by adolescents from nearby neighborhoods who competed in the contest and came to socialize in a mixed-gender setting. Thus, in addition to forging ties with other adolescents in the local *cité*, an important aspect of adolescent sociability is forming alliances with adolescents in others *cités* to extend their social networks. Visitations to nearby *cités* provided the opportunity to meet and visit dating partners and friends, to participate in conflict through physical or verbal fighting, and to trade and sell illicit

goods.⁵⁹ While visiting other *cités* was perhaps more common among adolescents boys due to their relative freedom of mobility, girls also exhibited a fascination with other *cités*. As part of my role as semi-official mentor and tutor, the group of girls that I worked most closely with would often ask me to go along such clandestine outings, only loosely associated with any outside authority because not officially organized with *Cerise* or the school. Oftentimes, they requested to travel to other *cités* rather than into Paris, the choice destination for official fieldtrips organized by *Cerise* and school for its 'cultural' richness. On these official outings, transportation into Paris consisted into an easy RER (train) ride with direct service from Chemin de l'Ile to downtown. On unofficial, secretive outings that I sometimes participated in, however, transport to another *cit * often consisted of two long bus rides and an indirect route.⁶⁰ While the obvious assumption by Parisian transit authorities was that *cit * dwellers would want to travel from the periphery to the 'core' or Paris, for most of these adolescents, the *cit * constituted the 'center' of their social, commercial, and leisure needs.

This particular group of girls traveled to other *cités* for a variety of adventures, including checking out other teenagers, male and female. In this regard, checking out the styles and brands that other adolescents wore constituted a central function of these outings. Conversations on the way home would invariably turn to "did you see the girl who was wearing the Diesel jeans, Nike Air Max, etc.?" The girls I worked with were also on the lookout for boys to date, partly because it was considered 'safer' (more secret) to date someone from another neighborhood, away from what the girls view as the prying eyes in their own *cit *. Some adolescent girls were also fascinated with illicit activity in other *cités* and could spot the lookout posted while *le business* (drug dealing) occurred. The adolescent girls I worked with claimed that boys from Chemin de l'Ile knew guys from other *cités* through economic activity, not only through *le business* but also through the sale of goods (e.g. clothing, cell phones, perfume, etc.). In addition to the economic aspect of these networks and exchanges, there was a territorial aspect to these visits—

⁵⁹ I deal with the parallel economy of *cités* in the final section of this chapter.

⁶⁰ I discuss the difficulties of managing my conflicting identities as 'mentor' and anthropologist in the Introduction.

fights would sometimes occur between *les mecs* ('the guys') from one cité and those from another, in a symbolic show of defending local territory.

The girls, too, sometimes showed such spatial affiliation through aggression, although of a less organized kind. In my presence, Fatima and some other adolescents once almost picked a fight with a group of girls at Pablo Picasso, another cité that was reputed to be 'tougher' than Chemin de l'Ile, showing the ways these adolescents actively valorized these otherwise widely stigmatized spaces. Although the above conflict consisted of verbal insults thrown back and forth, expectations for physical conflict seemed to increase when adolescent boys traveled to other *cités*. On another occasion, I went to Pablo Picasso with a large group of girls and one boy, Omar, one of the few boys who regularly hung out with adolescent girls. Ten of us, including Fatima, Salima, Lisa, Miriam, Cécile, Hourriya, Brigitte, Mounia, Aurore, and the lone boy Omar, traveled by RER to Pablo and walked through the art deco concrete gardens and rounded buildings. As we wandered through the paved footpaths of the *cité*, a group of younger boys, roughly 10, walked up to Omar (the sole boy) and snatched his Polo cap off his head and walked off sneering. The sign of aggression was interesting to me for several reasons—even though it was completely banal for the adolescents who were with me. First, the group of boys from Pablo seemed to understand that we were from outside the *cité* and took our presence there as an aggressive act in itself. Second, I found it interesting that the group of boys from Pablo chose to show aggression directly only to the lone boy, much as the girls had earlier chosen to show aggression toward a group of girls from Pablo. In this incidence and in others that I observed, aggression based upon a territorial identification with local space was directed at members of one's own sex.

Personally, I felt incredibly upset by this close brush with violence on an outing 'led' by me, even though I was merely a rather hollow excuse for a chaperone, having neither organized the event (Fatima usually did that) and being only a figurehead of authority for these adolescent girls' parents. In reality, I had very little, if any, authority over these girls. Feeling thus wholly dis-empowered, I felt I needed to take action, and felt able to probably because of the size and age of these aggressors. Omar himself showed no sign of responding to the theft of his cap. So, I walked back to the group of

boys, who were playing catch with the cap, and asked them to give it back. When they refused, I used a common translated expression from Arabic that commands respect for 'guests': "I come from far away" (*Je viens de loin*) and asked again for the cap.⁶¹ After saying that it was a miserable excuse for a cap because the brim was broken, they tossed it back at me. When I returned it to Omar, the others seemed to think that what I had done was 'dangerous', but also brave. The more important point here is that verbal and physical conflict between adolescents from different *cités* is a common way that they perform spatial identity and local affiliation.

In contrast, official 'cultural' outings sponsored by *Cerise* seemed often to be exercises in humiliation for these adolescents. Not only did our large groups attract attention in the bourgeois streets of Paris, the styles of dress and speech that these girls used marked them as being *de la cité* ['from the *cité*']. Several of the girls with whom I worked closely commented about this to me, claiming that in Paris people stared at them, and that these people were thus obviously *racistes* ['racists']. On one such outing, some of the girls begged to go into the luxurious LaCoste store on the Champs Elysées. When Zahra, the organizing educator concurred, we were told by the doorman that we would have to wait--only two at a time could go in. Once inside, I realized that the policy was exercised on a case by case basis as there seemed to be a large group of Japanese tourists shopping that undoubtedly entered at the same time. This incident provided another occasion for the girls to proclaim 'racism'--whether the black bouncer's decision was class or race based (or both), these (predominantly Arab) girls and other adolescents in Chemin de l'Ile interpreted expressions of exclusion and prejudice consistently as 'racism', rather than, say, class prejudice or spatial exclusion.⁶²

⁶¹ The irony of this statement didn't strike me at the time--I was using the logic that they should be polite to me because I was a 'guest' in their neighborhood, but the aggression toward us seem to be based on the fact of our provenance from another neighborhood.

⁶² While I in no way want to question the validity of these adolescents' experiences of racism, I do think it is important to note the ways that claims of racism fall in line with the overwhelming use of anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim, and anti-Arab discourses in the far right, as opposed to anti-poor rhetoric. In this instance, class-based exclusion and scapegoating of immigrants is couched in terms that decry the incommensurability of 'cultures'. These discourses are obviously having an effect--not only are hate crimes

LA RACAÏLE AS THE APEX OF STYLE AND CONSUMPTION PRACTICES

Hebdige's [1979] use of Levi Strauss' *bricoleur* to describe British youth culture resonates with the ways that adolescents in Chemin de l'Ile appropriate mainstream and massproduced brands and icons and bend them to their own purposes of identity construction. Hebdige notes that the subcultural *bricoleur* (in his research the working-class British "lad") appropriates existing markers of fashion to create a new, hybrid style. In the case of adolescents in Chemin de l'Ile, this process sometimes involves appropriating and re-signifying symbols of capitalist culture by incorporating them into North African-derived cultural and religious practice. For example, among adolescents in this study, the Nike 'swoosh' was commonly painted in *henna* on hands during Ramadan, the holy Muslim holidays. Whereas *henna* is traditionally used across North Africa to ritually mark participants in marriages and religious holidays, its use to perpetuate the already ubiquitous Nike sign was becoming a new tradition among adolescents in the neighborhood. The semiotics of this practice are innovative for they blend a mass-produced icon of capitalism with a traditional practice usually reserved for cultural and religious ritual. It would seem pointless, however, to claim this practice was uniquely a case of secularizing sacred tradition, or, conversely, the strategic use of capitalist icons for cultural and religious maintenance in diaspora. Both processes are undoubtedly occurring (even if they seem contradictory) and demonstrate the hybrid practices of identification among children of Algerian immigrants and the attendant, emergent styles particular to their experiences growing up in French *cités*.⁶³

In Chemin de l'Ile, adolescents pay inordinate attention to bodily practices, including clothing styles and brands, hair and jewelry styles and such practices are considered significant for how they marked the spatial affiliation of the wearer as a *fille* or *mec de la cité* ('girl or boy from the cité'). Undoubtedly related to the widespread stigmatization of French *cités* that I discuss in the last chapter, holding title to *fille* or *mec*

and police brutality against Arabs on the rise, so are adolescents explanations of economic exclusion as 'racism'.

⁶³ My claims to the cultural particularity of children of Algerian descent in France should also be tempered with the acknowledgement that, as Eckert [2000] notes, adolescents generally 'mess' with meaning.

de la cité is not altogether positive: it denotes toughness, street-smarts, and hipness, but may be considered 'too' tough. Further, certain dress styles along with certain behaviors associated with the tough urbanity of the *cité* (notably *le business*, or drug dealing) were said to indicate one's status as a *racaille* ['street tough']. The following section explores adolescents' ambivalence with respect to the figure of the *racaille*, their fascination with and moral judgement of people and behaviors associated with *la racaille*. The connections and conflicts that adolescents articulate between styles of dress and behavior, and between stigmatization and valorization provide an important lens with which to examine adolescents' ambivalence toward the space of the *cité* and their own identities as both its inhabitants and as Muslim children of Algerian immigrants.

LA RACAILLE: FIGURING STYLE AND STIGMA

Despite the fact that many adolescents I talked with resisted my suggestion that the way one dressed and talked determined whether a person was deemed a *racaille*, I encountered anecdotal evidence to the contrary. Nonetheless, in a group interview when I posed the following question to roughly eight girls, "*Est-ce qu'on appelle quelqu'un une racaille selon la façon dont ils s'habillent ou ils parlent?*" ('Do people call someone a 'racaille' because of the way they speak or dress?'), I received a resounding 'No' to my question. Thus, whenever I asked adolescents directly about whether being a *racaille* was indicated by styles of speech or dress, I was always told no—being a *racaille* was not about how you dressed or spoke, but about how you acted. Nevertheless, I want to explore the anecdotal evidence to the contrary because I think it serves to demonstrate how behavior, morality, speech and dress styles all coalesce in the alternately stigmatized and valorized figure of *la racaille*. In turn, I want to argue that as such, *la racaille* serves as a symbol metonymic of the alternately stigmatized and valorized space of the *cit * within popular discourse and everyday practices.

The first example consists of a humorous exchange in which a girl's Nike ring is jokingly interpreted by a tutor as a sign that she is a *racaille*, or, as it is stated here in *verlan*, a *caillera*.⁶⁴ At the *Cerise* association one day, Samira [a girl of about 12], Sami [a 25-year-old adult male tutor], and I were casually talking in the kitchen. Samira, who was generally very shy and one of the few really 'good' students to frequent the association, had been one of the first middle school students to show up that day for tutoring, and was sitting in the outermost room, quietly doing her homework while we chatted. I noticed she was wearing a Nike ring⁶⁵ and I couldn't help but say "*Toi aussi?*" ('You too?'), in an incredulous tone. After all, Samira's best friend was Leila, the

⁶⁴ In my experience, the inversion of *racaille* to *caillera* did little to change the term's meaning as *racaille* is already considered slang, not 'proper' French. As I mentioned earlier in the chapter, *verlan* is a style of French slang that inverts syllables of words.

⁶⁵ These purportedly 'Nike' rings were usually counterfeit, and not actually produced by the Nike Corporation, demonstrating another aspect of the informal economy that *cit * styles and aesthetics depend upon.

only girl in the association (and one of the few in the neighborhood) who chose to wear the *foulard* or headscarf. As well, the 'good girl' behavior of these younger (roughly twelve-year-old) middle-school students was quite different that of some of the older girls (15 or 16) who had formed a friendship group at Cerise that reveled in troublemaking at school. Thus, Samira was not the 'type' I associated with these styles, a response that also emerged in Sami's reaction. After I registered my surprise at Samira's ring, Sami jokingly interjected an explanatory statement for her possession of the Nike ring: "*Parce que t'es un caillera.*" ('Because you're a *racaille*!') Samira laughed and protested, "*Non, c'est parce que c'est mon anniversaire...et une fille me l'a donné*" ('No, it's because it's my birthday and a girl gave it to me.') Sami asked, "*Aujourd'hui?*" (Today?) and when Samira answered 'yes', Sami and I wished her happy birthday.

However seemingly banal this exchange, the pinpointing of the Nike ring as "*racaille*" style shows the ways we, along with other speakers in Chemin de l'Ile, are evaluating markers of style in terms of social behaviors and organizing them into 'types'. For example, even Sami's ironic commentary that Samira is a 'street tough' functions to associate a style marker (the Nike ring) with a particular social type, the *racaille*. Much as Sami and I are jokingly commenting on the apparent disjuncture between Samira's 'good girl' status and her wearing a Nike ring, Samira nonetheless denies her attachment to the ring, seemingly to reject a *racaille* identity for herself. She was only wearing the ring, Samira justifies, because a girl had given it to her, thereby implying that not to wear it would be rude. In her explanation for why she wore the ring, Samira evidenced that she, too, rejected the Nike symbol when both Sami and I associated it with behaviors linked to the stigmatized figure of *la racaille*. In that sense, all three of us were reproducing stereotypes about who would likely wear such a ring and what such a ring would indicate about their social behavior.

In the following examples of casual discussion among adolescents, I hope to draw out some of the complexity surrounding this term as well as the conflicting values that characterize adolescents' discursive construction of *la racaille* in relation to morality and social space within Chemin de l'Ile. In the next example, Fatima tells a story about the new boy in her class, a "céfran" (verlan for *français*, or "French") who leads the class in

tough, disrespectful behavior. Unlike the previous exchange, Fatima's narrative serves to glorify the supposedly transgressive behavior associated with *la racaille*.

Example 2.2: Céfrans and Racailles

1	Fatima <i>laughing</i>	Mesquine Bouthier, Bouthier n'a pas arrangé des choses!	<i>Poor Bouthier, Bouthier didn't make things easier [on the teacher]</i>
2	Chantal	Bouthier quoi?	<i>Bouthier what?</i>
3	Fatima	Un mec des Quatre Chemins est venu dans notre collège, il a atterri dans notre classe, et quand il était pas dans la classe, la classe elle était calme, mais laisse tomber quoi!	<i>A guy from "Quatre Chemins" came to our school, he landed in our class, and [before] when he wasn't in class the class was calm, but [now] forget it!</i>
4	Cécile	Après elle est partie en couille	<i>Afterwards, it [the class] went to hell.</i>
5	Fatima	En fait elle était pas calme, il y avait du bordel, mais bon, il y avait pas comme la fin de l'année	<i>In fact, it wasn't calm [before], people raised hell, but not like at the end of the year [after Bouthier came]</i>
6	Pierre	ouais	<i>yeah</i>
7	Fatima	Et les profs ils disent, "oui c'est l'arrivée de Bouthier--il nous entraîne." Et toute la classe a commencé à dégénérer. Même les premiers de la classe ils repondaient aux profs, tout.	<i>And the teacher they said, "yes, it's because Bouthier came--he drags us into it." And the whole class started to fall apart. Even the best students talked back to the teachers [and] everything.</i>
8	Pierre	<i>laughs</i>	<i>laughs</i>
9	Fatima	Ils repondaient, ils se battaient en cours, ils disaient "oh foutez moi la paix" et tout, mais tu sais les mecs chelou c'est les petits céfrans. Ils se prennent pour de la racaille.	<i>They talked back [to the teacher], they fought in class, they said "oh leave me the hell alone" and everything, but you know the tough guys, it's the little French [kids]. They think they're racaille.</i>
10	Chantal	<i>laughs</i>	<i>laughs</i>

This transcript of casual conversation among adolescents shows the ways that they revel in transgression, particularly in the disruption of class time through talking back to the teacher, refusing to do work, fighting, and generally 'raising hell' (*foutre le bordel*.) Similar to the 'lads' in Willis' [1977] study of how working class kids become working class adults in industrial England, adolescents in Chemin de l'Ile valorize disruptive behavior and many generally dislike school. In addition to run-of-the-mill boredom, many Chemin de l'Ile adolescents dislike school because they don't do well and are even disproportionately 'tracked' into remedial classes. While the French school system provides universal and generally free access including University, it is one of the most culturally elitist systems on earth [Bourdieu 1984:2]. For example, many of these adolescents' parents are illiterate in both French and Arabic and speak 'ordinary' (non-standard) French, if they speak it at all. Nonetheless, these adolescents are expected to function in literary French and comprehend elite French literature and philosophical texts, both of which presume access to and a deep knowledge of bourgeois vocabulary and culture. However, unlike Willis' 'lads' many of these adolescents will not find employment with or without school--unemployment for young people aged 18-25 was estimated as high as 30% by neighborhood officials. Further, the working class jobs that adolescents could look for after finishing trade school are harder to come by than many of the jobs they would gain access to through academic high school. Disruptive behavior that I observed among adolescents often seemed like a way for them to vent their frustrations with a system that seemed to do little to ensure their success.

Fatima, who narrates Example 1, was no different--she was a student who honestly wanted to succeed, but who often did poorly in school. In this regard, the challenging behavior she directed at professors was legendary among her peers, and although at least partly an outgrowth of her frustration with school, also probably contributed to her lack of success. "Comportment" constitutes a part of every class grade in French middle school and sometimes dictates the difference between passing and failing. Fatima's choice to valorize her classmate Bouthier's disruptive behavior is a way then that Fatima can publicly valorize her own disruptive behavior, albeit indirectly. In

her description of the ways that Bouthier's behavior influences the classroom, Fatima makes some interesting distinctions between "*les céfrans*" ('French kids') and *la racaille*.

On the one hand, Fatima's obvious appreciation of Bouthier's daring serves to aggrandize his tough reputation, as well as to play up the tough reputation of his *cit , les Quatre Chemins*.⁶⁶ And by initially agreeing with her teacher that "when he wasn't in class the class was calm, but [now] forget it!" Fatima seems to initially downplay her own and other classmates' role in disrupting the class. She backs down from this position, however, by correcting, "In fact, it wasn't calm [before], people raised hell, but not like at the end of the year [after Bouthier came]" thus saving face with respect to the transgressive identity that she often crafts for herself in such narratives. Fatima distinguishes, however, between "French" troublemakers and *la racaille*, creating a hierarchy of toughness, at the top of which she locates the supposedly non-French *racaille*. Her use of the dismissive term 'little' (*petit*) to refer to her 'French' classmates (*les céfrans*) further diminishes them in terms of their disruptive acts in school. Thus, Fatima infantilizes the 'French' as less tough and mature than *les racaille*, whom she is depicting as non-white. In reality Fatima, like all the other students in this study are considered 'French' by nationality because they were born in France and will receive French citizenship at the age of eighteen.⁶⁷ Nonetheless, Fatima poses 'white' or European French kids against the 'true' non-white troublemakers (*les racailles*), since she constructs them as exclusive of the 'little French' kids in her class. In constructing *la racaille* as contrastive with Frenchness, Fatima valorizes this figure as indisputably tough, and reproduces the dominant stereotype that *les racailles* are Arab or black.⁶⁸

It is interesting in this regard that even though Bouthier is indisputably tough and clearly not one of the 'little' French students, he apparently doesn't seem to qualify as a *racaille* either. In Fatima's construction, *la racaille* becomes an identity that behavior

⁶⁶ In fact, *Quatre Chemins* did have considerably more problems with violence and drugs, so much so that the French government tore it down about a year after this recording.

⁶⁷ In 1994, *Les Lois Pasqua* (the Pasqua laws) sabotaged this system of automatic citizenship by requiring children of immigrants to request citizenship at 18. However, Jospin has since rescinded this law and many of the punitive policies that accompanied it.

⁶⁸ This stereotype exists inside and outside French *cit s* in popular representations. For example Albert [2000] notes middle class white French kids are considered '*faux*' (fake) *racailles*.

can be modeled after, but not necessarily an identity that anyone would claim for oneself. *La racaille* is thus used here to describe a set of behaviors rather than a social identity. However, as I explore in the next excerpt, individuals seem to be identified as *la racaille* almost exclusively if they are involved in drug dealing in the neighborhood. Thus, those who do not deal drugs and/or who are still students may be thought to emulate behavior or dress styles associated with *la racaille* and yet still be excluded from the category. In the remainder of this section and in the next section, I analyze adolescents' complex, and largely quite negative attitudes towards drug dealing and drug use. Adolescents' attitudes to drug use and drug dealing correlate to the local Algerian community's negotiation of morality within stigmatized public space of the *cit *.

The following example was recorded during a casual conversation among several adolescents in the association *Cerise*. The focus of the conversation centers on C cile's decision not to go to a wedding in the neighborhood, because she wants to avoid seeing and being seen by *la racaille*. The wedding described is that of Hayat, the eldest sister of one of their male peers, Fouzi, who is himself about 14 years old. In conversation leading up to the excerpt, Hayat (the bride) is described as nice, 20 years old, and chubby.

Example 2.3: La Racaille Go to a Wedding

1	Fatima	T'es partie � son mariage?	<i>Did you go to her wedding?</i>
2	C�cile	Ma soeur, elle m'avait invit�e apr�s j'ai fait "Non, j'y vais pas"	<i>My sister, she invited me, but after I said "no, I'm not going."</i>
3	Chantal	Pourquoi tu voulais pas?	<i>Why didn't you want to?</i>
4	C�cile	Parce que (2.0) Quand tu vas dans un mariage franchement j'ai pas envie de voir toute la racaille que tu vois toujours eh dans la cit� tout �a. C'est bon, j'ai fait "non, je vais pas."	<i>Because (2.0) When you go to a wedding, frankly I don't want to see all the racaille that you always see uh in the cit� and all that. It's ok, I said 'no, I'm not going.'</i>
5	Chantal	Oh! =	<i>Oh! =</i>

6	Pierre	=Mais non mais là c'est un mariage tu crois quoi, c'est c'est pas la rue=	<i>but no, but, this is a wedding, you think what, it's it's not the street</i>
7	Fatima	=Non mais même attends hé c'est c'est pas les mecs que-- franchement quand ma cousine elle s'est mariée, mes cousins pendant qu'ils y étaient ils avaient que ramener ah (1.0) les mecs des Canibous les mecs de Paquerettes les mecs des Côtes D'Auty mais ils ont fait "Non, c'est un mariage pour la entre la famille c'est que leur famille qui va il y pas les <u>bicots</u> euh= [<u>highly pejorative word</u>]	<i>No but still, wait, hey, it's it's not the guys that-- frankly when my cousin got married my other cousins while they were there they could have brought all the guys from the "Canibous", the guys from Paquerettes, the guys from Cotes D'Auty, but they said "No, it's a wedding for the family their family that goes, not the <u>Arabs</u> ah-</i>
8	Pierre	=Bah ouais=	<i>= well yeah=</i>
9	Fatima	=les mec qui va, non non=	<i>=the guys that go, no no=</i>
10	Pierre	=C'est de la famille=	<i>=it's the family=</i>
11	Fatima	=A part bon deux trois personnes, tu vois qui sont euh=	<i>=Aside from two or three people, you see that are uh=</i>
12	Pierre	=[[voilà]]	<i>=[[exactly]]</i>
13	Fatima	[[polis]] tu vois?	<i>polite, you know?</i>
14	Chantal	Mm hm	Mm hm
15	Fatima	Hasul ⁶⁹ les mecs qui se tiennent à carreau	<i>You know the guys who watch their step [i.e. discreet]</i>
16	Chantal	Mm=	Mm=
17	Fatima	=Mais normalement je n'sais pas pour le moindre respect c'est mariage à sa soeur ou à sa tante ou j'sais pas à qui que ce soit, la moindre des choses, chais-pas moi, où il ramene personne pas de leurs copains ou pas qui ce soit	<i>=But normally, I don't know, for the least amount of respect it's a wedding to one's sister or aunt or I don't know to whomever at the very least, I don't know, where they bring no-one not their buddies, or anybody</i>
18	Chantal	Mm	Mm

⁶⁹ Arabic discourse marker meaning 'like' or 'you know'.

19	Fatima	C'est ça normalement mais bon, eux [the couple], c'est possible qu'ils les invitaient, non?	<i>That's how it is normally, but well, them [the couple], it's possible they invited them, isn't it?</i>
20	Cécile	Son frère son frère	<i>her brother, her brother</i>
21	Chantal	Mais le marié euh Kamel c'est pas un racaille, lui? Non.	<i>But the groom, uh, Kamel, he's not a racaille is he?</i>
22	Fatima	bah il vend du "it" ['shit' or hashish]	<i>well he sells pot</i>
23	Cécile	[clicks tongue against teeth to express her displeasure with Fatima's comment about groom]	[tongue click]
24	silence	[5.0] very long pause	5 seconds of silence

While this example is lengthy, I've decided to include it to demonstrate the complexity of adolescents' attitudes toward *la racaille*, particularly with respect to how they construct weddings as sacred spaces restricted to family. In the first exchange between Fatima, Cécile, and myself [lines 1-4], Cécile justifies her decision not to go to the wedding because she "didn't want to see all the *racaille* that you always see uh in the *cité*" [line 4]. The concern that Cécile articulates about 'seeing' *la racaille* may, in fact, have more to do with being 'seen' by and among *la racaille* since many adolescent girls in Chemin de l'Ile claimed that their reputations were threatened by the indiscriminate use of public space.⁷⁰ Citing the (semi-)private setting of weddings, Pierre challenges her concerns as unjustified because, after all, "this is a wedding...not the street" [line 6]. However, subsequent to this initial exchange, the conversation pivots on this very point--of the 'need' to exclude *la racaille* and thus to restrict weddings as private spaces of home and family in order to maintain the 'respect' of female relatives. According to the talk represented here, a "respectful" wedding depends upon the exclusion of *la racaille*. Within this logic, *la racaille* metaphorically represent 'the street', and the 'disrespectful' threat to women's and family's modesty that 'the street' embodies.

In justifying her position that *la racaille* should be excluded from weddings, Fatima uses the example of her cousin's wedding, to which, she claims, her other cousins "could have brought all the guys from Canibous, the guys from Paquerettes, the guys

⁷⁰ In Chapter Five, I deal with the challenges that girls and their reputations face in Chemin de l'Ile.

from Cotes D'Auty, but they said "No, it's a wedding for the family their family that goes, not the Arabs ah-". Fatima's claims are interesting for their inherent contradictions. On the one hand, it is clear that her cousins know 'all' the *racaille*, and she cites several of the toughest *cités* in the area to shore up her claims that her cousins "could have brought all the guys from the Canibous, the guys from Paquerettes, the guys from Côtes D'Auty" and, by extension, must be very tough themselves, if not in fact, *racaille*. On the other hand, Fatima⁷¹ uses highly pejorative language to describe *les mecs* ('the guys') as *bicots*, a very pejorative French term for 'Arabs'. She then continues to explain that "for the least amount of respect at a wedding to one's sister or aunt...at the very least, I don't know, there, they [should] bring no-one, not their buddies, or anybody."

In addition to a social commentary on *la racaille*, this example provides insight into shifting cultural attitudes towards weddings as semi-private spaces of the family. In North Africa, weddings tend to be public events where all villagers or (in the case of big cities) neighbors are allowed to attend. As such, weddings provide some of the few contexts where non-family members are able to socialize in a mixed-gender setting. By contrast, adolescents in Chemin de l'Ile expressed an apparent discomfort with the overly public nature weddings, as they he apparent attitude expressed here by the attitudes of Cécile in line 4 and by Fatima in lines 7 & 17. Such as shift would seemingly indicate a shift toward French values of weddings as private events. However, underlying these adolescents' apparent preference for weddings to be family spaces is the ideal of *le respect*, which, as I argue in more detail in Chapter Four, pertains to cultural beliefs and ideals regarding an age and gender based hierarchy that informs a code of behavior in public and private settings. From the perspective of the adolescents in the above example, the presence of *la racaille* at weddings compromises the possibility of ensuring *le respect* (or "respect") of the female relatives present.

Thus, whereas, "discreet guys" [line 15] might be tolerated at a wedding, *la racaille* is not, unless, of course, the wedding is his own. Toward the end of the

⁷¹ Fatima describes herself as "Arab," even though her family is actually Kabyle and non-Arabic speaking. When pressed on this point by me, she claims to be 'both', probably both due to the preponderance of Arabic culture and language in Chemin de l'Ile and the intertwined histories of Arab and Kabyle peoples in Algeria and North Africa generally.

exchange, I ask whether Kamel, the groom, is in fact himself *racaille*. By means of a response, Fatima simply claims that he sells 'it', French slang for the English loan word 'shit' used for hashish. Here again, the distinction between public and private is articulated as the distinction between transgressive versus respectful behavior. Fatima seems to be implying that, despite his status as *racaille*, Kamel can have a respectful wedding, if he avoids inviting his friends and restricts his wedding to family. Here, behavior of *la racaille* does not seem to be considered immoral for its own sake, necessarily, but is rather, in the context of a wedding immoral because of how their presence would 'disrespect' (i.e. threaten the reputation of) the women present and the sanctity of family. However, the long pause after Fatima divulges that Kamel sells "it" and Cécile's disparaging tooth sucking seem to indicate that these adolescents are concerned that this information is inappropriate for my adult "tutor" ears because I might share it with other adults at *Cerise*.

In other instances, I observed these same adolescents speaking quite disparagingly about other adolescents who got high or who were known to sell or smoke pot. But such moral grand standing belied a general fascination with drug dealing and veneration for older, tough *racaille* among the adolescents I frequented. Fatima in particular seemed to alternate between fascination with *la racaille* and a rejection of drug dealing and use as immoral. For example, despite her adamant claim that *la racaille* threaten the 'respectful' character of a wedding, she prided herself in knowing a lot about drug dealing. For example, on one of our illicit group outings to another *cit *, Fatima took several adolescents and me to a street where she showed us a lookout posted to prevent cops from busting ongoing drug deals. Her knowledge of and fascination with the illicit acts of drug dealing seemed to exist in direct contradiction to her usually very vocal rejection of drugs and drug dealings as immoral. However, Fatima's four older brothers were reputed to deal drugs among the educators at *Cerise* and it's possible that her complex blend of fascination, knowledge, and criticism were indicative of the complex feelings that she had about her own brothers' purported involvement with dealing drugs.

But Fatima was not the only adolescent girl who negotiated the (im)morality of drug dealing; other girls paid close attention to boys supposed involvement in drugs when

deciding who to date. As I explore in subsequent chapters, adolescent girls were very careful about how to manage their reputations among peers, and dating someone who dealt or did drugs was considered taboo by many girls. In one instance I observed a very heated discussion between Fatima and another girl Miriam about whether the boyfriend of another girl dealt drugs. This discussion occurred in the kitchen of *Cerise* between Fatima and Miriam, who literally met behind closed doors for almost an hour. About half way through I asked if I could join them and they both agreed. They were talking about another girl, Lisa, whom they frequently criticized for her dating practices. The convoluted story they jointly told about Lisa was ultimately a cautionary moral narrative about drugs and sex. Lisa and a boy from a nearby *cité* had mutually expressed a liking for one another. As is often the case when adolescents court one another in Chemin de l'Ile, their friends expressed their mutual desire to Lisa and the boy respectively and Lisa finally called him up to ask him out. Soon after, however, Lisa apparently heard rumors that the boy both smoked and sold hash, and she claimed that she had stopped seeing him and even talking to him. Another reason given by Miriam and Fatima for why Lisa supposedly stopped seeing this boy was that she claimed that he had asked her to have sex with him. I was interested to find out that all participating girls, Fatima, Miriam, and Lisa, presented each of these behaviors as valid reasons for "breaking up" or refusing to see a boy, even though some girls questioned the validity of Lisa's claims about this particular boy.

Regardless of what actually happened between Lisa and this boy--and I would surely never have access to the 'true' events even if they were relevant--Lisa seemed to be actively managing her personal reputation through distancing herself from this boy. Claiming to break up with him for the 'right' reason (whether it be for sexual advances or drug use) served to enhance her own reputation as a girl who followed the "rules" of dating established by this adolescent peer group. And as someone who dated boys far more than her peers, Lisa and her reputation were under intense scrutiny and so her claims about this boy might have been a way of actively managing her peers' impressions of her. Although for these adolescent girls the most central 'rule' was to retain their virginity, or at least appear to do so, avoiding boys who were *racailles* was also of

importance.⁷² In this way, anxiety over bodily 'impurity' of young women was expressed in anxiety over social 'impurity' of *la racaille*; their access to young women was restricted for the ways their social impurity were thought to endanger girls' bodily purity.

In Lisa's absence, for example, these other girls seemed not only to debate Lisa's reputation and her claims, but also this boy's potential threat to girls' reputations generally--they seemed to be trying to get the 'real scoop' on him. At one point, for example, another girl, Mabrouka, came in and refuted the claim that the boy had sold pot, both as a way of questioning Lisa's reputation for telling the truth and re-establishing the boy as a potential suitor. Ironically, justifications in favor of this boy's reputation included claims about other illegal behaviors that the girls deemed "no big deal." For example, after Mabrouka claimed that it was untrue that the boy sold drugs, Fatima added "Yeah, like all the other guys he steals little things, [like] radios, to have pocket money. That's no big deal." ("Oui comme tous les autres mecs ils volent les petits trucs, les radios, pour avoir l'argent de poche. C'est pas grave ça.")

Among many adolescent girls with whom I worked, there was a general consensus that dealing in drugs was immoral but that stealing or reselling stolen goods was understandable. Nevertheless, fascination with the danger and risk of both behaviors seemed common among these same girls; just after Fatima's comment, Miriam told about a time when she saw someone steal a radio from someone on a bus and how shocked the people were. Laughing as she told the story, she seemed to revel in the sheer daring of the theft. And, while I never heard of any female *racaille* who dealt drugs, I had observed Fatima and some of these other girls shoplifting food from a supermarket on one of our 'unofficial' outings.⁷³ In this way, their adamant justification of theft over drug dealing probably represented a moral hierarchy that allowed them to continue petty shoplifting without suffering social exclusion.

⁷² Yemina, the eldest daughter of eighteen in the family I lived with, had once told me that her father punched a young man considered a *racaille* who had talked with her in front of their building.

⁷³ This was a truly terrifying moment of fieldwork during which I realized that my own interest in adolescents' fascination with "deviance" made me an accomplice to theft and a "bad influence" on these "impressionable youth." When I realized that Fatima had stolen food upon exiting the store, we forged an agreement that I would buy snacks for everyone as long as they never shoplifted on our outings. (Of course I also delivered an impromptu 'lecture' about theft not being 'worth it' and the probability of getting caught.)

In the next section I continue to analyze the complex relationships that exist between illicit economic activity, morality, and representations of public space in Chemin de l'Île. In particular, the next section deals with the ways that public space in Chemin de l'Île was alternately stigmatized or valorized in relation to moralizing discourses about production and consumption.

MORALITIES OF PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION: THE *CITÉ* AS PARALLEL ECONOMY

One afternoon I arrived in Chemin de l'Ile for an appointment with the local events coordinator at the Mayor's Office only to find that he was out of the office. After some deliberation, I decided to have a coffee at the café across the street, crowded with mostly middle-aged Algerian men who lived in the immigrant foyers nearby. Coffees are cheaper when you stand at the bar in France, and men were three and four deep--I suddenly realized that I was the only woman there aside from the 50ish barmaid. I made my way through the crowd to the non-smoking area, sat down and ordered a coffee. Soon after, a young man I knew, Mahmoud, came over to my table from where he was sitting with his friends nearby. In a polite tone, he asked, "*T'es toute seule, Chantal?*" (Are you all alone, Chantal?) I said yes and explained that I had come to see Mr. Maso (the local activities director), but that he hadn't shown up for our appointment. Reciting a common refrain about politicians in the neighborhood, Mahmoud said "*Lui, c'est un escrot*" (That guy is a crook). When I asked, Why, what had he done? Mahmoud said "*Rien, il n'est jamais là, il fout rien lui. Il vient nous voir quand il y a les élections.*" (Nothing, he's never here. He does nothing. He only comes to see us when there are elections.) Mahmoud's (quite common) attitudes about politicians piqued my interest, and I began to list local elected officials to elicit an opinion. What did Mahmoud think of El Katabi, the only North African representative in the *departement*? Didn't know him. What about Christian Bouthier, a local school teacher and representative? At the sound of his name, I got a very different response from Mahmoud: "Oh, he's nice. He lives right over here (pointing). But if he didn't live here, he would be like all the rest." ("*Ah, il est gentil, lui. Il habite juste là. Mais s'il vivait pas ici il serait comme des autres.*")⁷⁴

⁷⁴ In a bizarre act of violence in 2001, a middle school hall monitor (*surveillant*) shot and killed Mr. Bouthier, along with six other locally elected officials in a supposed attempt to murder the mayor of Chemin de l'Ile. This event was devastating to the middle school students with whom I worked because Mr. Bouthier was generally very well liked and respected in the neighborhood, where he was also a resident.

However, I learned afterwards that the simple distinction between living inside or outside the neighborhood's borders was only one of many ways that members of the Algerian community decided who to trust. Not only was the local versus non-local distinction central to one's acceptance within local social networks, one's profession was also clearly of vast importance as well. In this particular instance, Mahmoud noted that the mistrust accorded most politicians by locals could only be mitigated by local status of that politician, as in the case of Bouthier. Mistrust of anyone associated with the "French" administration included police in addition to politicians. In my own experience, I had known one Algerian man, Mabrouk, who approached me to privately tutor his daughter in English. Initially, I had appreciated invitations to have dinner with his wife and family and was beginning to spend more time with them when, a few different times, other 'locals' warned me not to spend time with them. "The father is a cop, a *vendu*" (a 'sell-out'), they warned. "No one likes him in the neighborhood, and if you spend too much time with him, they won't like you either."

Positive models for work and economic productivity were equally complex among young adults in Chemin de l'Ile. On the one hand, entrepreneurial activity was very much admired among the adolescents with whom I worked. Ahmed, the eldest boy in the family with whom I lived for 5 months, often recounted to me how he longed to go to *les States* so that he might become a *businessman*. The perception that it was easier to establish legitimate businesses in the United States than France was popular among adolescents and seemed somewhat valid, especially given the exorbitant tax rates and fiscal responsibilities expected of French employers. Chemin de l'Ile, like all other *cités* and many economically depressed regions in France (notably Brittany and the South), were known for their highly developed parallel economies. It is estimated that in France over half of all construction work is conducted *au noir* or 'under the table'. Chemin de l'Ile was a veritable hotbed of carpenters, masons, plumbers, and other craftspeople, unable to obtain work in legitimate businesses, but conducting their own *business* whenever possible. As one Algerian woman who was remodeling her house bragged to me, you could get any kind of work you wanted *au noir* and at half the market price.

In addition to skilled labor, the resale of clothing and electronic goods was widespread in the neighborhood. It was rumored, for example, that an entrepreneurial group of young men had flown to Thailand in order to bring back suitcases full of jeans and high-tech tennis shoes which were cheaply fabricated and sold on-site by American conglomerates such as *Nike* and *Levi's*. Largely due to this type of parallel or 'illegitimate' entrepreneurial activity called *le business* or *le biz*, it was possible to buy all manner of luxury items, such as cell phones, perfume, jeans, and tennis shoes, for about half the price and tax-free in Chemin de l'Ile or nearby *cités*.⁷⁵

For young men who were failing school, establishing a foothold in *le biz* in the neighborhood presented a way to gain social status and economic independence. Ahmed had left school for unusual reasons: he had been a good student in middle school and had decided to go to a better high school in another *cit * to avoid spending too much time with his friends. Unfortunately, unlike his older sister Yemina, who graduated with high honors from the same high school, Ahmed refused to make new friends for fear of being seen as 'replacing' his old friends from Chemin de l'Ile. Ahmed was increasingly harassed and challenged to fights by boys in his class who asked him why he never hung out with them. Facing constant harassment and a nearly two hour bus ride each day at this school, Ahmed just stopped going.

Although he has since joined the French army (a solution that his family found a relief), after dropping out Ahmed initially got locally involved in *le biz*, (that is, the resale of stolen electronic and luxury items in the neighborhood, not drug sales). His open activity in this parallel economy caused a rift in his parents' relationship: his mother, Aïcha, was wholeheartedly against his involvement with anything illegal, but his father, Khaled, saw nothing particular wrong with it, as long as he didn't get involved with drugs. This difference of opinion was perhaps related to his parents' different immigration status--Aïcha had migrated from Algeria after marrying Khaled, who had grown up in Chemin de l'Ile since the age of three. Their divergent positions came to a

⁷⁵ The TVA or 'value added tax' in France was over 18% on all items for purchase except food. Luxury items such as perfume included even higher tax percentages in their regular store prices.

head one night when Ahmed tried to sell an obviously stolen cell phone to his father who was intent upon buying it even amid Aïcha's avid protests, "not in my house!"

Yemina, Ahmed's older sister, was immediately also interested in getting involved in *le biz*, and asked Ahmed to cut her in, but Ahmed just laughed it off, not wanting to share. Ahmed's entrance into the illegal trade of goods had seemed to invert the birth-order hierarchy such that Yemina was in a position of asking for things from her younger brother. Girls are generally excluded from this type of trade which is passed down from so-called "big brothers" (*grands frères*) to "little brothers" (*petits frères*) in Chemin de l'Ile as elsewhere [Duret 1996]. His entrance into the quasi-kinship of *le business* was ensured by his male gender, whereas Yemina was excluded. Some of the other male adolescents I got to know through *Cerise* were also moving through the ranks as *petits frères*. "Older brothers" would ask them to buy cigarettes for them or do errands for a small tip. Educators at *Cerise*, however, worried that they would move into small time drug dealing and smoking hash.⁷⁶

As I've noted above in my discussion of *la racaille*, the stigmatization of drug dealing was not limited to educators in Chemin de l'Ile. Even those few local residents who were able to set up 'legitimate' businesses were subject to judgement based upon local religious values. For example, the two main meat shops in the neighborhood were owned and operated by local North African butchers. Both putatively *halal*,⁷⁷ many neighborhood people cast aspersions against the meat of one of these butchers, claiming that it wasn't really *halal*, and that furthermore, the shop had been "built by drug money." While the prices were often twice as high at one of the other butchers that was supposedly legitimately *halal*, some families--including the one I lived with--chose to shop there or go without meat, as we frequently did.

The controversy over as seemingly banal a decision as where to buy one's meat demonstrates the often-competing moralities of Chemin de l'Ile and other places like it in France. On the one hand, local residents took a certain pride in the entrepreneurial

⁷⁶ And indeed, for several of the young men that I tutored at *Cerise*, this turned out to be the case. I discuss these adolescents' diverse experiences subsequent to my fieldwork in the epilogue.

⁷⁷ *Halal* meat comes from an animal that was killed by having its throat slit so as to drain the body of blood and impurities. During the process, the animal must also be blessed by an *Imam* (religious leader).

spirit⁷⁸ and ‘getting one over’ the French government that made such businesses possible, regardless of their questionable sources of income. Similarly, working for the police was considered a conflict of interests for anyone of North African descent because of ongoing harassment experienced at the hands of the police.⁷⁹ On the other hand, religious and moral values intrinsic to this Muslim community gave a central emphasis to questioning the moral legitimacy of businesses supposedly bought and built with drug money.

⁷⁸ Successful small-time business people in the neighborhood included many of the mothers of the children I tutored, who worked predominantly as home-base nannies, but who also baked bread and pastries to sell during Ramadan. The neighborhood also displays the success of entrepreneurs who run bakeries, the local café, convenience stores, several *halal* meat markets, and on my most recent visit in 2003, a pizzeria and an internet and telephone café. As well, the fresh produce market twice a week was predominated by Arab-speaking salespeople and products that one might find in any souk in North Africa.

⁷⁹ Groups of police would regularly descend upon the young men hanging out in the parking lot and demand national identity papers, even though many of them were effectively standing directly in front of their own homes. Although French law prohibits collective punishment, it was reported to me that when one person present did not have his identification, the police would often bring the whole group to a nearby police station. One local man who had been the national champion in kickboxing had his career cut short after police officers threw him into the paddy wagon, fracturing his collarbone.

CONCLUSION

Managing personal reputation in the urban spaces of a *cit * like Chemin de l' le is complicated by conflicting moral values that place adolescents in the middle of difficult choices regarding attaining economic solvency, fulfilling cultural expectations of *le respect*, and achieving a tough self presentation that may involve illicit activity. On one hand, *la racaille* hold the respected position of local 'businessmen' and suppliers of luxury items such as Nike sneakers and cell phones that adolescents (and sometimes their parents) desire as a form of symbolic capital that grants them 'distinction' among their peers [Bourdieu 1984]. On the other hand, many activities that *la racaille* or *les grands fr res* partake in, including drug dealing, are quite stigmatized, as evidenced by the avoidance of meat sold in butcher shops 'built by drug money' by practicing Muslims. Adolescents find themselves particularly concerned by these moral choices, since crafting a successful personal reputation among peers usually involves embracing *cit * styles and aesthetics that are associated with stigmatized figures such as *la racaille*. At the same time, these styles attain a social power from their association with illicit behavior and 'the street'. In the following chapter, I continue to pursue the ways that adolescents elaborate their personal identities through and against circulating discourses regarding morality, the stigmatized space of the *cit *, and stereotypes regarding *les arabes*.

Chapter Three: Symbols of Identity: Stereotypes and Social Categories in Interaction

This chapter considers the ways that adolescents reproduce and subvert dominant discourses about “Muslims” and “Arabs” through their shifting identifications with Arabic and French cultural and linguistic symbols. Whereas in Chapter One I examine the centrality of Algerian and North African immigration and *intégration* to changing conceptions of France as a national community, in the present chapter, I examine this dialectic from the perspective of these “new” French subjects. That is, I demonstrate that dominant “French” representations of national identity, ‘race’, immigration, and cultural assimilation are central to how adolescents of Algerian descent experience and perform their own social identities. In so doing, I hope to bring nationally circulating discourses regarding “French” and “Arab” cultures together with locally achieved performances of identity that appropriate and sometimes subvert these hegemonic representations.

My aim here is akin to the "reflexive sociology" Bourdieu practices, notably in the work *Weight of the World*, that "presents a sociology that constructs the emblematic from the idiosyncratic" [1999:ix]. Much like Bourdieu, through analyzing adolescents' interpretations, rejections, and recyclings of dominant discourses concerning *les arabes*, I hope to create an ethnographic account of Chemin de l’Ile that transforms adolescents’ everyday experiences into a theoretical analysis on the politics of cultural identities in France. In *Weight of the World* [1999], Bourdieu achieves this "transformation" by juxtaposing interviews and narratives from people's everyday experience who occupy polarized subject positions in France, for instance, white union factory workers and unskilled immigrant laborers, which are often depicted as vying for the same employment opportunities. Bourdieu's intended goal for creating such a conversation is that, "through simple juxtaposition, to bring out everything that results when different or incompatible points of view confront each other, where no concession or compromise is possible because each one of them is equally founded in social reason" [1999:3]. The juxtaposition that I attempt to create in this chapter (and in the dissertation more

generally) is somewhat different in that bring together dominant discourses regarding *les Arabes* and adolescents' own everyday discourse production. In so doing, I attempt to analyze how Arab-French adolescents engage with circulating discourses about *les Arabes* and *les français* and respond with their own representations of what it means to occupy both subject positions.

While I examine the ways in which adolescents speak against dominant stereotypes regarding *les Arabes*, like Paul Willis in his study of working class British “lads,” I also want to consider the ways that their performances reproduce dominant representations. As children of primarily Algerian immigrants living in low-income housing projects, the adolescents described here have a relationship and access to “Frenchness” that is complicated by socio-economic exclusion and pervasive forms of new cultural racism [Balibar 1991, Gilroy 1987]. Among my ethnographic informants, adolescence is verbally and symbolically performed through other complex social identities, which are over-determined by ‘race’, class, culture, religion, and gender. That is, the linguistic and cultural resources by which adolescents perform ‘youth’ are saturated with larger, hegemonic discursive formations that they alternately reject, reproduce, and elaborate.

My analysis addresses performance as a means of moving beyond conceptualizing “identity” as “a category that individuals inhabit” to analyzing how modes of self-presentation are collaboratively achieved in everyday interaction [after Bucholtz’s critique 1999:7]. I distinguish between performances of social and personal identity and explore how the latter finds expression through the former. By learning, reproducing, subverting, and questioning dominant social identities such as *Arabe*, adolescents craft their own personal identities [cf. Kondo 1990]. In other words, stereotypes of “French,” *Arabe*, and so on are “what people [or adolescents] think with” [Drummond quoted in Williams 1991:127]. Further, it is largely within the context of the nation-state that “minority” identities like *Arabe* and *Mulsulman* become crystallized into ethnicities or racialized groups. Among Muslims in diaspora, Metcalf argues, “[S]elf presentation and contestation with the larger community, within the context of the nation-state, contribute to the formation of an ethnic identity defined as Muslim” [1996:18]. Similarly,

adolescents' notion of a “French” perspective is informed by nationalist movements such as politician Jean-Marie Le Pen’s National Front party [*le Front National*] which purport to speak for a national community (separate from 'foreigners') that is defined by its supposed racial and cultural uniformity, encoded as *français de souche* ["French by roots"].⁸⁰ Thus, for both Le Pen and for these adolescents, Frenchness is interpreted as a racialized identity, rather than one determined by citizenship status.⁸¹ As I will show through close analysis of everyday talk and social interaction, social categories and racialized stereotypes constitute a primary source of cultural fodder that adolescents use to interpret and express not only social inequality, but everyday experiences, including interpersonal conflict and playful intimacy.

The three sections that follow demonstrate the range of discursive and interactional levels at which circulating stereotypes, dominant cultural representations, and social labels operate. In the first section, I analyze adolescents’ response to, in their words, “a scene of racism” and their collaborative negotiation of the stereotypes about Muslims, Arabs, immigrants, and the French that the event evokes. The second section deals with the humorous revoicings of dominant stereotypes and social labels such as *Arabe* and *clandé* (an abbreviated form of *clandestin* or “illegal immigrant”) in order to examine their pragmatic uses in interpersonal communication. The final section looks at the use of French and Arabic cultural symbols in innovative collaborative punning to explore the ways that adolescents both reinforce and subvert categories of social identity through verbal play. I juxtapose these diverse uses of dominant cultural symbols and stereotypes to show the vast range of social experience they articulate for adolescents. In

⁸⁰ As I review in Chapter One, anti-immigrant rhetoric and policy held a predominant place in political platforms among a range of French political figures and parties, from conservatives to liberals during the 1980s and early 1990s [Brubaker 1992, Wihtol de Wenden 1991].

⁸¹ Yet they are by no means alone in this belief; scholars note that "French" national identity is becoming increasingly polarized with respect to a Maghrebi/Muslim 'other' particularly in popular depictions of religious practice such as veiling [cf. Bloul 1996]. Similarly, national identities such as *Algérien* and *Marocain* are essentialized as quasi-ethnic or racialized identities by many among adolescents in my fieldsite. For instance, one informant claimed to be *métisse* [racially 'mixed'] because she had one parent who had migrated to France from Algeria and the other who had migrated from Morocco. In this way, all identities alternately occupied by the adolescents in this study, *Arabe*, *Musulman*, *Algérien*, etc., were subject to essentializing as quasi-ethnicities, presumably in part due to the ways that adolescents experienced their construction as the perpetual 'other' to a 'French' norm.

so doing, I explore how adolescents use dominant representations to bridge the gap between “discourse” as historical formation and “discourse” as unfolding interpersonal communication [Foucault 1978; Brown and Yule 1983, respectively]. Central to my analysis is the process whereby dominant, structural relationships among idealized “types,” (e.g. “Arab,” “French,” “immigrant,”) are reproduced and critiqued through the expression of interpersonal relationships in interaction [Basso 1979].

‘UN SCÈNE DE RACISME’

In the fall of 1999, a group of adolescent girls and I were sitting in a public park, wedged between two apartment buildings in Chemin de l’Ile, a neighborhood in Nanterre composed of low-income housing complexes, or *cités*. Mabrouka and Brigitte, both fourteen, were chatting after school with Naima, only twelve. I knew Mabrouka and Brigitte from the neighborhood association where I tutored English, but had just met Naima. The park was one of the few public spaces unofficially designated for women and girls; a small enclosure provided mothers with children’s climbing toys and the area was less visible from the street than the parking lot where men and adolescent boys would often congregate. On this day, I was tape-recording our informal conversation as part of my dissertation project. As we sat there chatting, the girls and I became aware of an angry dispute occurring 25 feet away, in front of the building facing us. The building’s caretaker, a woman the girls assumed to be of “French” background, was demanding that a group of four or five young men disperse from the front of the building. Refusing to disperse, these men were what other people in the neighborhood call *frères musulmans* (Muslim brothers) or more familiarly *musulmans* or simply *les mus*.⁸² All of these labels are used in the neighborhood to designate young men who have vowed to follow the strict practice of prayer, dietary prescriptions, and abstinence from sexual relations outside marriage that locally constitute becoming a ‘true’ Muslim or “following the straight path” (*suivre le droit chemin*).⁸³ Dressed in traditional North African religious clothing, wearing skullcaps and the long robes called *foqia* over their street

⁸² While the expression “Frères Musulmans” or “Muslim Brothers” in some contexts is used to denote political affiliation with the Muslim Brotherhood, the term was also liberally used to refer to any devout Muslim that strictly adhered to Islamic principles for a pious lifestyle. Founded in Egypt at the turn of the century by Sayad Al Kutub, the Muslim Brotherhood today is an international Islamist organization working on a variety of political and social issues. To my knowledge, however, the Muslim Brotherhood was not an active organization in Chemin de l’Ile.

⁸³ For women, the practice of covering one’s hair or wearing *hijeb* holds a similar symbolic function. However, I never heard women referred to as *les mus* or *soeurs musulmanes* (Muslim sisters). This may be because, to my knowledge, few local women veiled while I conducted my fieldwork, and because women tended to pray at home such that ‘the devout Muslim woman’ had not congealed into a social persona in the neighborhood.

clothing, the group had just come from the local “mosque” (a prayer room in an adjacent building). When these young men did not move away from the building at the caretaker’s urging, she pushed a man in the group on the shoulder. Shortly after this incident, the group did leave the front of the building, walking together and grumbling to us as they passed that the caretaker was “drunk.”⁸⁴

Although we were sitting too far away from the conflict for me to pick it up on tape, I was able to record the reactions that it provoked in the girls sitting near me. From our ensuing conversation, I analyze the girls’ interpretations of the causes and implications of the conflict, as well as the shape the narrative takes as the girls retell it to me and to other adolescents. These interpretations and retellings are interesting for several reasons, which I will develop in the analysis below. In the first excerpt, the girls develop an analysis of “racism” that establishes a basic conflict between “the French” and “Muslims,” which is later extended to a conflict between “the French” and national groups, including Algerians, as well as racially defined groups, specifically Arabs. At no point does Mabrouka, Naima, or Brigitte identify as “French”; rather, together, they articulate a generic non-French position by virtue of their distinct “immigrant” backgrounds. However, as I will revisit below, each girl has a particular and indirect relationship to “immigration,” in that Naima’s parents were both originally from Algeria, Mabrouka’s father originally from Morocco and her mother from Algeria, and Brigitte’s father originally from Germany and her grandmother from Portugal. In the transcript, each speaker is indicated by the first letter of their name; likewise, my speech is indicated by “C.”

⁸⁴ This type of open conflict is reminiscent of Bourdieu's description of other low-income housing projects in *Weight of the World* as "places which bring together people who have nothing in common and force them to live together, either in mutual ignorance and incomprehension or else in latent or open conflict" [1999:3].

Example 3.1: Drug Addicts vs. Muslims

M 1	la gardienne elle est en panique	the caretaker is freaking out
2	tellement elle est raciste,	she's so racist
3	elle voit plein de musulmans	she sees tons of Muslims
N 4	ouais c'est vrai	yeah it's true
5	et en plus les frères musulmans ils respectent	and plus Muslim brothers give respect
6	et quand c'est des voyous, ils s'en foutent	and when it's hoods, they don't care
7	c'est ça que je comprends pas chez les gens	that's what I don't understand about people
C 8	mm	mm
N 9	c'est vrai! attends!	it's true! wait!
10	elle croit que c'est des terro-	she thinks they're terrorists
11	t'as vu?	did you see?
12	j'vous ai dit quand c'est les-	I told you when it's the-
13	hé HE! sur le Qur'an -	Hey HEY! On the Qur'an-
M 14	oh la la [yelling in background]	Oh my!
N 15	t'as vu je te dis	see, I'm telling you
16	que quand c'est des drogués	that when it's drug addicts
17	ils disent rien aux petits français	they say nothing to the little French kids
18	les drogués hein? ça ça m'énerve ça	drug addicts, huh? that, that bugs me
M 19	t'as vu?	did you see?
N 20	je- je t'ai dit hein?	I-I told you huh?
21	on t'as dit Chantal	we told you Chantal
22	quand c'est les petits drogués	when it's little drug addicts
23	sur le Qur'an elle les laisse	on the Qur'an she leaves them alone
24	wallah elle les laisse	by god she leaves them alone
25	et là quand c'est eux	and now, when it's them
26	elle leur geule dessus là	she yells at them there
M 27	aaah [caretaker pushes a man]	ahhh
N 28	en plus les musulmans ils re-	and plus Muslims they re-
M 29	hiih!	hiih!
N 30	elle a dit quoi? elle a dit quoi?	what did she say? what did she say?
M 31	elle l'a [[tapé!	she hit him
B	[[elle l'a tapé	she hit him
32	elle l'a poussé	she pushed him
33	elle lui a fait ça [demonstrates]	she did that to him
M 34	elle le sait qu'i peut pas frapper, c'est pour ça	she knows they can't hit [her], that's why

35	elle le sait qu'i peut pas frapper	she knows they can't hit [her]
N 36	ouais par'c'que elle sait que les musulmans,	yeah because she knows that Muslims
37	i tappent pas	they don't hit
38	nous, les musulmans	we, Muslims
39	les hommes, ce qu'ils respectent le plus	the men, those whom they respect the most
40	c'est les vieux	it's the old men
41	les femmes	the women
42	et les enfants	and the children
43	les femmes tu peux pas les taper	you can't hit women
44	tu p'pas l- lever la main contre elles	you can't raise a hand against them

This excerpt shows the girls' and my initial reaction to the dispute between the *gardienne* [caretaker] and *les frères musulmans* [Muslim brothers] and our ensuing interpretations. When Naima and Mabrouka observe that the caretaker is *en panique* ['freaking out'] in line 1, they attribute her anger to the group of "Muslim brothers" standing before the building. Naima's comparison of the caretaker's treatment of *voyous* [delinquents or 'hoods'] and *drogués* [drug addicts] as better than that of Muslims is representative not only of the urban landscape in which both are local characters, but also a commentary the degree to which the caretaker is "racist." Regarded by adolescents as one of the most reviled and stigmatized personas in the neighborhood, evoking *le drogué* serves to cast the caretaker as particularly unfair to Muslims, whom she mistakenly views as *les terros* ["terrorists"] in line 10. Naima and the others argue the ignorance of the caretaker's position, since, from their perspective, Muslims are "respectful" [line 5] and non-violent [line 36-44]. Furthermore, Mabrouka and Naima reason, the caretaker obviously understands that Muslims are non-violent and is taking advantage of this fact since she has dared to push one of the men [line 27].

Naima's valorizing depiction of Muslims draws upon the notion of "respect," a central cultural trope among adolescents in the neighborhood that I will analyze in detail in Chapters Four and Five. In a creative adaptation and reinterpretation the Arabic notion **ḥshuma** (modesty/honor) [cf. Abu-Lughod 1986], adolescents in Chemin de l'Ile discursively construct "respect" as a major axis of cultural difference between Muslim and French values and behavior. In the particular depiction Naima employs here,

“respect” is constructed hierarchically; old men are the most respected, followed by women and children. Adult men are, instead, themselves subject to the rules of “respect,” in that they must confer “respect” to those who are (and whom they wish to mark as) more socially vulnerable than they, namely elderly men, women, and children.⁸⁵

At stake in both the original conflict between the caretaker and the Muslim men as well as in the girls’ subsequent interpretation is who can rightfully occupy space, both literally and metaphorically, in front of the building and within French national borders. As I will demonstrate, in our subsequent discussion of the conflict, determining who is the rightful ‘owner’ of (French) space is extended from the local space of the neighborhood to a discussion of “France” as a national space. For example, in the next excerpt, our discussion turns to interpreting the right of Muslims to occupy both space in the *cit * and in France generally.

⁸⁵ While this construction of ‘respect’ differs considerably from traditional notions of *hshuma*, the similarity can be summarized as a young man’s social standing (“honor”) is contingent upon his preserving the dignity (“shame”) of those who have less access to social standing, namely elderly men, women, and children.

Example 3.2: Racism and the Cité

M 45	hé elle a dit qu'elle va voté pour Le Pen pour nous dégager	hey-she said she's going to vote for Le Pen to get rid of us
N 46	bah [elle] va se faire foutre ce qu'elle va voter	well [she can] fuck herself what she voted
47	[mimes spitting]	[mimes spitting]
48	et même qu'elle vote pour Le Pen	and even if she votes for Le Pen
49	qu'est ce que ça va faire	what is that going to do?
50	ils pourraient jamais nous renvoyer	they could never send us back
51	on est plus que eux	there are more of us
52	ils pourront jamais	they could never
53	moi j'te dis je t- je t-	me, I'm telling you, I'm I'm
54	ils pourront jamais	they could never
55	elle est dingue hadi ⁸⁶	she is crazy that one
56	là-celle là	that one there
C 57	pourquoi elle est aussi fâchée?	why is she so angry?
N 58	parce que- elle est raciste	because- she is racist
59	elle n'aime pas les musulmans	she doesn't like Muslims
B 60	bah qu'est [[ce qu'elle fait-	well what [[is she doing-
61	qu'est ce qu'elle fait dans une cité alors?	what is she doing is a cité then?
C 62	[[bah elle est mal barrée dans le quartier là	[[well she's bad off in this neighborhood

In this excerpt, Mabrouka reintroduces the conflict to the conversation by claiming she has overheard the caretaker say she would vote “Le Pen” to get rid of “us” (*nous dégager*) in line 45. Mabrouka carefully whispers the overheard comment to Naima, seemingly to highlight both the inherent violence of the caretaker’s statement as well as its potential for creating violence if circulated. (In the transcript, Mabrouka’s speech appears in smaller font to represent her whispered voice.) However, by repeating the caretaker’s words to Naima and subsequently other adolescents, Mabrouka appeals to the socially powerful genre of rumor. Mabrouka not only lays claim to authoritative knowledge about the building’s caretaker, she also begins to circulate this knowledge among her peers, for whom rumors are given central importance for making and breaking social alliances. As well, in the neighborhood’s physically and socially close space, rumor is an inordinately powerful mechanism of social control in so far that many of the

11,000 inhabitants are connected through family networks and local institutions such as associations, subsidized housing complexes, and schools.

The caretaker's supposed threat to vote for Le Pen, unleashes a powerful symbol among these adolescents, who are painfully aware that the politician called for the deportation of all immigrants from France. Despite the seeming implausibility of Le Pen's proposition, it is clear the degree to which his inflammatory rhetoric lives on, both through its strategic reproduction by the caretaker and in the girls' subsequent revoicing of this "threat" to each other. Much as the caretaker's threat frames Muslim men's supposed misuse of the street as an offense punishable by deportation, our own conversation begins to make connections between local and national space. Naima's response, "They could never send us back, there are more of us" [lines 50-51], reproduces and further contextualizes the struggle over space at a national level. In addition, Naima further solidifies the social dichotomy of "us" versus "them" by claiming that Muslims (*on* or "we") are more numerous than Le Pen supporters (*eux* or "them"). Thus the girls' collaborative interpretation of the conflict evolves from one concerning "Muslim brothers" and "racists" to an inclusive discussion of "us" [Muslims] versus "them" [racists], that is extended in the next excerpt to "the French" generally.

Another discursive parallel between our discussion and the initial conflict involves the strategic revoicing of dominant stereotypes. In a pattern that mimics the caretaker's strategic reference to anti-immigrant rhetoric, Naima reinforces the "social panic" [Hall 1978] inherent to Le Pen's discourse by implying that Muslims are indeed taking over France: "There are more of us [than them]." In a similarly derisive tone, Brigitte and I co-construct the stereotype that the neighborhood and *cités* in general are "full" of Muslims: "What is she doing in a *cité* then?" and "Well, she's bad off in this neighborhood" in lines 60-62. Chapter One addresses the racialization of *cités* across France as the social product of a confluence of poverty, exclusion, and inequitable housing laws. In this instance, Brigitte and I appeal to the stereotypical image of the *cité*

⁸⁶ Normally, this Arabic term would take the feminine form, **hadia**, but, as I mention in the Introduction, adolescents do not always follow conventional rules for gender agreement.

as a racialized space to claim the supposed predominance of Muslim residents as proof of their right to this space.

As both non-Muslims, however, Brigitte and I collaboratively use this stereotype to index a prevalent joking genre among these adolescents, who take every opportunity to acknowledge and reify ethnic, religious, and national⁸⁷ difference among their peers. Social labels and related insults are often used as a means to engage in a joking style popularly called *traiter*, literally ‘to treat’ [someone], often by marking a peer as a racialized other. As I will demonstrate in subsequent sections in the present chapter, adolescents employ an extensive vocabulary for describing racialized, cultural, and religious difference and to symbolically position themselves and others. Above and in the excerpt, however, the girls discursively construct themselves in alignment with a generic “non-French” identity to collectively position themselves against the “racist” caretaker.

Example 3.3: “And then they wonder why...people don’t like the French”

B 63	mais c’est pas bien, regard après	but it’s not good, look afterwards
64	ils se demandent pourquoi on aime pas les fr-	they wonder why we don’t like the Fr-
65	pourquoi les gens ils aiment pas les français	why people don’t like the French
66	regard comment ils parlent	look how they talk
C 67	mm	mm
N 68	t’as vu parce qu’ils nous aiment pas	see, because they don’t like us,
	[[c’est eux ils aiment	[[it’s them they like
M 69	[[oh la la, et là ils sont en train de nous traiter	[[oh my, and there they are dissing us
70	ils sont en train de nous traiter	they are dissing us now
N 71	eux ils aiment personne les français	they don’t like anyone, the French
72	parce que ça y est on est dans leur pays	because that’s it we are in their country
73	regard, attends, je vais t’expliquer	look, wait, I’m going to explain to you
74	mon père il m’a dit	my father, he told me
75	il m’a tout raconté	he told me everything
76	c’est qui s’est passé dans la guerre mondiale et tout	that happened during the world war and all
77	c’est eux ils sont venus nous chercher pour eux-	it’s them who came to get us for them-
78	eux sont venus nous chercher	it’s them [who] came to get us

⁸⁷ Adolescents' self assigned categories of "nationality" are defined by their parents' national origin, and so are figurative in use.

79	dans le pays pour le pétrol	in the country for the oil
80	après maintenant ils parlent	and now they talk
B 81	ouais mais il y en a	yes but there are some of them
82	hé hé Naima	hey hey Naima
83	j'avoue y a des français qui sont bien	I swear some of the French are good
C 84	ouais bien sur	yes of course
N 85	la vérité moi, il y a des français,	the truth, for me, there are some French
86	comment je les aime bien!	I like them so much!
87	t'sais ils respectent et tout	you know they respect and everything
B 88	ouais mais c'est pas tous les mêmes	yeah but they aren't all the same
89	je veux dire c'est pas tous les mêmes	I mean they aren't all the same
N 90	y a même des français	there are even some French
91	ils se convertissent à l'Islam	they convert to Islam

In this portion of the discussion, Brigitte describes her own and others' dislike of "the French" as justified by the way the French talk about others: "But it's not good, look, afterwards they wonder why we don't like the Fr- why people don't like the French. Look how they talk." [lines 63-66] In this example, Brigitte initially personally claims disliking the French herself ("They wonder why we don't like the Fr-") but then repairs⁸⁸ to claim that the more generic category "people" don't like the French ("why people don't like the French"). Brigitte's shift in discursive responsibility may be attributed to her own complicated identity positioning—although, in her family, only her grandmother is of Portuguese origin, she self-identifies as "Portuguese." Alternatively, her correction may be related to my presence as an adult and outsider. In any case, her negative assessment of "the French" is quickly corroborated by both Naima and Mabrouka, the first of whom responds, "You see? Because they don't like us. It's them[selves] they like," [line 68-69]. As for Mabrouka, she refers back to the building caretaker's discussion with two or three non-Muslim bystanders, "Oh my! And there they are now, dissing [*traiter*] us. They are dissing us now" [lines 69-70].

⁸⁸Repair, as discussed by Levinson [1983], is clarification or correction of a sequence of talk, and is a common way that speakers re-orient themselves to their own words.

Naima continues, “They don’t like anyone, the French, because that’s it, we are in their country” [lines 71-2]. Naima thus designates France as “their country” and not her own, even though in a previous example she points out her own and other Muslims’ right to remain in France: “They could never send us back, we are more [numerous] than they.” Furthermore, Naima describes the French as responsible for bringing Algerian immigrants into France and then for not accepting them: “They came to get us...and now they talk” [lines 77-80]. Naima bases her claim in a description of the history of labor recruitment from Algeria, which the French government actively pursued from the period after WWII until the oil crisis in 1973. In so doing, she locates responsibility for why Algerians are currently in France with the French.

This discussion thus shows the girls co-constructing the category “the French” and their own oppositional non-French (and ‘anti-French’) stance, despite their various backgrounds (Muslim and non-Muslim, Algerian, Portuguese-German, and Algerian-Moroccan). While the reasons for the girls’ identification as non-French are complex--it seems alternately tied to identifying as Muslim, as being of immigrant parentage, and as “Algerian,”--the justification for their criticisms of “the French” are based upon the girls’ numerous accounts of experiences of exclusion and prejudice that the girls develop over the course of the discussion: “She’s racist. She doesn’t like Muslims,” “The French don’t like us,” “And then they wonder why...people don’t like the French--look how they talk,” “They don’t like anyone, the French.” In the discursive logic of the girls’ discussion, identifying as non-French is tied to claims that the French are fundamentally against the non-French, which the girls collaboratively construct as a shifting identity, either through being Muslim, “Algerian,” or as having immigrant parents. Thus the girls are essentializing “Frenchness” as an identity that precludes the subject positions they claim to occupy, namely, “Muslim,” “Algerian,” “Portuguese,” and *d’origine immigré* (having immigrant parents).

The girls’ construction of Frenchness as an exclusionary social category demonstrates that they interpreting nationality in terms of religious, cultural, and racialized difference, in a similar way that anti-immigrant rhetoric appeals to “culture” to

express racism and prejudice.⁸⁹ Thus, much like “cultural” differences drawn in Le Pen’s rhetoric, the girls describe social distinctions that attain essential difference, although they based upon religion and national origin. For example, at a later point in our conversation Brigitte claims that she can gossip about another Portuguese girl because “all Portuguese are cousins.” Mabrouka routinely describes herself as “métisse” [mixed race] because she is half “Algerian” and half “Moroccan” by parentage. It is also striking that prejudice is named and interpreted as “racism” in the girls’ interpretations of the conflict between the caretaker and the Muslim men.

Yet the above example also shows the girls re-evaluating their negative judgement of “the French” as inherently racist, even as the girls continue to distinguish themselves from the social identity. Brigitte contradicts her initial assessment of the French by appealing to Naima with the words, “I swear, there are French people who are good” [line 89]. Even girls’ positive re-evaluation distinguishes themselves from the social category “the French” and by building consensus about “them.” Of interest too is the reintroduction of the trope of “respect,” which is used here as a caliber to separate the “good” French from the others: “The truth—[for] me, there are some French--how much I like them! You know, they respect [us] and everything” [lines 85-87] “Respect” is constructed in this instance as the French’s acceptance of Muslims and their values. This point is further developed by Naima in her acknowledgement that some French people even convert to Islam, which she depicts as the utmost form of “respect” [lines 90-91].

The final excerpt shows how the girls re-narrate an account of the dispute to Khaled, a thirteen-year old boy of Algerian parentage who has just arrived. (For the sake of brevity, I have left out some of the earlier retellings of the conflict.) The example demonstrates the girls urging Khaled to “take sides” with respect to the social groups and labels they have established as the conflict’s cause.

⁸⁹ This point is argued by Balibar [1991], who claims that new forms of racism in France are articulated through supposed cultural differences that are accorded essential qualities.

Example 3.4: “She insulted you as much as him”

M 91 regard, elle est en panique	look, she is freaking out
N 92 elle est hami ⁹⁰	she is hot ['excited' or 'agitated']
93 ça y est, il t’as fait quoi?	it’s over, what did he do to you?
94 l’autre t’a fait quoi?	what did the guy do to you?
K 95 oh c’est bon aussi	oh that’s enough
N 96 moi j’s’rais elle-	me, if I were her-
M 97 “c’est bon?” écoute	“that’s enough?” listen
98 elle t’a insulté	she insulted you
99 elle t’as insulté autant que lui hein?	she insulted you as much as him huh?
100 elle a dit “j’aurais su,	she said “if I had known,
101 j’aurais voté Le Pen	I would have voted for Le Pen”
102 vous auraient ka’b ” ⁹¹	[so that] you would get out of here ”
K 103 elle a voté Le Pen quoi, pas que-	[so] what? She voted Le Pen, not that-
M 104 nan elle a dit	no, she said
105 “si j’aurais su, j’aurais voté Le Pen”	“if I had known, I would’ve voted Le Pen”
N 106 elle est hami elle est hami	she’s excited , she’s excited
107 moi j’serai à sa place, j’aurais honte!	me, in her place, I would be ashamed!
M 108 bon Chantal tu viens d’assister	well Chantal, you’ve just experienced
109 à une scène de racisme	a scene of racism
N 110 à sa place j’aurais honte	in her place, I’d be ashamed
111 elle a même tapé le mec	she even hit the guy
K 112 t’as enregistré Chantal?	did you record it, Chantal?

In this exchange, Khaled seems to want to question the girls’ criticism of the caretaker: “[So] what- she voted Le Pen, not that--” [line 103]. However, Khaled is interrupted as Mabrouka criticizes him for not taking a stance against the caretaker: “She insulted you. She insulted you as much as him, huh?” Mabrouka thus defends Naima’s

⁹⁰ *Hami* (Arabic) was translated alternately by adolescents as ‘happy’ and ‘excited’.

⁹¹ **Ka’b** may originate from the Arabic term for “heel,” as it is used as an insulting way for someone to leave, as in the expression “ka’b chez toi” (‘go home’). However, the term was alternately used in the

discursive right to retell the incident (even though Khaled is clearly tired of hearing it) and her own right to exact a particular reaction from Khaled regarding the incident, with respect to his own identity as a Muslim. Again, the motif of “respect” resurfaces in this interaction, since Mabrouka is constructing the conflict as requiring a response from Khaled, implying that any self-respecting person would respond to such an insult. Mabrouka’s position is in synch with the local interactional aesthetic of these adolescents, who express the cultural motif of “respect” by expecting each other to meet insult with insult, or lose face. The notion of “respect” is also intrinsic to Naima’s response in this excerpt, since she repeatedly proclaims how “shameful” the caretaker’s behavior is.

In addition to the moral authority that criticizing “racist” behavior confers to Mabrouka, this example shows how speakers gain narrative authority through naming events, e.g. “a racist scene,” and reproducing them as stories [Briggs and Bauman 1992, Hanks 1989]. In the act of naming, constructing, and reproducing the “racist” event, Mabrouka employs the power of “entextualization,” or the process whereby an event becomes a ‘text’ that is easily reproduced in other contexts [Briggs and Bauman 1992:148]. Similarly, Khaled’s question to me, “Did you record [it] Chantal,” shows the technological representation of an event is another way it becomes transferable to other contexts. In this case, both retelling and recording the event are ways these adolescents can name and critique the “racism” they have observed, to denounce it, and to thereby gain a measure of personal and group “respect” in the face of insult.

In the following section of the chapter, I explore the ways that speakers ironically reproduce stereotypes for strategic uses in interaction. In particular, my analysis deals with adolescents revoicing self-referential stereotypes to make assessments about each other and themselves in the immediate interactional context.

expression “je t’ai **ka‘b**,” meaning ‘I got one over on you’. Both the term and its usage are particular to speakers in France; the same term in Standard Arabic means ‘heel’ (of a shoe) or ‘cube’.

“SANS PROBLÈME” OR “CENT PROBLÈMES”? : REVOICING STEREOTYPES ABOUT LES ARABES

The above pun--*sans problème* “no problem” or *cent problèmes* “one hundred problems” is indicative of the doubly-voiced utterances discussed in this section, namely the strategic re-voicing of stereotypes about ‘Arabs’ by ‘Arabs’ themselves. Moustafa, who told me the pun, had recently immigrated to France from Algeria and was living with his sister, Aïcha; his brother-in-law; their five children; and occasionally me, the itinerant anthropologist. After observing a conflict between Aïcha and one of her sons, Moustafa said to me quietly in the kitchen, “you know, Chantal, when a French person is asked how he’s doing, he responds ‘*sans problème*’ or ‘no problem.’ When an Arab is asked how he’s doing, he also responds ‘*cent problèmes*,’ but what he’s really saying is that he’s experiencing one hundred problems at that moment.” Moustafa’s pun illuminated the conflicting social binds that he was experiencing living at his sister’s home, and represented the double bind of Arabic social structure more generally. One was expected to demonstrate that the social obligations and tensions experienced living among kin were “no problem,” although, in reality, the situation actually posed “100 problems.”

Yet Moustafa’s problems extended far beyond family obligations. As a recent arrival to France on a tourist visa, his desire to remain in the country was continually threatened by immigration requirements and a lack of work. In a fashion similar to the ways that adolescents of North African parentage verbally position themselves in relation to a homogenized and monolithic “French” in the previous section, Moustafa frames his joke as being about “Arabs” versus a “French” standard. In constructing the categories “French” and “Arab” as distinct social identities, he simultaneously normalizes their social positions in relation to everyday experience: there are those who have “no problems” (the “French”) and those who have “100 problems” (the “Arabs”). In Moustafa’s case, the pun undoubtedly referred to the “100 problems” he’d experienced as a newly arrived immigrant to France, where the “Arab” and “immigrant” are as equally stigmatized as they are semantically interchangeable in dominant French discourse.

Like more the formal verbal performances that are central to linguistic anthropological analyses, joking (a distinctive type of performance in and of itself) “provides a frame that invites critical reflection on communicative processes” as well as social processes [Bauman and Briggs 1990:60]. Reminiscent of the Apache “whiteman” jokes that Basso [1979] analyzed, Moustafa’s joke illustrates both the personal relationships at hand--here, between Moustafa and his close kin--and the structurally determined social relationships at large, “Arab” versus “French.” However, such humorous revoicings of stereotypes differ in an important way from Basso’s “whiteman” jokes. They are voicings of self-referential stereotypes and a socially powerful, yet “dangerous” way to foreground and question dominant French representations of Arabs and immigrants [ibid.]. The ironic revoicing of self-referential stereotypes reveals speakers simultaneously speaking from idealized “French” and “Arab” subject positions. As such, utterances that evoke dominant stereotypes are akin to the double-voiced or “dialogic” speech that Bakhtin discusses [1981] and reminiscent of the experiences of double consciousness that DuBois [1969] and Gilroy [1993] describe.⁹²

Despite their innovative qualities, collaborative performances of identity demonstrate the scripted quality of a well-worn plot or scenario. Speakers fashion playful exchanges out of phrases, images, and tropes that are evocative of past identity performances in order to jointly revisit and newly construct familiar territory. And yet when identity performances are humorous, as is the case in this section, an element of “surprise” is key to engage other speakers. For a collaborative performance to succeed it requires both a lapse of literal interpretation and a certain amount of transparency; the recipient of an initial bid to perform identity must ‘get’ the play and then further elaborate in a fashion subtle enough to not ruin the ‘joke’. In this way, playful exchanges in which social identity is collaboratively performed move between “the literal and the metaphorical, between surface and latent meanings” [Gates after Mitchell-Kernan 1988:82].

⁹² In the words of Hanks, dialogized speech voices multiple perspectives by incorporating “a variety of viewpoints that may be artfully played off one another...or may fail to coalesce into a unitary construction at all” [1989:114].

Stereotypes about Arabs were frequently used among my informants to criticize, and the stereotypes themselves were often negative depictions of Arabs. I observed a rare positive use of the term “Arab” stereotype during tutoring at *Cerise*, the neighborhood association where I conducted much of my research and audio recording. In an effort to get a student to work independently, Sami, a mentor of Moroccan parentage said, “Work a bit there instead of calling me over. That’s how it is with Arabs. Are you an Arab or not?” (*Travail toi un peu là au lieu de m’appeler. C’est ça avec les arabes. T’es une arabe ou pas?*) Here the dominant French stereotype that “Arabs are lazy” is countered with a positive construction of Arabs as hardworking--a ‘real’ Arab would work harder. Nonetheless, Sami still uses this positive stereotype to assess and critique the student’s behavior, showing the normative powers inherent to cultural and racial stereotyping [Williams 1991:127-128].

The collaborative performances that I address in the current section and in the final section occurred at the neighborhood association mentioned previously. Referred to simply as *Cerise* (‘Cherry’), the association hosted free tutoring sessions every night for local middle school students, most of whom were between the ages of 12 and 16. The vast majority of students who attended the association during my fieldwork were of North African, generally Algerian parentage, and so would be considered, in dominant French parlance, *Arabe*. However, adolescents rarely used the term *Arabe* to refer to themselves. Rather, adolescents generally used their parents’ national origin to describe their social identity even to non-Arabs, e.g., “I’m Algerian.” Alternatively, for cultural insiders including children of North African descent and other neighborhood kids, adolescents would indicate the town where their parents immigrated from to indicate social identity, for example, *je suis Marghnaoui* (I’m from Marghnia, Algeria).

As I mentioned earlier, among the adolescents in Chemin de l’Ile, *Arabe* and certain other social labels, such as *clandé* or “illegal immigrant” demonstrate a high degree of pre-determined semantic meaning, that is, generally a negative connotation. Yet these social labels and related stereotypes were used for a daunting number of speech acts beyond the descriptive function, including teasing, joking, criticizing, complementing, insulting, enforcing social norms, cajoling, and complaining. The

relative pragmatic richness of social labels such as *Arabe* demonstrates that they are used to index social relations and ideologies that are central to racial, social, and political landscapes, both at local and national levels.

In addition to showing how self-referential stereotypes are used to construct in-group identity among adolescents of Algerian heritage, I demonstrate how these joking routines implicitly foreground the stigmatized status of Arabs and immigrants within French society generally. Algerian-French adolescents' multiple uses of "Arab" jokes demonstrate how similar stereotypes are used to foreground social tensions within the local Algerian community and within French society generally. In this way, performative uses of *Arabe*, among other social labels, are central to formulating and expressing social norms and cultural critiques, both within the immediate interpersonal context and broader social contexts.

In the first example, several adolescent girls are doing homework together in the association when Samia asks her classmates for correction fluid or 'white-out'. When she finds none, Samia jokingly teases her fellow classmates by voicing a pejorative stereotype about *les Arabes*. It should be noted that, being of Algerian parentage, Samia is just as 'Arab' as the other girls present.

Example 3.5

- | | | | |
|---|-------------|---|----------------|
| 1 | Samia | [looking inside Mounia's pencil bag]
attends je te prend un tippex
<i>wait I'm borrowing your white out</i> | |
| 2 | Mounia | j'en ai pas
<i>I don't have any</i> | |
| 3 | Samia | hé hé ah ah Hourriya t'as un tippex?
<i>hey hey ah ah Hourriya d'you have white-out?</i> | |
| 4 | Hourriya | [shakes her head 'no'] | |
| 5 | Samia-----> | les Arabes ils ont rien!
<i>Arabs don't have anything!</i> | [Samia laughs] |

In this exchange, Samia twice requests white-out from her fellow classmates (lines 1 & 3), but is twice refused (lines 2 & 4). Her response, “Arabs don’t have anything!” (line 5) shows Samia using a negative depiction of “Arabs” to serve as a criticism of her peers for not having the desired white-out. The example’s complexity lies in understanding how a negative, generic statement about “Arabs” stands in as a personal critique of Mounia and Hourriya, and furthermore, why Samia finds her own use of this statement humorous. By invoking the social label *Arabes* as a way to tease individual peers, Samia strategically voices a social category and attendant stereotype to convey a personalized message in a face-to-face context. An interesting aspect of this example then, is that the re-voicing of stereotypes is a vehicle for both constructing group membership (i.e. ‘you are Arab’) and to establish and enforce social norms (‘you should have white-out’).

Yet Samia is as much a member of the group she categorizes as the other girls and so her comment is clearly voiced with irony. For her ‘tongue in cheek’ comment to come off without insult, participants must understand that Samia is re-voicing a pejorative comment about a group with which she is herself affiliated. And yet her use of the non-inclusive pronoun *ils* (‘they’) to refer to “Arabs” shows Samia referring to a previous utterance, a stereotype reminiscent again of Le Pen’s rhetoric. Here, as in the other examples in this chapter, the social category *Arabe* is used to evoke and explain experiences of occupying an underprivileged economic and social position—for example, of “having nothing” in the above example, and of not succeeding in French schools in the third example below. In the process, these iterations of the social entity *Arabe* generalize experiences of poverty and discrimination as being contingent upon occupying this racialized position. At a discursive rather than interactional level then, Samia is providing an account for why there is no ‘white-out’ that extends well beyond a mere critique of her friends. In other words, her comment serves to normalize the connection between “having nothing” and being “Arab.”

But the perspective that Samia is only constructing a normalizing account of why there is no ‘white-out’ cannot explain the humor she sees in her own comment. The singsong quality of her voice seems to indicate that she is ironically quoting another

speaker. Furthermore, the brief, matter-of-fact quality of the statement paired with this playful voice quality makes this comment sound like a slogan—a summary of a longer message that encodes meaning through a form of semantic shorthand. In Bakhtinian terms Samia appears to be using dialogized speech, acting as an ironic mouthpiece for the anti-Arab and anti-immigrant rhetoric that is ubiquitous in dominant French discourse. That is, like the racist slogans of Le Pen, Samia’s glib statement stands for something more: a system of power relations between “Arab” and “French” and a quick way to express one’s position in an ongoing racialized conflict. This example, like the others that follow, show speakers strategically using social labels and stereotypes to speak not only to those present but also to larger discourses of racialized difference and inequality in the larger national context.

The second and third examples I address are drawn from a particular event at the association, namely the return of former adult mentors Sami and Momo one evening to the association. Both men had just completed studies in math and computer science at French universities and were in their mid-twenties. Having been born and raised in France like the adolescents they tutored, Sami’s parents were originally from Morocco and Momo’s from Tunisia. The two men were good friends and had attended high school and college together. Their return visit to *Cerise* was an exciting event for the children present that night. Sami, having worked full time for over a year at the association, was close to the children, and Samia, who figures frequently in the examples, was among his favorites. Samia was twelve at the time of the recording and is French of Algerian descent as is the other girl, Mounia.

The excerpt that follows shows a more collaborative interaction in which Samia and Mounia construct discursive connections between stigmatized social labels, i.e. *chomeur* (unemployed person) and *clandé* (illegal immigrant), and Sami and Momo’s supposed laziness. The exchange begins with Samia asking Sami if he misses working at the association.

Example 3.6

- 1 Samia ça vous a manqué Cerise?
did you miss Cerise?
- 2 Sami ouais, bah-
yeah, well-
- 3 Mounia -non en fait i sont i sont contents d'esquiver parce que qu'on les qu'on les
tue=
*-no in fact they're they're happy they split because because we we bug
them=*
- 4 Sami =regarde, on arrive et tout d'suite "les maths! les maths!" Hoh!
=look, we get here and right away "math! math!" Whoa!
- 5 Samia hé tu fais quoi maintenant?
hey what are you doing now?
- 6 Sami j'fais rien
i'm doing nothing
- 7 Samia au chômage=
unemployed=
Chantal =chômage
=unemployed
- 8 Sami [laughs]
- 9 Mounia clandé! [familiar form, "clandestine" is the complete form]
illegal immigrant!
- 10 Momo and Mounia [laughs]
- 11 Momo non, il a les papiers quand même
no, at least he has his papers
- 12 Samia et là tu fais quoi Momo? ha!
and now what are you doing Momo? ha!
- 13 Momo moi? j'fais un stage
me? i'm doing an internship
- 14 Mounia [[de quoi?
in what?
Samia [[où?

where?

15 Momo en informatique
 in computer science

16 Samia **ta'** les chomeurs [**ta'** is a possessive form in Arabic]
 of the unemployed

17 Momo **ta'** les chomeurs
 of the unemployed

[group laughter]

18 Momo un stage ANPE
 a social assistance internship

19 Samia **ta'** un re- ah, réfugié du Kosovo!
 of a re- ah refugee from Kosovo!

In this example, Samia and Mounia tease their former tutors Sami and Momo about their current joblessness by initiating a series of insults regarding unemployment and immigration. The girls and their former tutors collaboratively make symbolic and semantic connections through a chain of emergent derogatory social labels and identities. The exchange begins with Samia's seemingly neutral question to Sami, "Did you miss Cerise?" (line 1), but the interaction quickly takes on a contentious tone, as Mounia accuses Sami and Momo of not having missed them: "No in fact they're, they're happy they split because, because we, we bug them" (line 3). Rather than deny Mounia's claim, Sami counters, "Look, we get here and right away, 'math! math!' Whoa!" (line 4), laying the blame of his purported lack of enthusiasm for *Cerise* with the girls and their mistreatment of Momo and himself. This confrontational tone continues throughout the rest of the exchange as the girls tease Sami and Momo about their current unemployed state. First, Samia takes the opportunity of Sami's admission that he's "doing nothing" (line 6) to reframe his current status as "unemployed." The teasing is humorous because Sami does not fit the stereotypical French image of the "unemployed"; he had just finished a very prestigious Master's degree in math that made him eminently employable in the growing high tech industry in France. While he was indeed without a job at the

moment of the exchange, Sami was taking time off before beginning his search, and subsequently found a high-paying job at a start-up Internet company.

But the calculated misnomer sparks a humorous chain of ironic insults that operate much like dominant stereotypes directed at immigrants and Arabs in France. A single feature or signifier of Sami's identity is singled out and constructed as essential to his person. For example, Samia reframes Sami's admission that he is temporarily out of work as proof that he ranks among the "unemployed." Mounia takes the opportunity to improvise on Samia's theme by simply labeling Sami a *clandé* (line 8), implying that if he's out of work, he must be an illegal immigrant. The term *clandé* is complex in that it combines stereotypes about immigrant status with ignorance, provincialism, and laziness. Another aspect of the term's complexity is pragmatic—it is largely used by adolescents of Algerian descent to refer without irony to recent immigrants from North Africa who are generally single men, and who have come, either legally or illegally, to labor in France, much like Moustafa. But the term is also ironically used among adolescents to refer to each other, although they were born in France and have never immigrated. In this way, *clandé* is similar in meaning and usage to *Arabe*, as it is an insult that has been co-opted from mainstream French stereotypes to index in-group identity [cf. Gumperz 1982b].

The initial encouragement that Samia receives from Sami's laughter (line 8) is repeated after Mounia's comment by Momo's laughter (line 10). Paradoxically, Momo's laughter and subsequent response to Mounia's comment seem to make him vulnerable to the same type of teasing that Sami has just experienced. Momo's corrective intervention on Sami's behalf ("no, he has his papers at least" in line 11) seems to turn the attention toward him, opening him to questioning and criticism by the two girls. For example, when Samia asks Momo what he is doing now, she punctuates her question with a challenging "ha!" as if to note that he has become the new object of teasing. Similarly, Momo's "legitimate" response that he's doing an internship is met with further challenging by both Mounia and Samia, who simultaneously ask "where?" and "in what?" When Momo tries to further legitimize his current status by responding "computer science," Samia counters that he is doing an internship "of the unemployed,"

meaning state-sponsored. Furthermore, Samia uses the colloquial Arabic construction *ta' les chomeurs* ("of the unemployed") to imply that his internship is just a cover for his being unemployed.

Throughout the exchange, there seems to be an intensification of irony in each successive insult. For example, the progression from "unemployed" ---> "illegal immigrant" ---> "Kosovo refugee" seems to convey increasing levels of social stigma in terms of purported "drain" on the French state. Not only does each successive identity seem increasingly socially "pitiful," but also more and more fanciful in relation to the two well-educated and hard working French citizens standing before Samia and Mounia. In a pattern I observed many times, playful teasing and even more aggressive conflicts that initially involved only two speakers--here Samia and Sami--becomes a collaborative performance in which speakers creatively build upon each others' words. Moreover, the intensification of Samia's and Mounia's insults seems to grow with the encouragement she receives from Sami, Momo, and me in the form of laughter, co-construction, recycling their terms.

The third example represents a more elaborate teasing routine that occurred between the same students and mentors just after the above exchange. Here the motif for joking deals with stereotypes about Arabs and education. The exchange begins with Samia asking Sami if he passed his final high school exam, the *bac* or *baccalauréat*. The question is significant for locating Sami's place in the two-tiered French educational system, comprised of academic high school, culminating in the *bac* and university study, and trade school, culminating in a specialized trade degree, the "B.E.P." or *Brevet d'Etudes Professionnels* ('Professional Studies Certificate'). Academic high school presents several advantages, including the symbolic value that the *bac* embodies and the material benefit of gaining access to university study that would normally lead to higher paid, professional jobs. In contrast, trade high school students receive highly specialized training (e.g., carpentry, administrative skills, electronics, etc.) that normally culminates in working immediately at eighteen.

At the time, both Samia and Mounia were attending middle school, the stage at which students are evaluated for their potential to enroll in either academic or trade high

school. As both girls were still at the initial stage of their middle school years, neither had her high school curriculum defined at the time, and so was likely interested in situating herself and others in relation to the French school system. Typical of other low-income neighborhoods, Chemin de l’Ile has a low percentage of students who go on to academic high school in relation to the national average.⁹³ The below exchange is thus, in part, an effort on the part of Samia and Mounia to situate Sami and Momo within the French school system and in relation to how they, their classmates, and other ‘Arabs’ tend to fare in the public French school system.

Example 3.6

- 1 Samia t’as eu ton bac toi [to Sami]
you passed your high school exam
- 2 Sami moi j’ai tué mon bac [“got a really great grade”]
I killed my bac
- 3 Samia---> c’est rare que tu verrais un Arabe euh=
it’s rare that you see an Arab uh=
- 4 Sami =avec le bac hein?
=with the bac huh?
- 5 Mounia bah si, pourquoi?
yes you do, why?
- 6 Samia ma cousine elle l’a
my cousin has it
- 7 Momo non plaisante pas, Sami il veut se marier avec elle
no don’t joke, Sami wants to get married with her
- 8 Mounia ils envoient tous les **ḥala** en BEP
*they send all the **screw ups** to trade school*
- 9 Samia ah no, **balak** il l’a connaît
oh no, watch out [in case] he knows her

⁹³ Personal communication, Michel Giraud, Mayor’s Director of Neighborhood Programs, Chemin de l’Ile.

[3.0 second pause]

- 10 Samia alors euh
 so uh
- 11 Momo Sami vas-y maries-toi avec sa cousine
 Sami go ahead, marry her cousin
- 12 elle a le bac, vas-y
 she has her bac, go ahead
- 13 vas-y, maries toi avec elle
 go ahead, get married to her
- 14 Sami ah oui c'est la première je crois, c'est la première rebeu qui a eu le bac
 oh yeah it's the first I think, it's the first Arab who got the bac
- 15 c'est grave
 that's serious
- 16 Samia nan mais vous êtes pas marrants là
 no but you are not funny there
- 17 Sami [laughs]
- 18 Samia **Llah na'l shaytan**
 God curse the Devil

In a pattern that mimics the playful, yet confrontational tone of the last example, this interactional sequence begins by Samia asking Sami if he received his *bac* (line 1), a question might be interpreted as a challenge. Sami brags back that he “killed” his *bac* (meaning that he got an excellent grade), thus responding to Samia’s challenge in kind. Samia then begins to voice a negative assessment about *les Arabes* and the *bac* in line 3, (“It’s rare that you see an Arab uh=”), but stops short, at which point Sami co-constructs the stereotype: “=with the bac, huh?” in line 4. Much as in the first example, Samia is using a social label and attendant stereotype to voice a commentary both about the immediate interactional context and the larger social context. On the immediate interactional level, Samia seems to be re-voicing the common stereotype in order to tease

Sami by undermining his triumph over the *bac*. In a sense, in response to his reported success on the exam, Samia ‘lumps’ Sami in with the (here) negatively constructed category “Arabs,” just as he tries to distinguish himself as having done exceptionally well. On yet another level, however, Samia is forming a broader assessment about ‘Arabs’, thus “testing for shared knowledge” [Ziv 1984] about the *bac*, and her own and her peers’ chances for success in the French educational system.

Here as in the first example, the social identity *Arabe* is evoked to note and explain a lack—in this case, a lack of educational success—which serves to explain this experience as being contingent upon a particular ethnic positioning in the French context. And here again, Samia’s playful, teasing tone would also suggest the presence of a certain level of irony in her commentary—she may not be earnestly voicing this stereotype as ‘truth’ so much as to make a strategic move to counter Sami’s confidence. This time, however, Samia is challenged for her categorical statement. Mounia, in line 5, directly challenges Samia’s claim: “Yes they do, why?” To Mounia’s challenge, Samia revises her own categorical assessment with the example of her cousin, another “Arab” who has also received the *bac* in line 6. However, her admission initiates a new round of teasing, during which both Sami and Momo mock the naivete of her words. Momo claims that Sami wants to marry Samia’s cousin (line 7) because she has her *bac*, simultaneously managing to tease Samia for her limited notions of ‘Arabs’ and Sami for purportedly being so naive as to see the *bac* as unusual enough to be grounds for marriage. Mounia, still earnestly engaged in the discussion of why many Arab students don’t achieve the *bac*, presents an argument for why that is the case: “They send all the screw ups [**hala**] to trade school.” Meanwhile, Samia only worsens her situation by worrying aloud, “oh no, maybe he knows her,” (line 9), probably meaning that Samia doesn’t want to talk about her cousin out of respect for her in the event that Sami and Momo know her.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ While it seems counter-intuitive that Samia would rather say less about her cousin if Sami and Momo knew her, a social etiquette of “respect” in the neighborhood dictates the protection of one’s relatives’ and friends’ reputations by withholding information about them from non-family and acquaintances. This interpretation of Samia’s comment was proposed to me by my research assistant who had native linguistic and cultural competence. Furthermore, this interpretation seems consistent with my observations of other

As Samia persists in depicting her cousin as a rarity, Momo reframes his teasing comment as a repeated entreaty to Sami that he marry her: “Sami go ahead, marry her cousin” (lines 11-13). Sami responds in a similar tone: “Oh yeah it’s the first I think, it’s the first Arab who got the *bac*. That’s serious.” By collaboratively performing a parody of Samia’s naivete, Sami and Momo make a thinly veiled criticism of her assumptions that ‘Arabs’ are unsuccessful in school. At this point, Samia realizes that Sami and Momo are teasing her and responds defensively: “No but you are not funny there” (line 16). In striking contrast to the second example in which participants collaboratively construct stereotypes to construct in-group identity, all participants, Sami and Momo, as well as Mounia, reject Samia’s reproduction stereotypical depiction of ‘Arabs’ as it apparently mimicks dominant French discourse too closely. As well, Sami even refuses to use the term *Arabe*, preferring instead to use the slang term *rebeu* in line 14. Here, as in other interactions that I observed with Sami, Momo, and other North African French of their generation, the use of the word *rebeu* generally replaces *arabe*, probably since the latter term carries negative connotations in mainstream French media.

This last example, then, demonstrates Basso’s [1979] observation that certain types of joking are particularly “dangerous.” In the case of revoicing negative assessments about ‘Arabs’, the joking lasts only so long as those involved agree to actively engage in ironically reproducing dominant stereotypes. In the first and second examples, Samia’s voicing of ‘Arab’ stereotypes went unchallenged by participants, showing that they were willing to comfortably operate “between the literal and the metaphorical, between surface and latent meanings” [Gates 1988:82]. But in the second example, Samia’s generalizations about ‘Arabs’ fell flat, or perhaps rang too true, as they were articulated by a middle school student who is herself potentially implicated in the limited expectations that she describes.

The juxtaposition of successful and unsuccessful examples of collaborative joking shows the double-edged character of self-referential stereotypes and their use for in-group identity construction. To return to Moustafa’s metaphor, social labels such as

interactions in which participants preferred to give less information to their peers about an absent party if those present knew him or her.

“Arabe” and “clandé” and attendant stereotypes are readily available for joking and teasing—thus no problem to incorporate into derisive humor. But the use of negative social labels and stereotypes seem to potentially raise “100 problems” when adolescents use them ironically. Rather than the referential complexity of these labels, which generally remain negatively cast, it’s the relative pragmatic complexity that makes them “dangerous” in interaction. By ironically re-voicing dominant French stereotypes, speakers take a risk that their words will be interpreted at face value. While the use of social labels and stereotypes foregrounds the stigmatized status of Arabs and immigrants within French society, their critical power remains ambiguous--they seem to alternately critique and naturalize experiences of racism and prejudice.

In the final section of this chapter, I deal with collaborative performances of rhymed insults and puns to examine their relationship to representations of cultural and racialized difference explored in the previous two sections.

CROSSING CATEGORIES: CULTURAL PUNNING AND LINGUISTIC PLAY

As I have discussed throughout this chapter, adolescents are reproducing and subverting dominant cultural stereotypes and categories of identification in collaborative verbal performances. In comparison to the more structured use of stereotypes at metadiscursive and pragmatic levels of interaction describe in the previous two sections, in this final section I deal with verbal play in which full-blown stereotypes are reduced to iconic references. Here, adolescents contextualize their unique position at the intersection of French, Arabic, and popular American culture through the use of multiple linguistic codes and cultural icons.

The previous section demonstrated some of the same free-form and stream of consciousness quality as the rhymed insults couplets that are the focus of this section. For example, Samia and other speakers collaboratively constructed a “logical” flow of insults that moved from “unemployed” to “illegal immigrant” and finally to “refugee,” demonstrating their competence in dominant anti-immigrant rhetoric that posits immigrants as a drain on French social services. In contrast, the following examples demonstrate a level of open-ended meaning, to the degree that, I initially misinterpreted much of this language play as nonsense.⁹⁵ My increasing familiarity with these multilingual rhymed insults and puns revealed a highly sense-laden system of indexicality that incorporates Arabic, French, and American cultural and linguistic references. Perhaps the most succinct example of this type of linguistic and cultural play is the game **ḥashək**, a competitive word duel played by two participants. To instigate a game, one speaker merely says **ḥashək**, an Arabic politeness formula that is more commonly used after mentioning something that is potentially offensive or taboo. The

⁹⁵The distinction between nonsense and play languages is described succinctly by Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Sherzer: “To the uninitiated, play languages seem like nonsense, but the critical difference is that play languages, while designed to conceal, are readily and consistently decipherable” [1976:10]. The difference applies to the data analyzed here in that the seeming non-sequiturs used for insult routines are actually veiled references to taboo subjects. At the same time, the linguistic play here cannot be considered a true “play language” since the puns and veiled references are improvisational, and thus not present among bilingual French and Arabic speakers generally.

second player must respond with a word that rhymes with “**ḥashək**.” Common replies include French words such as *biftek* (“steak” or “muscle man”) and American loan words such as “milkshake” and “Star Trek,” but the joke may extend to high French cultural references such as “Toulouse-Lautrec,” the impressionist painter. The joke is to juxtapose one odd referent after another and the object is to literally have the last word—the person who can reply the most incongruous terms in succession is the winner.

Like the more elaborate rhymed insults and puns addressed below, this seemingly incoherent word game is not merely “play for play’s sake” but also serves as a “public means of demonstrating that one is a member of a particular group” [Sherzer 1976:35]. Thus Algerian-French adolescents’ linguistic play is a central activity for elaborating their bicultural experiences and multilingual repertoires [Kroskrity 1990]. In the case of **ḥashək**, the seemingly non-sensical stream of words makes for an effective game because the players know why the terms don’t fit together semantically and furthermore why they don’t make “sense” on a culturally symbolic level. For example, although the above game starts with the Arabic word **ḥashək**, players never use other Arabic terms to rhyme. Rather, every subsequent word consistently switches into French or English, foregrounding the conspicuous quality of the initial Arabic term within the immediate linguistic context. On a symbolic level, the successive Arabic, French, and English terms function as emblems (or icons) that represent the disparate but intertwined cultural and linguistic systems from which these adolescents construct an interactional repertoire.

Even beyond the game, the word **ḥashək** functions as an emblem of identity for Arabic-French youth because of their purported “misuse” of the term—proof, according to their parents, that the younger generation uses a corrupted form of Arabic. Among their parents, mostly first generation North African immigrants, **ḥashək** is used to maintain propriety after mentioning an unseemly topic, such as needing to use the toilet. In contrast, second generation adolescents use **ḥashək** to facilitate teasing their peers without angering them—kids alternately translated the term to me as “I’m sorry” or “I’m joking.” Through adolescents’ re-appropriation of this traditional politeness formula to negotiate responsibility about teasing, **ḥashək** takes on a performative function in

adolescent interactions that overrides the traditional meaning of the word and contributes to an alternative, youthful code of conduct. Like the interactional and cultural innovation that adolescents demonstrate with their new uses of *hashək*, collaborative bouts of insults and puns draw from multiple cultural referents and linguistic resources.

The next example illustrates this symbolic juxtaposition through the playful use of the French cultural icon and politician, Jean-Marie Le Pen, to joke about who Hayat's 'real' father might be.

Example 3.7

- | | | |
|---|--------|--|
| 1 | Hayat | tu connais pas le nom- le vrai nom de mon vrai père
<i>you don't know the name- the real name of my real father</i> |
| 2 | Hayat | c'est pas la peine
<i>it's not worth the trouble</i> |
| 3 | Salima | Jean-Marie
<i>Jean-Marie</i> |
| 4 | Hayat | non, le vrai
<i>non, the real one</i> |
| 5 | Khaled | Le Pen! WOOO!
<i>Le Pen! WOOO!</i> |
| 6 | Salima | Jean-Marie
<i>Jean-Marie</i> [singing in a whisper] |
| 7 | Khaled | tête de Pen, faire d'la peine
<i>head of a 'Pen', hurts it's so ugly</i> |
| 8 | Khaled | il s'appelle Jean Charles de Savant
<i>his name is Jean Charles de Savant</i> |

In this example, Hayat brags that the others will never guess the "real" name of her "real" father and so it's "not worth the trouble" [lines 1-2]. Her use of the word *la peine* ('the trouble' or 'pain') elicits Salima's playful response "Jean Marie" in reference to the phonological similarity between "la peine" and "Le Pen," Jean Marie's last name.

The playful claim that Jean Marie Le Pen is Hayat's father is effective because of its implausibility, since, as I mention previously, the politician has called for the expulsion of all immigrants from France, and by extension these adolescents' parents. Not incidentally, the name "Jean Marie" also commonly refers to the quintessential Frenchman in popular discourse, a figure who, like the politician, would not qualify as Hayat's father. Khaled next takes up the word *peine* and puns an insult directed toward both Hayat and Jean Marie Le Pen *tête de Pen, faire d'la peine* or "Head of a 'Pen,' hurts it's ugly" (or literally "hurts") [line 7]. In calling Hayat a *tête de 'Pen'*, Khaled manages to create a triply valenced insult—insulting Le Pen, Hayat, and her imaginary father for the supposed ugliness they share.

Khaled's final suggestion for the "real" identity of Hayat's father [line 9] is another pun that juxtaposes disparate cultural systems and ideologies since "Jean Charles de Savant" was then a French television host on the intellectual television talk show *Mardi Ciel*. Both references--Jean Marie and Jean Charles--serve to perform and subvert "Frenchness" and "Arabness" by creatively juxtaposing disparate cultural references. By purposefully confounding cultural and linguistic signs, adolescents' performances breach the boundaries of "Arab" and "French" as social categories as well as French popular culture and Arabic cultural practices.

In the above examples, performances of identities and cultural categories emerge as a kind of "crossing," to use Barrie Thorne's term [1993].⁹⁶ In the case of Algerian-French adolescents' interactions, the "borders" of contrasting linguistic and symbolic systems are purposefully transgressed to create a cultural crossroads from which to speak. While the "joke" in these puns is about discontinuity, the choice of referents serves to blur cultural and linguistic boundaries, making a hybrid message that only participants with like backgrounds can understand, thereby creating a new code for a unique identity. What initially appeared to be "nonsense" to me as an ethnographer is, in fact, a highly sense-laden linguistic and cultural code for those "in" the know. In this way, adolescents

⁹⁶I have used Thorne's notion of "crossing" rather than that of Rampton [1995] because the examples explored here correspond more closely to Thorne's description of children consciously using play and language to construct and elaborate upon cultural categories (in her analysis "male" and "female") rather than to "renegotiate the relationship between language and group membership" [ibid.:4].

performatively use multiple linguistic codes and symbols to contextualize their unique location at the intersection of French and Arabic linguistic and cultural systems. The political import of inserting high French cultural references and anti-immigrant political figures into the frame of kinship taboo shows also that adolescents are improvising verbal genres and cultural practices that mediate both “tradition” and social critique. Juxtaposing dominant French stereotypes and iconic French cultural symbols with established Arabic genres such as ḥashək and mother insults demonstrates “the inseparability of precursory traditions, politics, and cultural poetics and their often paradoxical relationship” [Limón 1994: x]. In the case of adolescents’ collaborative verbal performances, speakers are simultaneously voicing both cultural continuity and disjuncture.

CONCLUSION

The last section shows that even adolescents' seemingly 'nonsensical' verbal performances are permeated with fragments and semiotic leftovers from ideological French categories dealing with 'race' and culture. Furthermore, throughout the chapter, seemingly disparate speech genres and linguistic events demonstrate the prevalence of racialized stereotypes and social labels in adolescents' performances of social and interpersonal identity. As children of predominantly Algerian immigrants who live in a *cit *, these adolescents occupy a particularly stigmatized position with respect to dominant national discourses and cultural ideologies. It is no wonder then, perhaps, the degree to which these adolescents speak and position their social selves "in relation to" dominant French discourse and (their own) representations of monolithic "French" identity.

However, a totalizing depiction of these cultural and linguistic practices would be too narrow, and invest dominant French discourse with too much power to determine the ways that these adolescents perform social identity in interpersonal interactions. Rather, I will appeal to Cantwell's [1993] discussion of stereotype in order to contextualize these adolescents' verbal and cultural practices as intrinsic to cultural expression itself, and not only as the exclusive behavior of marginalized groups. In his ethnography of the Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife, Cantwell writes that stereotypes are "a way of sorting information...a kind of shorthand," and that rather than static, their use can indicate "less an urge to fix something than a need to set something in motion" [ibid.:154-55]. That "something," according to Cantwell and to my analysis here, is cultural mediation or "the fundamental act of engagement with the other and the other's culture" [ibid. 157]. The performances of social identity addressed here attain such a developed level of engagement with the 'other's culture' because of these adolescents' positioning as part of and yet marginal to that dominant 'other', the "French." Furthermore, these adolescents are performing social identities in preparation for adulthood, during which they will be expected to reproduce, occupy, and challenge these

cultural categories and representations [Eckert 1989]. Finally, I will end this chapter with Cantwell's notion that stereotypes also "set something in motion." The adolescents described here are not only exploring the gap between dominant representations of themselves and their own experience; they are also redirecting, subverting, and appropriating these stereotypes and categories to their own ends—the performance of an emergent (bi-)cultural identity.

In terms of the larger themes of *le respect* and reputation in the dissertation, adolescents' critical appropriation of French stereotypes regarding *les arabes* and Muslims show them negotiating their community's standing in relation to widely circulating stigmatizing discourses. In this regard, performances for peers and adult mentors that appropriate and challenge dominant French stereotypes about *les arabes* are a means for adolescents to attempt to reconfigure symbolic relationships between the diametrically opposed figures in discourse, *le français* and *l'arabe*. In the process of voicing their own social identity in opposition to and through stereotypical discourses, however, these essentialized categories remain intact in adolescents' own identity discourses.

Chapter Four: Parental ‘Name-calling’ as Identity Display

This chapter analyzes collaborative verbal performances that structure social and personal identity among adolescents in Chemin de l’Ile. Straddling the boundaries between play and insult, the verbal genre that I call "parental name-calling" involves adolescents irreverently using personal names of their peers’ parents in a public setting. In these verbal exchanges, adolescent speakers challenge the code of what they call *le respect* even as they further their own personal *reputation*. I will use the mutually informing yet competing social codes of *le respect* and "reputation" to structure data analyzed within this chapter and in Chapter Five. Simply stated, *le respect* is a social code that prescribes adherence to behavioral standards including showing deference for one’s elders and that is loosely based upon an age and gender hierarchy typical of Algeria, North Africa and even the Mediterranean more generally. As such, *le respect* is relational and hierarchical, both in terms of the ideal relationships that it embodies, (such as the dominion and authority of parents over children), and in its practice, in which individuals show and receive respect based upon their position in the relationship at hand.

Le respect bears a clear relation to the anthropological concepts “honor” and “shame” as defined by scholars working in the Mediterranean [Abu-Lughod 1986; Bourdieu 1966, 1979; Brandes 1987; Davis 1977; Gilmore 1982, 1987; Herzfeld 1980; Peristiany 1966] and elsewhere [e.g. Keating 1998b]. As generally defined in the above literature, “[H]onor and shame are reciprocal moral values representing primordial integration of individual to ‘group’. They reflect, respectively, the conferral of public esteem upon the person and the sensitivity to public opinion upon which the former depends” [Gilmore 1987:3]. As ‘reciprocal moral values’, honor and shame in early Mediterranean scholarship were categories generally attributed respectively to males and females; in this regard, honor is supposedly conferred to men who protect and control the “shame” (or sexual modesty) of “their” kinswomen [ibid.:4]. Or, in the words of Peristiany, honor and shame in the Mediterranean context pertains specifically to “the

comparison of the male-female relationship and that of the roles of the sexes within these societies” [1966:9].⁹⁷

However, the joint assumptions in such early work that honor and shame are equally applicable in all Mediterranean societies and that they constitute binary opposites have been thoroughly critiqued [Abu-Lughod 1986; Brandes 1987; Davis 1977; Gilmore 1987; Herzfeld 1980, 1987; Wikan 1984].⁹⁸ For example, Herzfeld [1980, 1987] questions the validity and supposed uniformity of honor as a cultural ideal. Instead, Herzfeld calls for a return to ethnographic particularism and an examination of those social values, such as hospitality, that have been overlooked due to scholars’ preoccupation with honor [1987:75]. Similarly, Giovannini notes the apparent plasticity of the honor concept, such that in ethnographic literature it “may encompass one or several of the following evaluative criteria: wealth, ancestry, physical strength and prowess, piety, and sexual comportment” [1987:61]. Abu-Lughod’s critique of the honor/shame dichotomy hinges upon the observation that, among the Awlad ‘Ali Bedouin in Egypt, men and women are both (if not equally) able to achieve honor and modesty (**ḥshuma**). However, men’s and women’s access to honor and **ḥshuma** are differently organized due to an underlying ideology of social hierarchy that posits men as more naturally honorable (i.e. socially powerful) and women more prone to the vagaries of sexual shame.⁹⁹ Abu-Lughod explains that differential access to honor and modesty mirrors the Bedouin social hierarchy: “The weak and dependent, who cannot realize many of the ideals of the honor code, can still achieve respect and honor through an alternative code, the modesty code” [1986:79].

Similarly, adolescents’ construction of *le respect* differs considerably from the dichotomous notions of “honor” and “shame” that were prevalent in the early literature.

⁹⁷ Most Mediterranean scholars, including Peristiany, do not limit honor and shame to Mediterranean societies, but rather claim that the practice of locating moral judgement in public opinion constitutes an attribute of all face-to-face societies [1966:11].

⁹⁸ These critiques have also been accompanied by scholarship that questions the validity of reifying the Mediterranean as a unified (and uniform) cultural region [Herzfeld 1980].

⁹⁹ This gender ideology holds that sexuality must be controlled and that, due to their greater role in sexual reproduction, women are more closely associated with ‘unruly’ natural and bodily impulses, including sexuality, and hence more prone to ‘shame’ [Abu-Lughod 1986:124].

In adolescents' discourse, *le respect* describes behavior of men and women, despite the fact that this behavioral code is applied differently to the actions of men and women (as well as to the generations, i.e. parents and children). The model of hierarchy that Abu-Lughod describes among the Awlad 'Ali Bedouin holds similarities for the type of social hierarchy that adolescents espouse when they discuss *le respect*. Abu-Lughod notes that among the Bedouin, social hierarchy is modeled on the hierarchical model of the family in which "the powerful have obligations and responsibilities to protect and care for the weak" [1986:81].¹⁰⁰ Similarly, *le respect* involves, in part, the expectations that the supposedly less powerful groups will be protected by those that are potentially stronger or more powerful. For example, as Naima claims in Chapter Three in Example 1, ideally, "Muslims, they don't hit. We Muslims--the men--those they respect the most, it's the old men, the women, and the children. You can't hit women. You can't raise a hand against them."¹⁰¹ In Naima's discussion, "respect" is constructed both relationally and hierarchically; old men are the most respected, followed by women and children. Instead of exclusively depending upon others to receive *le respect*, adult men are hold the power to confer it to others; they are expected to give "respect" to those who are (and whom they wish to mark as) more socially vulnerable than they, namely elderly men, women, and children. Thus the power to 'give' *respect* to others (thereby marking them as socially vulnerable or weak) is a power unevenly distributed; men hold more power to give or withhold respect than women, just as adults in their prime can give or withhold respect from the young or the elderly.¹⁰²

How, then, do adolescents in Chemin de l'Ile configure "respect" for the less socially powerful, and notably girls and women? In contrast to the social power of granting respect to another, women's power lies in the ability to attain the respect of

¹⁰⁰ Earlier scholars working in the Mediterranean have also noted the similarity between family structures in this region and models of hierarchy that apply to Mediterranean society more generally [Abu-Zahra 1976, Peristiany 1976].

¹⁰¹ "Les musulmans, ils ne tappent pas. Nous, les musulmans--les hommes--ce qu'ils respectent le plus c'est les vieux, les femmes, et les enfants. Les femmes, tu ne peux pas les taper. Tu ne peux pas lever la main contre elles."

¹⁰² Furthermore, as I discuss in Chapter Three, adolescents in Chemin de l'Ile discursively construct "respect" as a major axis of cultural difference between Muslim and French values and behavior.

others, a power that is largely tied to the way that they control their own sexuality and their reputations by limiting time spent with (non-kin) men. Successfully limiting such access (or appearing to do so) depends upon limiting time in public space,¹⁰³ generally considered men's domain and upon either avoiding dating or again, appearing to avoid dating before marriage.¹⁰⁴

The absence of these behaviors encourages a withdrawing of respect, even among women, as the following example illustrates. On an outing to *Les Halles*, the underground mall in the center of Paris, a group of girls and I mistakenly took the street St. Denis, a well-known for (female) prostitution. The adolescent girls with me were alternately fascinated and horrified by the scene: prostitutes dressed in provocative clothing openly negotiated with prospective clients. Both Fatima and Hourriya made a point of loudly voicing their protests to prostitution, each using the motif of *respect*. For example, at one point Fatima loudly exclaimed: "There is no respect here! There is nothing here!"¹⁰⁵ I found Fatima's comment interesting in that the lack of 'respect' that women were supposedly exhibiting by engaging in prostitution had created a space (the street) in which all "respect" was lacking, thus leading to a total lack of social value (or "nothing"). Similarly, after Hourriya had made a loud, insulting comment to one of the prostitutes, I asked her not to insult them. Hourriya responded "Oh no, please, Chantal. I have no respect for people who give their bodies [in prostitution]." ¹⁰⁶ In this way, we see that much like Abu-Lughod's discussion of Bedouin values, once a woman or

¹⁰³ A notable exception to women's general absence from public space in Chemin de l'Ile included a small playground in the neighborhood, which, as children's space, is considered (more) appropriate for women and girls than other public space, such as parking lots, the train station, the Athletic Center, or anywhere near the workers' foyers. As well, the open-air market is becoming a feminized space in Chemin de l'Ile, similar to the ways that the public space of the market is becoming feminized in Morocco [Kapchan 1996]. I discuss adolescent girls' ambivalent use of and relationship to public space in Chapter Five.

¹⁰⁴ Public dating was so proscribed in the neighborhood of this study that the only girl who allowed herself to be seen in public with her 'boyfriend' was a non-Arab foster child. At the time, Lisa and her boyfriend were more show than anything else--it was largely rumored that they were not sleeping together. Nonetheless, Lisa's active interest in having a boyfriend publicly and picking up guys at the mall was undoubtedly to blame for the terribly critical way that her friends talked about her behind her back, making fun of her heavy makeup and criticizing the ways that she went looking for guys even though she already had a 'boyfriend'.

¹⁰⁵ "Il n'y pas de respect ici! Il n'y a rien ici!"

¹⁰⁶ "Ah no, s'il te plaît, Chantal, j'ai pas de respect pour ceux qui donnent leurs corps."

‘socially weak’ person ceases to adhere to the modesty code, they also give up their access to respect and honor.

In contrast to *le respect*, reputation refers, in part, to the public display of verbal prowess that contributes to the presentation and management of personal identity among one’s adolescent peers.¹⁰⁷ Much like “respect,” however, reputation was differently ordered or conceived for girls and boys in Chemin de l’Ile. On the one hand, boys were expected to physically defend themselves and their reputations through physical fighting, but girls were not. In fact, fighting was so proscribed for girls that few engaged in it as it was considered far too ‘masculine’ for them. In the one example of a school fight between girls that included an adolescent in this study, Cécile (already touted as ‘too masculine’ prior to the fight) was publicly ridiculed by her peers for several days afterwards. To my knowledge, she did not fight with other girls in school again.

However, language and dress styles existed as more available resources for girls to craft their personal reputations as tough and independent. As well, dressing in the purportedly masculine styles of the *cité* afforded girls a way to emphasize their reputation as independent and strong and not as sexually available or active (thus also preserving *le respect*). In particular, the style of dress chosen to forge this ‘new’ type of hybrid femininity was neither the sexualized styles of the ‘girl from the *cité*,’ tight tunics, form-fit polyester pants, and platform shoes, or the ‘traditional’ Muslim style, consisting of floor-length skirts and loose, wrist-length tunics, and headscarf. The girls dealt with in this dissertation are, for the most part, attempting to construct a “third means” of doing femininity, through borrowing liberally from both masculine and feminine styles. In addition to adopting the purportedly masculine styles of dress and language, the girls retained their long, tightly attached hair and plenty of gold rings and chains. While refraining from physical fighting (for the most part), girls’ tough language afforded them both a measure of respect from their peers, but also the dubious status of supposedly ‘wanting to be men’.

I address the linguistic and social effects of these stylistic choices in further detail in Chapter Five. For now, suffice it to say that the centrality of language and linguistic

styles to the construction of reputation cannot be overemphasized. As I have illustrated above, language (along with styles of dress) is the most readily available resource for girls to establish the tough, independent feminine identity that they desire. Further, parental name-calling exists as type of challenge to a peer's parent's *respect* in which the insult hinges first upon simply naming the peer's parent in ongoing conversation in order to elicit a response from a peer, thus initiating an exchange of ritualized insults [Labov 1972].

I argue that in collaborative performances that negotiate the boundaries between play and insult, parental 'name-calling' both structure and symbolize social and personal identity among adolescents. In terms of social or group identity, these verbal performances are central in two ways: 1) they are embedded in interaction and so create a level of secrecy that contribute to 'inside' knowledge and 2) they symbolically pose parents and adolescents in an oppositional and yet dependent relationship. In terms of personal or, perhaps more accurately, interpersonal identity, kin-based 'name-calling' functions as a personalized form of deixis¹⁰⁸ to 'point' at individual peers. Peers are thus not only thereby acknowledged, but also socially constructed in terms of their relationship to their parents.

Parental 'name-calling' takes the form of many different types of interaction. In the simplest form that I observed, grade-school children yell each other's parents' name back and forth, matching their own mother's or father's name with that of their peer's. Among older adolescents who operate with a more sophisticated sense of humor, directly calling each other by a parent's name of the same gender was a common practice, thereby laminating together their peers' and their parents' identities. Thus, for example, Brigitte, a girl who self-identified as Portuguese and was not Algerian or Arab, was often called "Maria" after her mother, just as Salima, who was of Algerian descent, was often called "Djamila" also after her mother. Oftentimes, these forms of address or 'naming'

¹⁰⁷Here I draw from Goffman's [1959] notion of self-presentation as a series of public performances.

¹⁰⁸Hanks locates deixis as "the boundary between language and gesture" [1996:5]. Like more conventional forms of deictic language such as "now," "here," "I," and "this," the act of addressing a peer by a parent's name depends upon heavily contextualized understanding by participants. Furthermore, like other forms of deixis, parental name-calling not only relies upon context, it also creates a context within which to understand the ongoing utterance.

practices were embedded within adult-centered contexts such as school or tutoring and thus used as an illicit and secretive activity to construct in-group knowledge among peers.

Ritualized insults based upon parents and kin are, by no means, specific to Chemin de l'Île or French adolescents of Algerian descent.¹⁰⁹ As I demonstrated in the last chapter, just as adolescents shape dominant stereotypes about social identities "Arabe" and "Français" to their interpersonal needs and purposes, teasing routines and motifs that are not exclusive to adolescents in Chemin de l'Île nonetheless elucidate the particular, everyday experiences of adolescents there. In this regard, parental name-calling constitutes a particularly important discursive frame for adolescents to articulate their ambivalent ties to both their parents and their peers. While these teasing routines may be certainly informed by both the centrality of kinship and related discourse to Arabic-speaking households, I will refrain from positing a direct or exclusive influence of Arabic kinship structures and language practices. To do so would be reductive of adolescents' experiences in at least two ways. First, adolescents are exposed to a focus on kinship and, more specifically, to mother and father insults in a variety of speech genres and contexts. These generic contexts include popular music, especially American and French rap, and popular publications, such as the widely-circulated book of mother insults *Ta Mère* ["Your Mother"], written by the French comedian Arthur. Second, imposing a cultural uniformity on parental name-calling would elide the active participation by adolescents who are not of Arabic descent. Participation by non-Arabic speakers shows the relevance of parental name-calling for constructing an adolescent peer culture in Chemin de l'Île. These expressions of in-group knowledge among peers are, paradoxically, contingent upon foregrounding the parent-child relationship. Furthermore, performances of parental name-calling often highlight adolescents' experiences of both cultural disjuncture and continuity in relation to their immigrant parents.

¹⁰⁹Nonetheless, scholars of North African and the Middle East have noted the importance of family and shared honor to an individual's identity. As Fernea and Fernea note that in North Africa and the Middle East "[F]or a family's honor, its public reputation was and still is every member's responsibility and legacy" [1997:208].

Further, I argue that non-locally specific genres of teasing, such as mother (and father) insults, are interactionally central to adolescent peer networks in Chemin de l'Ile. Name-calling performances provide an interactional structure for the experience of adolescent identity to be shared as insiders' knowledge among peers [cf. Goodwin 1990]. Adolescents' verbal play with symbolic kinship permit them both to have an in-group sense of identity that is both articulated through and transposed against their immigrant parents. Routines and performances in which adolescents imitate their own and others' parents are a way that they both individuate from their parents and create a common feeling of belonging as French of North African descent. In the various types of ritualized conflict that I address below, I hope to demonstrate that teasing generally and teasing about parents in particular constitute a way of "doing" adolescence among peers. As among other adolescents, French adolescents of Algerian descent use teasing to achieve a variety of pragmatic purposes, including voicing aggression, expressing desire, creating closeness, and constructing social divisions [cf. Goodwin 1990]. For the purposes of this chapter, however, I am primarily concerned with understanding how adolescents in Chemin de l'Ile use parental name-calling to negotiate their relationships with their (idealized) parents and with their peer group.

The chapter is organized into four sections. The first section locates my term, parental 'name-calling', in relation to local speech genres, namely, *afficher* [literally to 'display' someone]. In the second section, I discuss secrecy as a central way that adolescents use parental 'name-calling' to contribute to their experiences of peer groups in Chemin de l'Ile. In the third section I address the most performative examples of parental name-calling as a type of speech event. In the fourth section, I deal with the larger social context of parental 'name-calling', namely, how kinship, intimacy, and knowledge about a peer translate into discursive power for participants.

LOCATING PARENTAL 'NAME-CALLING' IN RELATION TO LOCAL AND NON-LOCAL SPEECH GENRES: *AFFICHER* AND "TEASING"

Parental 'name-calling' can be considered a variant of the speech genre *afficher*, which literally means 'to display, or to post'. Documented in other *cités* in France [cf. LePoutre 1997], *afficher* connotes the act of telling personal information about another to an audience, usually in that person's presence. As I will show throughout subsequent sections of this chapter, parental 'name-calling' incorporates elements of the genre *afficher* in that citing parents' first names and other information about them provides a means to 'display' personal knowledge about a peer in a non-private context. Accordingly, I begin this section with a performance of *afficher* in order to situate 'parental name-calling' (my own term) in relation to this locally recognized speech genre. Here, as in other examples of *afficher*, personal information is called out or 'displayed' for public hearing--in this case, for my tape recorder, which was running at the time, and a hypothetical "American" audience.

In the case represented below, two teenaged girls, Sherazade and Sonya, 15 and 13, point out the relative dangers of being tape recorded by me. Sherazade playfully claims that my recording her and Sonya constitutes an example of *afficher* since I'm going to share this information with the "United States." Sonya then performs a version of *afficher* to Sherazade, by citing her last name and address (see arrows for placement in transcript). Sherazade's heightened excitement and worry that her family name be included in data I bring back to the U.S. demonstrates the importance given both to protecting one's personal identity as well as flaunting it. For Sherazade and other adolescents in Chemin de l'Ile, *les States* (the U.S.) represents the land of fame and fortune. Sherazade's excitement about being tape-recorded and a representation of her identity brought back for American consumption evokes Andy Warhol's prediction that everyone will eventually attain (or at least desire) '15 minutes of fame'. However, Sherazade's anxiety that, along with her first name and voice, her last name and phone

number will be divulged shows a desire to protect her anonymity, a quality in short supply within this close-knit neighborhood of 11,000 people.¹¹⁰

Example 4.1: ‘Name-calling’ as integral to *Afficher*

1 Sherazade alors tu vas nous afficher aux Etats Unis [XX mon très cher]
so you’re going to ‘display’ us to the U.S. [XX my dearest]

[laughs] [101]

2 Sonya Sherazade arrête!=
Sherazade Stop!

3 Sherazade [pointing to tape recorder]
=tu vas nous afficher aux Etats Unis avec ça là?
you’re going to ‘display’ us to the States with that there?

4 Chantal oui
yes

5 Sherazade mon dieu! mon dieu! [ironically]
my god! my god!

6 Chantal non mais [ça serait pas vos noms]
no but it won’t be your names

... [deleted text]

7 Sherazade je serai Miriam [XX]
I’ll be Miriam

8 Chantal oui Miriam
yes Miriam

9 Sherazade [mais tu me mets pas un autre nom je veux mon nom là]
but don’t put another name—I want my name there

10 Chantal tu veux ton nom?
you want your name?

11 Sonya----->Sherazade BenHabib [slowly, with emphasis- teasing]

¹¹⁰ I address the politics of space in Chemin de l’Ile in more detail in Chapters 2 and 5.

Sherazade BenHabib

- 12 Sherazade mais pas pas mon nom de famille hein?
but not my family name, huh?
- 13 Sonya ----->8 rue de la Résistance [Sonya announces Sherazade's home address]
8, Resistance Street
92000 Nanterre
Nanterre 92000
- 14 Sherazade pas de numéro de téléphone
no telephone number
- 15 Sonya numéro de téléphone je te laisse par contre
I'll leave the telephone number alone, on the other hand
- ...
- 16 Sherazade il faut pas que tu donne mon numéro de téléphone hein?
you mustn't give my telephone number, huh?
- 17 Chantal ahh
ahh
- 18 Sherazade ah parce que tu croyais qu'il fallait donner mon numéro de téléphone?
uh because you thought you should give my phone number?
il en est hors de question
it's out of the question
- 19 Sherazade ni mon adresse, mon nom de famille, mon numéro de téléphone, ni rien du tout
not my address, my family name, my telephone number, or anything at all
- 20 Sonya Sherazade BENCHABIB
Sherazade BenHabib
8 rue de la Résistance
8 Resistance Street
[laughing] 92000 Nanterre
Nanterre 92000
- 21 Sherazade ??
- 22 Chantal affichée, oui
'displayed' yes

23 Sherazade elle a un vieux pit [speaking about Sonya's very small terrier]
she has an old pit bull

[laughing]

24 Sherazade elle a eu un rapport disciplinaire
she got a disciplinary report

This collaborative exchange is as much a critical commentary about my research as it is an ironic performance of this genre *afficher*. In lines 1 and 3 Sherazade twice claims that I'm using my tape recorder to *afficher* or 'display' her to the United States. Her description of my work with respect to the local speech genre *afficher* is fitting, in a sense, because my goal, after all, is to tell American academics about Sherazade and her peers' experiences of identity and thus to 'display' them in a highly personal way. But Sherazade is also speaking quite literally about the 'facts' of her identity and asking how much and what pieces I will share with my American audience. In addition to the hyperbolic performance of fear at the very idea of having her identity displayed ('My god, my god!' in line 5), our conversation turns to tangible questions of how I will represent her: Will I use her real first name? What will be her pseudonym? Will I use her last name? In a very tangible way, Sherazade is negotiating the limits and conditions under which I will divulge information about her to a non-intimate audience. For example, when I claim that I won't use her real first name, Sherazade asserts that she wants to retain her real name [line 9], rather than be reduced to the innocuous "Miriam" that she first proposes as an alternative identity [line 7].

Just as Sherazade declares that she wants her 'real' identity revealed, however, Sonya begins a performance of *afficher* to 'display' Sherazade's full name and address, reciting the words slowly and deliberately [lines 11 & 13]. Sonya's performance is playful, because the information given is not private in the given context; all individuals physically present, including myself, were aware of Sherazade's last name and address. Also, because this performance took place just below her apartment in the adjacent playground, passers-by would likely be privy to the information given. While Sonya respects Sherazade's request—"no telephone number" [line 14]—Sherazade still plays up

the fact that Sonya ‘displayed’ her; she retaliates by mockingly calling her small terrier an “old pit bull” and by sharing personal information about Sonya’s disciplinary report at school.

Sherazade and Sonya together produce the name of the verbal genre *afficher* and demonstrate their knowledge of how to perform the genre. For example, Sherazade specifies the genre’s features by performing her ‘fears’ of what information I might divulge: “uh because you thought you should give my phone number? It’s out of the question! [line 18]. Sonya, on the other hand, performs a mock version of *afficher* by stating information that is common knowledge, i.e. “Sherazade BenHabib, 8, rue de la Résistance,” thereby demonstrating her knowledge of the genre without angering Sherazade. As Bauman and Briggs note, performance ‘provides a frame that invites critical reflection on communicative processes’ as well as cultural practices [1990:60]. This example shows Sonya and Sherazade reflexively commenting upon the genre *afficher*, even as they execute a mock performance of it.

Like the verbal genre *afficher*, performances of parental ‘name-calling’ constitute personal challenges because the initiating speaker seizes upon personal information about a peer to display in a public setting. While the combination of verbal play and performance surrounding parents would seem to fall under the larger generic category “teasing,” these interactions are often collaborative in such a way that precludes such a static model of interaction. In common parlance, “teasing” implies that the “teaser” enters into the interaction without the intention to insult, hurt, or offend, hence the pervasiveness in French (and English) of the statement *je te taquinais* “I was [only] teasing.” However, as scholars working on evidentials in linguistic anthropology have noted, in any given interaction, a speaker’s “intention” is not exclusively the product of his or her internal mental state, but rather an emergent product of the interaction itself, that is determined through the ongoing interpretation by co-participants [cf. Duranti 1994].

As I will show in examples below, these interactions move between what are commonly referred to in English parlance as *teasing*, *joking*, and *insulting*, and, at any given moment, may adopt a new interpretation in the eyes of participants present. As

such, this interactional practice is similar to the Arabic speech genre **tfliya** that Kapchan documents [1996:245-7]. As Kapchan notes, much like *afficher*, **tfliya** is "a conversational genre which involves joking and teasing in a performative mode" [1996: 245].¹¹¹ While conflict can be an integral part of the genre *afficher*, it is also difficult to uniformly claim the 'directness' or 'indirectness' of this conflict, even though doing so has been the focus of a significant amount of research in theoretical discussions of "conflict talk" [cf. Grimshaw 1990]. Rather, these interactions move between 'direct' and 'indirect' conflict just as they move between conflict and play.¹¹² As well, to refer to these performances as "ritualized conflict" (i.e. indirect conflict, usually without resolution, cf. Grimshaw) would be to under-represent the playful element common to most of these verbal routines. By tracking the ways that these collaborative performances move between play and insult, indirect and direct speech, I hope to demonstrate not only the versatility of this verbal genre, but also of these participants.

As discursive genres that integrate play and conflict, parental 'name-calling' and *afficher* facilitate a variety of interpersonal relationships and pragmatic purposes among adolescents. For example, for adolescents in Chemin de l'Ile, who are acutely aware of social hierarchy and cultural preferences, both genres are the means to monitor each others' behavior, as in "policing" the gender boundaries that I describe in Chapter 5 [cf. Goodwin 1990]. Along these lines, examples of parental 'name-calling' that occur between boys and girls are plentiful in my data, especially cases in which the girls and boys 'gang up' against each other. As with other forms of teasing and verbal play, *afficher* can function to both segregate and socialize the genders, since the speech event is often used to express antagonistic relations between 'male' and 'female' that often typify childhood and early adolescence [cf. Thorne 1993]. Also, adolescents may use performances of *afficher* to express a range of emotions, including sexual desire and aggression.

¹¹¹ Even more striking are the ways that parental name-calling resembles **tfliya** through the common inclusion of rhymes and puns [Kapchan 1996:245]. I will return to this point later in the chapter.

¹¹² Donna Eder [1990] notes similar findings in her work on adolescent girls' verbal practices, in that the speech tends to move between playful 'joking' and more direct conflict and affront.

Yet, while *afficher* can accomplish many social tasks, I hope to show the relevance of this type of interaction as an end onto itself. Much as Goodwin has demonstrated that "aggravated disagreements are activities that the children worked to achieve in their own right," parental 'name-calling' is central to adolescent interaction in Chemin de l'Ile and usually the 'goal' of the interaction itself [Goodwin paraphrased in Grimshaw 1990:24]. Furthermore, *afficher* "provides an opportunity to display rather than put off the expression of opposition [that] can be seen as an important feature of peer culture" [Grimshaw, 1990:24]. In this regard, I hope to show how *afficher*, and, in particular, parental 'name-calling' function as a way to 'do' adolescence. In other words, these types of collaborative interactions serve as a vehicle for the experience and expression of adolescence as well as an interactional structure through which peers enact and express social identity as a group.

As part and parcel of my focus on pragmatic use rather than generic structure, I emphasize that parental 'name-calling' is not just representative, but constitutive of social organization among adolescents in Chemin de l'Ile [cf. Goodwin 1990]. My focus is not only upon the particular cultural motifs that such teasing elicits, but also upon parental 'name-calling' as a set of practices central to adolescents' peer socialization and social organization. Paradoxically, at the same time that name-calling calls forth images of parents, these verbal routines "constitutes those who are present to it," namely adolescents [Goodwin & Goodwin cited in Grimshaw 1990:14].

PARENTAL INSULTS AS AN ENACTMENT OF THE PEER GROUP

In this section, I look at parental name-calling as a way that adolescents create a peer culture based upon in-group knowledge at the same time that they create symbolic relationships with imagined, non-present kin. While adults and parental figures figure centrally in these performances, their secretive nature makes them primarily the domain of peers. On one hand, the social relevance of these verbal routines depends upon a construction of adolescent identity as relational to adult and parental figures. On the other hand, these interactions are difficult for adult, non-peers to understand and thus function as an 'in-group' register for peers. My own introduction to this type of discursive play illustrates how parental teasing functions as covert communication among adolescents in 'mixed' (adult/adolescent) settings.

As part of my internship at *Cerise* I taught a voluntary English class after school. The usual participants were a group of middle-school girls most of whom were friends and who lived near each other in the buildings called “la Resistance.” On this particular day, however, a boy named Khaled came to class, much to the dismay and resistance of the girls present, who exclaimed “Oh no, not him,” (*Non, pas lui*) and “That guy’s crazy” (*C’est un fou, lui*). Being close with his mother, I knew that Khaled did have a reputation for ‘raising hell’ (*foutre le bordel*) in school. And, while many girls his own age found his green eyes attractive, these older girls were obviously not impressed. As a slightly younger boy than the girls present (12 and 14 respectively), Khaled was subject to the kind of adversarial teasing that, I found, characterized relations between boys and girls in middle school. This adversarial tone seemed to set the stage for the parental name-calling that was to follow.¹¹³

We had spent some time that day deciphering the words to a reggae song that I had brought in, but everyone complained it was too difficult. Then Brigitte proposed that we do a role play dialogue based on the American T.V. show “Beverly Hills 90210.” We

spent a good bit of the class trying to remember characters' names from the show and assigning one to each participant. As we were listing off the Anglo names of the T.V. characters, i.e., Brandon, Kelly, and so on, Khaled added "Ali" to our verbal list. I laughed, thinking that he was making a joke about the lack of Arabic names in the list of characters. Khaled looked startled and then asked me, "Tu piges?" (*Do you understand?*). I initially said yes, but when I explained my version of his joke, Khaled shook his head and explained to me, "No, Ali is the name of someone's father." Although I later found out that the teasing was directed at Hourriya, as her father's name is Ali, I understood that Khaled was being as secretive as possible while still explaining the game.

This interlude describes not only peer relations but also my own dubious relationship to these peers. Treating me like any other 'clueless' adult and cultural outsider, Khaled was surprised and initially dismayed at the prospect that I 'got' his joke. However, by letting me in part of on his secret, (the gist of the joke without the target), Khaled affords me partial insider status. The compromise that we find to give me such knowledge seems derivative of my identity as both a cultural ingenue, desperate to understand any information possible, and an American, imminently more reliable because not French. Finally, I had little to no institutional authority to wield over these adolescents and they knew it; I could be 'trusted' because I had so little power over these children's lives.

In this highly abbreviated form, Khaled and Hourriya had found a way to insert this father-centric version of parental name-calling. In this case, the act of merely voicing a peer's parent's name is just one manifestation, among many, of a highly secretive way to provoke a reaction from a peer. However, these interactions do not simply act as an abbreviated form of address in which only the addressee knows that he or she is 'being spoken to.' Khaled uses the act of voicing Hourriya's father's name as a way to inscribe intimate meaning onto the ongoing group interaction. Each of these covert challenges is destined for a particular person in the ongoing context, and only

¹¹³ I deal with adversarial gender relations among adolescents in more detail in Chapter 5. In this chapter, however, I address parental 'name-calling' as predicated upon a kind of adversity among peers more

those individuals with personal knowledge about the addressee will understand the message.¹¹⁴ These teasing rituals are thus not necessarily about constructing cultural meaning so much as creating interpersonal meaning, which, nevertheless, necessarily improvises on shared cultural meaning.

The next excerpt illustrates the complications that arise when the interactional expectations of adolescent peers collide with the (projected) interactional expectations of flesh-and-blood parents. One source for disjuncture is the way that performances of parental name-calling flout community-based ideals of ‘respect’ for elders that, despite their existence as ideals (and not necessarily as practice), structure and inform adolescent negotiations of self and peer-group. More specifically, this excerpt demonstrates two fourteen-year-old girls, Mabrouka and Brigitte, calling out to a boy of roughly the same age, Ali, as he passes by on a bicycle. These girls are sitting chatting in the playground with a girl of 15, Fatima, at the time. Just after Mabrouka and Brigitte perform a parental name-calling to Ali, Fatima criticizes Mabrouka for behaving this way in front of her mother, who is sitting with a few other women at the other end of the playground.¹¹⁵

Example 4.2: ‘My name is Yessenia Hachani’

- 1 Mabrouka j’m’appelle [[Yessenia Hachani y’a un problème!? y’a un problème!?
My name is Yessenia Hachani. You got a problem!? You got a problem!?
- 2 Brigitte [[Yessenia Hachani y’a un problème!?
Yessenia Hachani. You got a problem!?
- 3 Mabrouka j’m’appelle Youssouf Hachani y’a un problème?!
my name is Youssouf Hachani. You got a problem?
- 4 ? Samia?Assia! [maybe names of parents]
??
- 5 ? shh! shh!
shh! shh!

generally.

¹¹⁴ In this way, they are similar to the Apache place name stories that Basso [1984] documents in the article “Stalking with Stories.”

¹¹⁵ In Chapter 5 I describe the complex usage of this playground, which was an important inter-generational feminine space.

other. In the case represented above, Mabrouka and Brigitte embody Ali's mother's and father's voices as a way to communicate to and about Ali himself. Through hypothetical reported speech, Mabrouka and Brigitte momentarily take on identities of a peer's parent, if only to create a vivid contrast between themselves, as Ali's mock parents, and his actual mother and father [cf. Tannen 1989].

In addition to adolescent preferences for interaction, this example demonstrates differences between adult and adolescent groups, particularly with respect to divergent interactional expectations. In particular, the loud performance of parental name-calling draws the attention the critical gaze of a real parent watching the performance: Mabrouka's mother. While her mother stares stony-faced from across the playground, Fatima chooses to voice the projected wishes of Mabrouka's mother, also through the use of hypothetical reported speech: "Your mother is saying to you 'but who do you think you are? [Are] you normal?'" [line 6]. Here Fatima also embodies a mother figure through constructing words for her. Thus, while this exchange involves a performance of flouting respect for a peer's parents, it also involves a peer performance that reinstates normative respect for parents and demonstrates adolescent concern for *le respect*.

However, Mabrouka's response to Fatima's scolding exhibits her ambivalence toward how the code of *respect* would potentially affect their behavior in front of adults. In a diminished voice, Mabrouka whispers "Is it true?" Mabrouka's response thus initially appears ashamed, but then seems to indicate that her own mother has less influence over her behavior than outsiders would: "oh yeah, I thought it was your mother who was looking at me" [line 9]. Mabrouka also disperses the force of her mother's disapproval by implying that her mother's dismay is a usual result of Mabrouka's yelling that hasn't dissuaded her from the practice: "She is freaking out--my mother looks at me when I yell" [line 10].

In both of the examples in this section, adolescents are constructing in-group practices for interaction that index relationships with adults at the same time that they attempt to exclude adults as audience members. In this way, these routines are designed

¹¹⁷ While it is unclear whether the words "is there a problem?" refer to an actual event or to an aggressive caricature, the humorous rendering of Ali's parents is effective nonetheless.

for adolescent peers who have a cultural understanding of the value of 'respect' for kin, and who consequently take intense delight in transgressing this value through teasing. In other words, parental name-calling is subversive because the adolescents performing it have internalized a value for 'respect' of kin. This cultural preference is evident here in Fatima's response to Mabrouka's performance--she wants to protect her peer's mother's 'face' by restricting adult access to name-calling routines. At the same time, the example makes clear that public 'face' and 'appropriate' adolescent behavior hinge upon the gaze of the 'other' in that the critical gaze of non-kin is constructed by Mabrouka as potentially more damaging to one's character than that of close kin: "oh yeah, I thought it was your mother who was looking at me" [line 9].

In the next section I develop the idea that these name-calling routines structure interpersonal communication between adolescents. In so doing, I will describe these performances as speech events in an effort to show their relevance for social interaction and social structure among peers.

PARENTAL NAME-CALLING AS SPEECH EVENT

In this section, I turn to more elaborate parental name calling routines and explore their relevance for structuring verbal interactions and social relationships among adolescent peers. True to Hymes' [1964] vision of speech events generally, participation in parental name-calling holds dual consequences for adolescents. On the one hand, competence in these exchanges is a way to show that one belongs to a peer group through the demonstration of communicative competence and insider knowledge. On the other, practicing and performing name-calling is a way, in itself, to create social and linguistic contexts for peer relationships.¹¹⁸ Studies in the ethnography of communication have looked to speech events to understand how the construction of cultural meaning occurs as a collaborative process. Sherzer, for example, found that the choice of speech event contextualizes meaning within Kuna chiefs' gatherings, and will also determine how and which audience members are expected to participate [1974, 1983]. As well, Sherzer notes that successfully participating in official speech events largely determines a chief's success [1983:90].

In the context of this study, speech events arguably constitute a central way for adolescents to experience belonging within a group of peers.¹¹⁹ As scholars in the field of language and gender research have noted, a practiced-based approach "allow[s] identities to be explained as the result of positive and negative identity practices rather than as fixed categories, as in the speech-community model" [Bucholtz 1999:203, see also Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992].¹²⁰ One of the major means of experiencing and

¹¹⁸ Here I also draw upon Marjorie Goodwin's work describing the role of interactional structures for organizing African-American children's social networks [Goodwin, 1990].

¹¹⁹ I do not wish to claim that adolescence is a universal category. Rather, as I argue in Chapter Two, adolescence is a salient category when it is used as such by a given community and when cultural markers, such as linguistic styles, designate adolescents as a distinct group.

¹²⁰ The speech community is a concept that now needs considerable problematizing. While adolescents in Chemin de l'Île can hardly be considered a "community" in the traditional sense, much of what 'traditional community' has meant to anthropology is itself coming into question. While I do not wish to engage with the entirety of this theoretical debate for the sake of space, what Gumperz [1968] termed a "linguistic community" has been challenged as too uniform a concept to account for the often contested and partial ways that individuals participate in language practices.

exteriorizing adolescence in *Chemin de l'Île* is the collaborative practice of verbal genres such as parental name-calling. In the examples that follow, I hope to show that peer identity emerges through interactional style not in an abstract sense, but through the particular ways that interactions are styled and structured by adolescents themselves [cf. Goodwin 1990].

Collaborative performances of parental name-calling provides the opportunity for adolescents to elaborate their own and their peer's social identity in relation to parental figures imagined in talk. Through irreverent name-calling practices, adolescents perform their identities as children old enough to stage performances of rebellion against their parents, which are, ironically, expressed through the symbolic inter-dependence of parent and child. To be sure, these name-calling routines are composed of a peer insulting another's parents, seemingly indicating that the irreverence only extends to others' kin. However, through discursive signals that serve to initiate parental name-calling, speakers make themselves vulnerable to such teasing and facilitate the ritualized insulting of their own relatives by a peer. Thus, these collaborative performances are a way for adolescents to stage mutually-achieved performances which both foreground and subvert culturally sanctioned notions of 'respect' for older kin. The social contradictions here calls to mind "the inseparability of precursory traditions, politics, and cultural poetics and their often paradoxical relationship" [Limón 1994: x]. In the case of parental name-calling performances, adolescents simultaneously voice both cultural continuity and disjuncture.

In the following examples of collaborative parental name-calling, three adolescents improvise using lyrics lifted from a Daniel Balavoine song "Je m'appelle Henri" ("My name is Henri"). Daniel Balavoine was a popular French singer in the late 70s and early 80s, whose career was cut short by a fatal plane crash. His music is part of classic French rock that is still played on mainstream radio stations across the country. Creatively subverting the song's original meaning, three Algerian-French adolescents, Hayat, a 14 year old girl, Salima, a 15 year old girl, and Khaled, a 13 year old boy, take turns inserting each others' mothers' names in the "Henri" slot of the lyrics. In so doing, they transform the song lyrics into a performative vehicle for parental name-calling.

Example 4.3

- | | | |
|---|--------|--|
| 1 | Salima | “je me presente”
<i>“I introduce myself”</i> |
| 2 | Hayat | shoush
<i>shhhh</i> |
| 3 | Khaled | “je m’ap – pelle”
<i>“my name is”</i> |
| 4 | Hayat | Aïcha
<i>Aïcha</i> |
| 5 | Salima | je m’appelle [[Aïcha
<i>my name is</i> [[<i>Aïcha</i> |
| | Hayat | [[je-
[[I- |
| 6 | Hayat | je voudrais bien avoir un petit chat
<i>I would like to have a little cat</i> |
| 7 | Salima | [laughs] |
| 8 | Hayat | bonjour Djamila
<i>hello Djamila</i> |

In this example, the words “I introduce myself” instigate a round of playful teasing in which one participant’s initial utterance is completed by a second participant, resulting in collaboratively achieved pair parts. For example, in the first four turns of this exchange, Salima, Khaled, and Hayat collaborate to form the couplet “I introduce myself, my name is Aïcha.” This form of parental name-calling is clearly a collaboratively achieved speech event for several reasons. First, Salima and then Khaled take turns initiating, but not completing, the pair parts formed by lyrics to the Balavoine song. Salima begins, in line 1, “I introduce myself,” but doesn’t complete the second part. Khaled initiates several words from the second pair part of the Balavoine lyrics, “I call myself Henri” (line 3), but omits a personal name by stating simply “je m’appelle” [‘I call myself’]. In choosing to leave the couplet incomplete, Khaled leaves himself open for teasing. Instead, Khaled could have completed the part with the name of one of the

girls' parents. However, it seems here that Khaled is choosing to play the 'straight man' to initiate a round of playful teasing, much as Salima has done by voicing the initial words "I introduce myself."

Hayat's choice to fill the "Henri" slot with Khaled's mother's name, "Aïcha," changes the openly collaborative character of the exchange into an utterance directed at Khaled. Salima chooses to align herself with Hayat's bid to tease Khaled by repeating the full second line of the pair part "My name is Aïcha" [line 5]. By merely reiterating Khaled and Hayat's words, Salima maintains a cadence or rhythm to the teasing exchange. As is the case with more direct conflict, i.e. an argument, this example demonstrates participants' preference to maintain the ongoing volley of words, even if it means repetition. Like a three-way tennis match, the most important thing is to 'keep the ball (or word) alive,' a pattern that mimics more serious conflict among children and adolescents. Here, as in examples of direct conflict, the preference is to fill the 'slot' made available to the addressee, whether or not he or she finds a new line of defense.

In line 6, Hayat adds another rhyming pair part "I would like to have a little cat" [line 6]. Here, the French word *chat* ("cat") not only rhymes with Aïcha, but is also an allusion to Salima's mother, whose nickname among Salima's peers is *Djamila, le chat* or "Djamila the cat." The use of the seemingly innocent word "cat" to refer to Salima's mother (and by extension Salima) is a pun¹²¹ which allows Hayat to "say something tabooed while appearing to say something harmless" [Sanches and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1976:73]. Salima responds to this clever turn of the teasing on her by laughing and then Hayat makes a direct reference to Salima's mother by saying "Hello Djamila" [line 8]. As in the "Beverly Hills 90210" example in Section II, adolescents are constructing a secretive code that solidifies in-group knowledge and affective attachment to their peer group.

Although the interaction is collaboratively structured, verbal aggression is nonetheless manifest in how insults are directed at addressees. Much as Khaled becomes the object of Hayat's teasing after he initiates the teasing routine, Salima becomes the

recipient of teasing after she reiterates Khaled's and Hayat's words: "je m'appelle Aïcha" [line 5]. Here and in many of the instances of teasing that I analyze in Chapter Three, it is a speaker's participation which leads to her or his being challenged by a peer. That is, speaking of any sort seems to be interpreted as a signal that the speaker is 'open' or available for teasing by other participants. Insofar as the interactional pattern is to direct teasing at whomever is verbally active at the moment, the interaction is less generally about 'ganging up' on any one participant than each speaker doing the best performance of verbal prowess possible. In this particular example, Hayat is able to successfully tease everyone in the room while rhyming, demonstrating remarkable verbal ability. In other contexts, Hayat was incredibly verbally agile—she often rapped and spoke in rhyme, punning and riffing off other speakers' words. In a sense then, by leaving open 'slots' for Hayat to fill, Khaled and Salima may be attempting to encourage Hayat to 'see what she can do' in terms of the rhyming and punning that she is already known for among her peers.

This example shows that parental name-calling can take the form of a speech event in which verbal competition is not as central as collaborative verbal play. The highly collaborative quality of these performances shows that participants are concerned with constructing a layering of meanings, a jointly achieved juxtaposition of cultural puns and plays on words. More specifically, the example demonstrates linguistic and cultural play occurring at several levels. At the referential level, punning creates an insider code for adolescent peers, as shown by how "chat" is used to rhyme with "Aïcha," but also to refer to Salima's mother. At the discursive level, the insertion of their peer's mother's name, "Aïcha" and "Djamila," into a classic French rock song is an example of innovative cultural punning in which participants breach the symbolic borders between French and Arabic cultural references.

In the next example, participants extend symbolic play to their choice of linguistic code by using Arabic as a resource to improvise rhyming insults.

¹²¹This example actually demonstrates what Sanches and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett refer to as a "children's pun" as opposed to a "true pun" in which "perfectly homonymous elements [are]...used to produce two

Example 4.4

- 1 Khaled Fatiha, elle fait caca
Fatiha, she's shitting
- 2 Hayat ah ha!
ah ha!
- 3 Khaled parce qu'elle a du **khra'** sur la tête
*because she has **shit** on her head*
- 4 Hayat Aïcha, caca **khariyya**
*Aïcha, shit **shitter***
- 5 ? [XX **kathir**]
[XX a lot]
- 6 Khaled Ah hem!
Ah hem!
- 7 Salima je me presente
I introduce myself
- 8 Khaled je m'appelle Djamila
my name is Djamila
- 9 Hayat Aïcha!
Aïcha!
- 10 Salima je m'appelle Aïcha
my name is Aïcha
- 11 Hayat qui est là? oh la petite **qaḥaba**
*who's there? oh the little **whore***
- 12 Khaled gi- gitane!
g- gypsy!

As in the last excerpt, the three participants continue to tease each other by inserting the name of their peer's mother into couplets, which are generally rhymed and collaboratively achieved. Here, however, Arabic loan words are the central resource for the more overtly competitive exchange. For example, Khaled instigates the teasing by

claiming of Hayat's mother *Fatiha, elle fait caca* or 'Fatiha, she's shitting' [line 1] and continues "because she has shit on her head," using the Arabic word **khra'** [line 3]. In this insult, Khaled employs Arabic as a reiteration device since it allows him to repeat the word for "shit" in both French and Arabic. Hayat responds in like fashion by recycling similar words derived from "shit" in both French and Arabic, chanting "Aïcha, caca **khariyya,**" calling Khaled's mother a "shitty shitter" [line 4].

The presence of Arabic in this exchange is more akin to loan word usage than codeswitching, in that emblematic Arabic terms are used rather than whole phrases or syntax [cf Gumperz 1982a]. However, the practice of using reiteration in contrasting codes for emphasis is a common characteristic of what Gumperz calls "metaphorical codeswitching" [ibid.]. In a sense, then, while participants' practice of embedding Arabic insults into French may not be the "juxtaposition...of...two different grammatical systems" [ibid.:59] since the Arabic terms adhere to French grammar, this exchange "builds upon participants' perception of two contrasting systems" on a symbolic level [ibid.:84]. Just as the last example showed Arabic-inspired parental insults embedded in a French rock song, here too adolescents seem to be constructing a speech event that foregrounds symbolic contrast and cultural juxtaposition.

Once again, when the initial cadence of insults wane, the exchange's structure returns to the Balavoine song *Je m'appelle Henri*. First Salima reinitiates the teasing by uttering "I introduce myself" [line 7] and then by Khaled who finishes the phrase and inserts Salima's mother's name "My name is Aïcha" [line 8]. Again, Salima's re-introduction of the instigating phrase "je me presente" seems to make her particularly vulnerable to teasing, as Khaled designs the completing pair part with her as the recipient. In a very literal sense, then, the words "I introduce myself" seem to 'introduce' the speaker as available for teasing.

The collaborative and complementary patterns of one speaker initiating the first pair part and the second finishing the rhymed phrase is mirrored in turn taking patterns more generally throughout the exchange. For example, responding participants seem to encourage their teaser to extend their turns by filling in nonsensical but rhymed responses. In line 1, when Khaled initiates "Fatiha, she's shitting" Hayat's response is

simply “ah ha!” which not only rhymes with *Fatiha, elle fait caca*, but also seems to me to encourage a continuation of Khaled’s turn, since it does not turn the insulting back at him. Khaled does continue his turn with a second iteration of the insult directed at Hayat: “because she has shit on her head” [line 3]. A similar pattern emerges in lines 4-6, in which Khaled merely responds with the exclamation “ah hem!” to Hayat’s insult about his mother. While these semi-verbal responses do not add content to these insulting routines, they do add rhythm and serve to continue the play of words that volley back and forth.

A pattern that emerges more strongly in this example is the strategic re-alignment of speakers to collaboratively tease another peer. In one instance, Hayat aligns herself with Salima by countering “Aïcha” [line 9] just after Khaled has initiated a name-calling sequence about Salima’s mother, “my name is Aïcha,” in line 8. Salima then ratifies her alignment with Hayat by reiterating the reference to Khaled’s mother “my name is Aïcha” [line 10]. Hayat completes the rhymed couplet directed at Khaled by rhyming with Salima’s pair part: “who’s there? oh the little whore” or **qaḥaba** [line 11].

In response to this new insult, Khaled breaks the rhymed pattern by exclaiming “gypsy!” in a conventional direct insult [line 12].¹²² Here collaborative parental name-calling breaks down in the wake of increasingly taboo insults. Perhaps a tendency of this type of collaborative play is to attempt insults of increasing irreverence. Given Khaled’s response, however, there would seem to be constraints to the type of insult that might be leveled at a peer before they cede from the game entirely. In this exchange and many others I observed, adolescents use Arabic loan words to express the most insulting or taboo terms, such as “shit/shitter” or **khra’/khariyya** and “whore” or **qaḥaba**. Following Gumperz [1982a], this would seem to indicate that the “in-group” language mitigates the force of the insult. In this instance, however, even the use of Arabic is not enough to sustain the playful tone after Hayat implies that Khaled’s mother is a prostitute.

¹²² *Les Gitanes* or ‘Gypsies’ are one of the most reviled and feared groups among adolescents in Chemin de l’Île and in France generally. The stereotypical construction of Gypsies by outsiders focuses on their

In the following section, I develop the larger aesthetic of kinship which undergirds parental name-calling and the construction of peer identity more generally. Just as adolescents are playing with the limits of propriety with respect to the ideal of ‘respect’ for kin, they are also using kinship itself as a motif for peer social identity.

purported toughness, ruthlessness, and lawlessness. As such, this image provided a stereotypical counterpoint to dominant French constructions of *les Arabes* as embodying similar characteristics.

KINSHIP AS INTIMACY, KNOWLEDGE, AND DISCURSIVE POWER

This section deals with the ways that parental name-calling performances fit into a larger pattern of evoking kinship in order to create and express intimacy among adolescent peers. By intimacy, I do not only mean ‘closeness’ in terms of shared emotional bonds, but rather personal knowledge about another that can be experienced by the addressee as both positive or negative, and which can be used to both positive and negative results. The dynamics of this process is threefold and I will explore each element through a concrete example of discourse. First, I explore the ways that discussion of a peer’s parent in public allows the speaker to claim intimate knowledge about a peer.

In the first example I look at how intimate knowledge about a peer is publicly displayed in order to belittle that individual. Additionally, this public shaming of a peer serves to voice tensions about the cultural gap between immigrant parents and adolescents in Chemin de l’Ile. In the second example, I look at the use of fictionalized kinship being displayed as grounds for knowing another peer intimately and, further, for publicly sharing knowledge about that person. In the third example, knowledge about a peer’s relative is used as symbolic collateral to prevent that peer from sharing personal information about the speaker.

Intimate knowledge about a peer's family serves as a tool in sharing and containing information about peers. Such intimate knowledge offers tangible recourse for an adolescent who feels wronged by another peer's misuse of information about him or her. That is, information about a parent gives adolescents the ability (and the credibility) to threaten to share information about a peer with his or her parent. As well, such information is threatening in that it might be shared with non-intimate peers. Indeed, the power of name-calling performances is that they are usually performed in front of an audience of peers, thus potentially ‘outing’ the individual. As is shown in the last example, personal information regarding dating or anything else deemed ‘secret’ by the peer in question is available for use as symbolic collateral to tease or threaten a peer.

Although the penalty for dating is often different for girls than for boys, both girls and boys wield the power to divulge personal information about another. I will address this point in more detail when I analyze the example.

Example 4.5: “Saliha with her scarf”

One evening I was sitting out in the playground near the "Resistance" apartments with a small group of girls, when Sherazade walked up to chat after dance practice. The rest of us had been sitting there since school was out. Sherazade, like the other girls, lived in the small 1960s apartment complex, which was the first public housing built in the neighborhood. All four buildings stood only four stories tall and sat cozily clustered around the playground. Upon seeing her approach, Mabrouka, one of several girls seated on the concrete wall, reported to Sherazade that her mother had burned something in her kitchen and the smoke had traveled all the way to the playground. Mabrouka then rendered a bodily pantomime of Sherazade's mother using a scarf to shake the smoke out of the kitchen. While she leaned forward and waved her arms up and down, Mabrouka added a verbal caption for the image she had created: "Saliha avec son foulard en train de le secouer" (*'Saliha with her scarf shaking it out.'*). Sherazade said nothing, but frowned. Mabrouka apparently interpreted Sherazade's look as an accusation of wrongdoing, for she responded: "Ne t'inquiète pas" (*Don't worry*). Rather than accept Mabrouka's mitigation of the seriousness of her performance, Sherazade said to the rest of us, "Elle me fait toujours ce genre de truc, Mabrouka, pour que je m'inquiète et tout," (*Mabrouka always does this kind of thing to me, so that I'll worry and everything*). With no resolution or further commentary, the girls' discussion about the event ended there.

In spite of the lack of interpretation embedded within the interaction itself, ethnographic knowledge about the cultural practices and local space of Chemin de l'Ile provides some clues as to why Sherazade would think Mabrouka's story was cause for "worry."¹²³ The verbal and physical imagery Mabrouka uses potentially incite affront because of the public spectacle that Sherazade's mother supposedly makes of herself.

¹²³ I deal with cultural practices surrounding space, gender, and propriety in detail in the next chapter.

Mabrouka describes Sherazade's mother as inappropriately crossing from private to public space in two ways: first, by supposedly burning something whose smell travels all the way to the playground, and second, by hanging out the window for everyone to see. Mabrouka's performance of Sherazade's mother, leaning out of her kitchen window and naively showing herself and her burned cooking to the whole neighborhood recalls stereotypes about the *clandé*, or newly arrived immigrant, prevalent in popular anti-immigrant rhetoric. Adolescents in Chemin de l'Île actively use the stereotype of the *clandé* to alternately tease one another or to distinguish themselves from this comical and naive figure.¹²⁴

Further, Mabrouka's performance of Saliha's use of her scarf is also a means to depict her as behaving inappropriately. The headscarf or *foulard* is a personal item of women's clothing that in Islam symbolizes (among other things) women's modesty before God [Abu-Lughod 1986]. It is quite surprising then, that Saliha would take a headscarf and use it to shake away smoke rather than keep it on her head, where it 'should' be. It is more probable that Saliha actually used a kitchen towel or *torchon*, since she did not wear a *foulard* in public, let alone in her home. Nonetheless, Mabrouka's choice of wording draws upon religious symbolism in order to cast Sherazade's mother as inappropriate. As well, Mabrouka's choice of familiar address for "Saliha" is also a means of flouting the culturally sanctioned respect of elders—a kind of respect that is often challenged by parental insults, at the same time that it is foregrounded as a cultural value.

In addition to the cultural values at stake in parental name-calling and similar types of insults, this example points to the delicate balance between joking and affront that teasing represents. In the above case, teasing becomes insult through its interpretation by the listener, Sherazade, and not specifically by certain codes or "limits" to the type or level of joking. At the same time, parental teasing among these adolescents provides a window of perspective on the tropes and themes that such joking embodies. In

¹²⁴ *Clandé* is a term that these adolescents use frequently—it derives from *clandestine*, or 'illegal' (as in 'illegal immigrant'), and is generally a term reserved as a descriptive term for the single male laborers who lived in two foyers within the neighborhood. As an insult, however, it is widely used among adolescent

addition to cultural preferences about content for such teasing, there are interactional preferences that also emerge. In particular, insults about kin, and especially parents, often necessitate a response—the addressee may feel not only a right, but also a responsibility to show anger or to defend their relative with reciprocal teasing. As such, parental teasing provides an interesting perspective from which to approach adolescent bi-culturality. Adolescents produce and interpret family-directed teasing using culturally relevant information. In so doing, they both draw upon ideals of ‘respect’ and kinship drawn from Algerian cultural models as well as French notions of “appropriate” public behavior.

Through the ambivalence expressed toward such cultural values as *le respect*, parental name-calling highlights the delicate balance that adolescents are negotiating between joke and affront in such teasing. At the same time, parental teasing among these adolescents provides a window of perspective on the tropes and themes that such joking embodies. In addition to cultural preferences about content for such teasing, there are interactional preferences that also emerge. In addition to drawing upon and subverting cultural ideals of ‘respect’ from Algerian cultural models, adolescents also seem to be re-voicing bourgeois notions of “appropriate” public behavior that they are taught in school. A current national education project implemented in middle schools, for instance, teaches French students like Mabrouka and Sherazade ‘civility’ and rules for ‘being good neighbors’ in a textbook that depicts problems with litter and graffiti within low-income housing projects similar to Chemin de l’Ile. In addition to ‘civility’ discourses that circulate in the public schools, anti-immigrant rhetoric has also associated immigrants in France with exceeding “appropriate” boundaries of a bourgeois French aesthetic. Thus it is perhaps not surprising that the depiction of Sherazade’s mother acting inappropriately corresponds to anti-immigrant rhetoric espoused by French media and politicians.¹²⁵ Such highly negative depictions of typical “immigrant” behavior are circulating through both public and everyday discourses in Chemin de l’Ile and elsewhere in France—the above

peers for teasing one another about qualities (i.e. dress style, language) that purportedly mimic the aforementioned migrant population.

exchange, however, demonstrates adolescents who are children of immigrants are using similar discourses for their own in-group purposes.¹²⁶

“Intimacy” exists as a manifold creation in this exchange. First, in telling and acting out Sherazade’s mother’s behavior, Mabrouka has indirectly constructed intimate knowledge about Sherazade herself. To know something about someone’s mother is already to know intimate knowledge about a peer, given the fixation upon producing and controlling information about kin among these adolescents. The non-intimate setting in which Mabrouka tells this story further highlights the intimate quality of seeing and smelling Sherazade’s mother attempting to rid her home of burnt food. Moreover, the potential affront of this story depends upon intimate cultural knowledge regarding propriety, gender, and space. In the next example, I look at how intimacy as closeness with a peer is constructed through knowing information about that individual and being able to share this information with others.

¹²⁵ In Chapter One, for example, I discuss the infamous speech in which Jacques Chirac evoked “*le bruit et l’odeur*” (“the sound and smell”) of immigrant neighbors to empathize with “*le français moyen*” (“average Frenchman”) and his supposed frustration with overcrowding in public housing.

¹²⁶ However, in a demonstration of the power of discourse and its ambivalence, this particular highly negative slogan was subsequently reassigned a pro-immigrant political meaning when the multiethnic group *Zebda* produced a CD of the same name “Les Bruits et les Odeurs.”

“COUSINS” TALK HOW THEY WANT’: RELATIONAL IDENTITY AND PERFORMATIVE KINSHIP

Performances of kin are not always directed at parents, but often deal with the ubiquitous “cousins” to which every adolescent in Chemin de l’Ile lay claim. I will not have the space to develop all of the different pragmatic ways that adolescents invoke the actual or fictional relationship “cousins.” Briefly, however, adolescents generally designate a “cousin” in order to describe, create, or justify closeness with another adolescent, whether or not this closeness is of biological or social origin. For example, girls who were very close friends would often describe themselves as cousins. As well, adolescents mislead children or adults (i.e., teachers, mentors, and anthropologists) about their relationship by claiming to be “cousins,” despite a lack of actual kinship. Additionally, adolescents of the opposite sex who want to validate behavior that would otherwise be suspect self-designate as “cousins.” One such instance consisted of a boy and girl, both around 14, who walked home together after tutoring every night. In order to protect themselves from the rumor that they were boyfriend and girlfriend, they described themselves as “cousins,” a relationship that may or may not have been biologically accurate.¹²⁷

In the following example, I explore the ways that claiming kinship authorizes adolescents to speak about a peer, an act that was risky because it could be interpreted as spreading rumors. Whereas in the above example, information about close kin is the vehicle to voice personal information about a peer, here kinship itself authorizes the act of speaking about another. In that sense, while voicing information about close kin is a way to publicly ‘display’ (*afficher*) a peer, kinship itself provides the license to do so without sanction. In this particular case, Brigitte is publicly teasing her “cousin,” making

¹²⁷ The fact that adolescents would self designate as cousins in order to circumvent any rumors that they were dating shows a considerable shift toward French values. In North Africa and the Middle East generally, parallel cousin marriage is widely practiced, and so *not* an excuse for mixed-gender socializing in public. In Chemin de l’Ile, adolescents seemed (at least outwardly) to claim a platonic relationship, thus either using French kinship patterns to their advantage or genuinely not considering cousins suitable romantic partners.

a parallel between her all white-outfit and the coconut candy bar, *Bounty*. Brigitte also justifies talking about whom the girl is dating by claiming to be ‘cousins’.

Example 4.6

- 1 Brigitte [quoting a popular television ad for the candy bar, “Bounty”]
hé! “Bounty! Une bouchée d’exotisme”
Hey! “Bounty! A mouthful of exoticism”
- 2 Mabrouka pourquoi tu dis ça?
why are you saying that?
- 3 Brigitte elle a du blanc là-ic¹²⁸ [Alexadra points to her shirt]
she has white here
- 4 tu sais du blanc style [‘style’ pronounced in American English]
you know white like [implying ‘in the style of’ the candy bar]
- 5 Mabrouka **za‘ma**
like
- 6 Naima tu sais elle sort avec qui? tu sais elle sort avec qui?
you know who she’s dating? you know who she’s dating?
- 7 Mabrouka **za‘ma** [??]
like [???
- 8 Brigitte Mais tu sais pas c’est ma cousine. J’parle sur elle comme je veux.
But you don’t know she’s my cousin. I talk about her how I want
to.
- [...]
- 9 Brigitte c’est pas vraiment ma cousine
she’s not really my cousin
- 10 c’est parce que c’est parce que c’est une portugaise et et
it’s because, it’s because she’s Portuguese and and
- 11 nous on est tous cousins c’est à dire
we’re all cousins, I mean

¹²⁸ “Là-ic” is *verlan* (inverted slang) for “ici-là,” or ‘here’.

In this example, Brigitte is calling out to an older girl, dressed in white and standing at the entryway of a nearby building. Brigitte quotes the overtly sexual motto of a candy bar advertisement to describe her “cousin,” Julie, as a “mouthful of exoticism.” Julie ignores this public description of her, but the girls sitting near Brigitte express intense interest in the exchange, asking, “why are you saying that?” [line 2] and “you know who she’s dating?” [line 6].

Perhaps because I am sitting with the girls, observing as well as recording them, Brigitte justifies herself, “But you don’t know she’s my cousin. I talk about her how I want to” [line 8]. Her justification reveals the logic connecting kinship and personal information: speakers have increased rights when talking about kin as opposed to non-kin. Brigitte then problematizes her own claim by admitting the girl is not “really” her cousin, but, because they are both Portuguese, it amounts to the same thing. Furthermore, Brigitte claims that Portuguese are “all cousins.”

This example demonstrates Brigitte creating intimacy with a peer by evoking imagined kinship. In both this and the previous example, adolescents are constructing kinship as bound/tied not only to intimate knowledge, but also the discretionary use of that knowledge by peers. In the first example, Mabrouka constructs an unflattering and intimate portrayal of Sherazade’s mother to tease, and perhaps intimidate her peer. In so doing, Mabrouka shows that holding knowledge about a peer’s parents is tantamount to holding the power of intimidation, or, as Sherazade states, to ‘make someone worry.’ In this last example, Brigitte is using fictional kinship to justify her right to discuss intimate facts about a peer’s dating life. Here again, kinship, intimacy, and discursive power are bound together in interesting ways. More specifically, fictional kinship is publicly displayed as the basis for access to private knowledge and for the right to share that knowledge with others.

In the following example, I continue to explore the dynamic relationship among kinship, intimacy, and discursive power. This particular example serves to frame parental ‘name-calling’ in relation to the potential material consequences that result from knowledge about a peer’s parents. The excerpt shows an exchange between Naima (a

girl of 12) and Khaled (a boy of 13), in which both exchange threats to share personal information with the other's parent. Adolescents thus use information about their peers' parents not only for teasing, but also for threats and disclosure.

Example 4.7: "I know where he works, your father"

- 1 Naima fais voir tes yeux Khaled. Ahmed numero deux
show us your eyes Khaled. Ahmed number two
[Ahmed is Khaled's older brother]
- 2 Mabrouka putain il a de ces beaux yeux, le chien_
fuck he has some of those beautiful eyes, the dog
- 3 Khaled pourquoi tu dis c'est Ahmed numéro deux?
why do you say it's 'Ahmed number two?'
- 4 c'est Khaled numéro zero et-
it's Khaled number zero and-
- 5 Mabrouka Ahmed numéro deux
Ahmed number two
- 6 Naimaouais, nan, par contre, c'est la vérité
yeah, no, on the other hand, it's the truth
- 7 que c'est Khaled numéro deux
that it's Khaled number two
- 8 parce que Khaled numéro un
because Khaled number one
- 9 c'est ton daron
it's your father
- [Naima laughs]
- 10 Naima je t'ai vexé! [gleefully]
I annoyed you!
- 11 Khaled heeeh t'es contente hhhaaa
heeee you're happy haaaa [fake laughter/mimicry]

- 12 ah mais toi t'es pas une Chaabane
oh but you- you're not a Chaabane
- [Khaled is implying that Naima is adopted—
Chaabane is her adoptive family's name]
- 13 Naima vas dire ça. vas dire ce que t'a dit là
go ahead and say that. go say what you said there.
- 14 Mabrouka il va la raconter à tout le monde pendant une semaine là
he's going to tell that to everyone during a whole week
- [...]
- 15 Naima ferme ta gueule aussi
shut your trap too
- 16 hé sur le **Qur'an**, tu balance
hey, on the Koran, you tell
- 17 sur le **Qur'an** je vais voir ta daronne
on the Koran I'm going to go see your mother
- 18 et **wallah** je lui dit-
and by God tell her
- 19 voi- ton père
go see your father
- 20 je je sais où il travail ton père
I know where he works, your father
- 21 Khaled hhhaaaahh! [crow-like laughing]
haaaaahhh!
- 22 Naima il travail à la loge, **ta'** la fac
he works at the security gate, of the University
- 3 à la fac- et ferme ta gueule-
at the University—and shut your mouth
- 24 i travail avec son frère
he works with his brother
- 25 et tiens maintenant j'te l'ai mis dans où j'pense-
and now that I stuck it to you where I'm thinking about

[i.e., "where the sun don't shine"]

- 26 Khaled [[moi j'vais voir ta soeur, ouais, j'sais où est qu'elle travail
me, I'm going to see your sister, yeah, I know where she works
- 27 Naima bah va la voir. j't'ai rien fait du tout
well go see her. I haven't done anything to you at all.

This example demonstrates that controlling knowledge about parents fits into a broader system of information exchange among adolescents. In this particular case, Naima and Khaled both wield information about each other's relatives to prevent the other from spreading of rumors about themselves. The initially playful exchange between Naima and Khaled turns increasingly combative as each threatens to divulge information about the other.

The exchange begins with Naima's reference to Khaled as "Ahmed number two," in allusion to Khaled's older brother, Ahmed [line 1]. When Khaled takes issue with being named in reference to his older brother, Naima points out that he really should be called "Khaled number two" because he was named after his father [lines 6-9]. By announcing Khaled's father's name, Naima engages in a version of parental name-calling; her playful yet aggressive intent is evidenced by her gleeful exclamation, "I annoyed you!" [line 10]. Khaled retaliates by mimicking her glee, "heeee, you're happy, haaaa!", and then implies that Naima is adopted, "oh, but you- you're not a Chaabane" (Naima's last name) [lines 11 and 12]. While Naima defies Khaled to repeat this information to others, she also threatens to see his mother and father, adding that she knows where he works [lines 15-20]. Khaled equally responds with a threat to go see Naima's sister and adds that he, too, knows where she works [line 26].

Struggles over intimate knowledge about kin and kinship abound in this example. Much to his dismay, Khaled's identity is expressed relationally, first with respect to his brother and then his father. Khaled retaliates by casting aspersions on Naima's familial status, positing biological kinship as a measurement for appropriate social standing. Both Naima and Khaled then threaten to use knowledge about each other's parent (namely, their workplace) to retaliate for information shared with other peers.

Here, the act of “displaying” (*afficher*) within the immediate context is pragmatically used to manage the possibility of being “displayed” to other peers, in other contexts. Specifically, the implicit threat that Khaled will spread the rumor that Naima is adopted gets voiced as a probability by Mabrouka: “he’s going to tell that to everyone during a whole week” [line 14]. Also embedded in the exchange is an oblique reference to Khaled dating someone, information that had already supposedly circulated to the girl’s brother. Naima need only obliquely mention that if Khaled tells her secret, she will tell his mother—the reference of what she will tell is understood and need not be named: “on the Koran I’m going to go see your mother, and by God tell her” [lines 17-18].

Thus, a peer’s knowledge of a peer’s parents comprises a kind of symbolic capital on several levels. In the immediate context, such information provides the means to provoke one’s peer. In the larger context of the peer group and the neighborhood generally, such information provides important collateral for controlling information about oneself. The importance of parental ‘name-calling’ is furthered by the observation that there are material consequences to the sharing and knowledge of information about a peer’s parents.

CONCLUSION

These varied examples of parental name-calling demonstrate the centrality of constructions of kin to adolescents' performances of personal identity. In particular, through parental name-calling, adolescents collaboratively perform their own and their peer's social identity in relation to a parental figures, imagined in talk. Performances of parental name-calling indicate that adolescents are experiencing and expressing peer identity as relational to their parents' generation. In these multi-layered performances, adolescents construct their identities as "daughter," "peer," "cousin," etc. Thus, performances of kin, and, in particular, of parents, point to the ways that adolescent identity is formulated not simply in relation to peers, but in relation to parental figures which are constructed as foils for the self, and, in turn, as foils for the peer group.

Moreover, in the context of adolescent identity in an immigrant community, the parental figure also represents the adolescent's relationship to one's cultural origins. As I have demonstrated, adolescents' collaborative construction of symbolic 'mothers' and 'fathers' create a complicated web of indexicality that entangles 'self' and 'other', child and parent, peer and adult, as well as 'second generation' and 'immigrant'. The collaborative linguistic performance of cultural identity and adolescent identity occur at the same time—one 'does' the other and vice versa. For example, Brigitte performs her own 'ethnic' Portuguese identity by constructing her peer as a 'cousin'. In so doing, Brigitte uses insider knowledge and practice of adolescent peer culture (namely that there are rules about who can talk about whom) to articulate a racialized 'immigrant' identity, and vice versa.

In addition to referencing knowledge about a peer's immigrant origins, the practice of parental 'name-calling' also exemplifies the overarching value of *le respect* through the verbal challenging of a peer's parent's "name," both literally and figuratively.. To be more specific, linking a peer to their parent in public is not merely significant in terms its ability to 'shame' an adolescent by foregrounding their identity as derivative of an absent adult. It is, also, a challenge for the adolescent peer to defend the

'respect' [*le respect*] of that parent through counter teasing. By using a peer's parent's first name in public, and in an irreverent manner, adolescents play with a cultural taboo. It is ironic then that the rules for respectful address and discussion of a parent are both subverted and foregrounded in these verbal routines. In the example where Fatima berates Mabrouka for performing a loud name-calling in front of her mother, ideologies about the secretive nature of these performances show the desire among these adolescents to uphold the very cultural values that these performances subvert. As is the case with other teasing types of subversion or 'rules', at the same time that a cultural custom is transgressed, it is reinforced through the breaking of that 'rule'. In the case of collaborative verbal performances, adolescents are simultaneously voicing both cultural continuity and disjuncture.

Chapter Five: “You Call That a Girl?”: Gender Borderwork and Crossing

This chapter explores *le respect* and *reputation* as two mutually informing ideologies for gender norms in Chemin de l’Ile. The social contradictions of *le respect* and reputation that I explore in relation to gender norms in Chemin de l’Ile draw upon Abrahams’ [1975] use of the concepts ‘respectability’ and ‘reputation’. The distinction in Abrahams’ work is based on his observations of working class, African American women in the early 1970s caught between the social bind of attending to masculine-styled ‘reputation’ through competitive verbal performance and to feminine-styled ‘respectability’ through their own effacement from public space. In this chapter, I deal with conflicting expectations for girls in Chemin de l’Ile, who, like the women that Abrahams studied, are expected to conform to a standard of “respectable” behavior and to a code of tough, reputational verbal style. As I discuss in more detail in Chapter Four, girls are held to a standard referred to as “respect” that involves self-effacement from the public sphere and maintaining their “virtue” (virginity) until marriage. While virginity and virtue are not necessarily outwardly perceptible qualities, avoiding public space and adopting modest dress styles are extolled by girls’ parents as a means secure a respectable image in the neighborhood.¹²⁹ At the same time, (drawing upon local codes for reputation among their peers), girls are expected to measure up to competitive verbal practices and speech genres which I refer to here and in Chapter Two as ‘*cit * styles’. In an effort to satisfy both, potentially conflicting sets of expectations, some girls adopt supposedly ‘masculine’ forms of dress and speech to circumvent inappropriately sexualized femininity while still exhibiting a high profile public identity. However, these girls are criticized by their peers for ‘trying to be men’, demonstrating the contradiction and ambivalence central to many girls’ experience of adolescent identities and gender expectations.

¹²⁹ Walters [1999:207] notes similar practices in Tunisia that dictate “the ways in which female and male bodies were regulated in public spaces,” particularly in small towns. Walters particularly notes the preference for keeping non-related men and women separate within public spaces.

Theories of language and gender within the fields of linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics provide particular promise for exploring the social contradiction and linguistic ambivalence that is often central to constructing local gender identities (e.g. Gal 1995; Bucholtz and Hall 1995; Kapchan 1996; McConnell-Ginet 1988; Ochs 1992; Thorne 1993). Perhaps most notably, Ochs describes the relationship between language and gender as non-exclusive in that linguistic features and discursive strategies index or point to gender only indirectly (1992:340). Instead, language directly indexes social stances which, in turn, come to stand for gendered meaning. Along these lines, Bucholtz and Hall note the ‘multivalent’ nature of linguistic forms that index gender (1995:14), and Kapchan the ‘polysemic’ aspect of gendered performances (ibid.:6). Local understandings and ideologies of the ways that verbal genres and styles map onto hegemonic gender categories invest ‘gendered’ symbolic forms with enormous potential transgressive power.¹³⁰ In the case of the *cit * styles of speech and dress that I mention above, linguistic and symbolic resources associated with the *cit * are more available to boys because they represent social stances like working class urbanity, youth, and toughness that indirectly come to represent masculinity in Chemin de l’Ile. However, because they only indirectly index masculinity, the inherent ambivalence of these verbal styles indicates that such symbolic forms and cultural practices provide a resource for girls to partially circumvent local prescriptions for ‘proper’ femininity.

Thorne’s pair of metaphors, *borderwork* and *crossing*, are particularly useful for describing the patterning of episodic enforcement and infraction of symbolic divisions between genders that I describe here (1993). In Thorne’s terms, girls’ strategic use of styles and attributes associated with masculinity constitute forays across gender boundaries, or crossings, which are countered by their peers’ social and verbal patrolling of the borders of gender identity, or borderwork.¹³¹ Tracking the push and pull of transgression and constraint present in adolescent girls’ performances of *cit * styles

¹³⁰ Here I draw upon Kapchan’s [1996] discussion of Moroccan women’s use of Qu’ranic verses and bawdy sexual genres in the marketplace to craft new forms of discursive authority as well as Kira Hall’s [1997] discussion of hijras’ use of both masculine and feminine speech styles in a way that transgresses male and female gender categories.

reveals the mutually informing yet often conflictual relationship between emergent gender identities and extant ideologies of gender.

In the first half of the chapter, I deal with the ways that girls are bound to a standard of *le respect* that delimits women's and girls' access to public space in Chemin de l'Ile. In the second half of the chapter, I deal with the ways that adolescent girls make a bid for a tough reputation among their peers, to varying degrees of success. I show that the tough reputation that adolescent boys aspire to in the *cit * is constituted, in part, by linguistic and symbolic practices that are less available to adolescent girls. All the same, girls attempt to access speech genres and dress styles that are central to a tough, local aesthetic of adolescent interaction, even though they symbolically considered masculine. I argue throughout that the mutually informing, yet conflicting *le respect* and "reputation" dovetail with notions of private and public space in Chemin de l'Ile. As such, a discussion of how space is gendered within the neighborhood is an integral to my argument that gender ideologies and linguistic practices mutually inform one another. Specifically, the first section on *le respect* deals with policing the boundaries of gender through a variety of practices, including teasing and evaluative comments by peers about 'proper' gender roles for girls. The second section analyzes girls' challenges to normative gender roles; however, I also show that girls' choices for representing themselves always exist in dialogue with their peers' critical evaluations of their behavior.

The inherently reflexive frame of performance provides a means to analyze both the voicing of social critique and the reiteration of social norms that are central to adolescent girls' (and boys') experiences of gender roles. Both adolescent boys and girls consider the ability to defend oneself against teasing and insults an important part of self presentation in the neighborhood. Goffman [1959] discusses self presentation as the process of crafting a public 'face' in relation to others through interaction. However, the very public nature of these competitive verbal performances, which usually take place in front of an audience at school, in the playground, or at neighborhood associations, mean

¹³¹ And, of course, the reverse is also true. Boys' gender transgressions are constrained by the borderwork activities of their female and male peers.

that they contribute to a self presentation that is regarded by adolescents as more typical of boys than girls. In this way, local cultural ideologies that construct public space as a more appropriate realm for men than women coincide with local linguistic ideologies that posit competitive verbal performance as a more suitable activity for boys than girls.

***LE RESPECT* AND GENDER IN PUBLIC NEIGHBORHOOD SPACE**

As I discuss throughout the dissertation, the culturally informed value of *le respect* posits a preference for men and women occupying separate outdoor, public space in Chemin de l'Île. Further, because most outside and public spaces in the neighborhood (i.e. parking lots, building entryways, areas around workers' foyers, the Sports complex, the Municipal Youth Center, the train station, the local café) are occupied by men and boys, there is a general preference among parents of adolescent girls that they limit their time outside (*dehors*) as much as possible.. Thus, prescriptive discourses about how girls and boys should use outdoor, public space are central to the construction of gender norms in Chemin de l'Île. While spending time outdoors with male peers is almost expected from adolescent boys and young men, girls and young women are advised by their older, male and female relatives to avoid public space. This discrepancy also derives, in part, from the widespread belief in Algeria, and across North Africa generally, that because men occupy most outdoor space, it is dangerous to an unmarried woman's virtue (i.e. virginity) and her own and her family's "respect" generally. But this assumption is also prevalent in local discourses that associate outdoor space in the *cit * (referred disparagingly to as *dehors* or *la rue*, 'the street') with immoral or dangerous behavior considered especially inappropriate for women and girls such as prostitution and selling illegal drugs. Among the few spaces that are unofficially designated for women and girls is a small playground with children's climbing toys; this area is less visible from the street than the parking lot and local caf  where adolescent boys and married men tended to congregate. In contrast, as a place designated for small children, the playground was regarded as appropriate space for mothers and adolescent girls to use to sit outside and visit. This playground consisted of a small cement structure enclosing a play space with slides and ladders for older children and a fenced space with toys for toddlers. Benches and a low cement wall surrounded the space, making it a pleasant place to sit on sunny days. Adolescent girls, and once in a while a boy or two, who lived nearby used this playground to hang out and talk after school.

In addition to the informal segregation of women and men into separate outdoor spaces, girls and women carefully limited their time outdoors. While some married women sat in the small playground to chat in the afternoons, many others avoided such public socializing for fear that doing so would foster gossip about them. I remember one afternoon walking to the market with Aïcha, an adult, married woman from Algeria whose family I eventually lived with. She was worried about seeing her father-in-law on the street, claiming it wasn't good that he see her, it made it look like she was 'outside' (*dehors*) all the time. She quickly covered her hair and walked on, but when it came time to cross his path, she did greet him briefly and we scurried on our way, no time for chitchat. I was particularly aware of this code of 'respect' [*le respect*] as it was often called, because I was not often accorded 'respectful' treatment when alone. For example, any trip to market from Aïcha's house required crossing the public parking lot in front—a regular hangout for many young men in the *cit *. When alone, and particularly before I moved in to Aïcha's house, I was loudly greeted and flirted with. One man went so far as to publicly ask me out on dates as I walked by. However, whenever I walked by with Aïcha, none of the young men would speak to us unless Aïcha initiated the interaction, conceivably out of respect for her. Chatting adolescent boys and young men allowed her to pass by in feigned anonymity unless she initiated the verbal exchange. Aïcha felt completely justified in doing so. One way that she would initiate a verbal exchange might be in the form of a request for help—lugging something to her front door, for example, if her eldest son, Ahmed, couldn't be found. Adolescent boys and young men in this case would follow local rules for respect of elders by doing what she asked, no complaints or questions.

The type of cross-gendered respect that Aïcha enjoyed among her eldest son's peers was largely due to her status as a married woman and mother who generally complies with gender norms for avoiding public space, except when conducting 'official' family duties, such as going to the local, open air market.¹³² Such was not automatically

¹³²On Aïcha's outings to market that I often tagged along for, she would regularly exclaim to me, and sometimes, other married women friends that she would pass by, "We're always outdoors here!" (On est tout le temps dehors ici.). She explained to me that in Marghnia, Algeria, where she had lived until she was 19, she would never go to market---that was the work of men. In France, however, women were seen

the case with young, unmarried women, however. Take, for example, the case of Yemina, Aïcha's 18 year old daughter. Yemina often described the great effort that she exerted to attain 'respect', often by avoiding neighborhood space entirely. One night Yemina explained how happy she was that night on her walk home from the RER (train) station. There was a car full of young men from the neighborhood sitting in a car parked in front, playing the radio very loudly. As she passed by, they lowered the sound, an act that Yemina interpreted as highly respectful. She felt that night that all of her 'hard work' (as she put it) had paid off, because she had finally won the neighborhood men's respect. Some of Yemina's ongoing 'fight' (*lutte*) for this masculine respect had taken the form of absenting herself from the neighborhood itself. She had decided to attend high school at a neighboring suburb, Colombes, where her parents had lived previously. Not only was the high school better than that of Nanterre, but she would be able to avoid all of the hassles of daily interactions with young men from the neighborhood and escape the possibility of surveillance, by her peers and, indirectly, her parents. Her strategy worked quite well as she was able to neatly separate her public school life from her life within the local neighborhood, preserving a level of anonymity in Chemin de l'Île that seemed to ensure her more access to the "respect" that she desired.

Adolescent girls who did not avoid public space in the neighborhood to this degree would often hang out with their peers groups in the small children's playgrounds in front of their buildings to socialize, sometimes just yards away from their mothers. Even so, these girls were often told by their mothers and other female and male relatives who passed by to 'go home' or to 'stop sitting on that bench like a bum.' Other girls who attempted to construct a non-compliant or atypical gender identity would further subvert expectations for the use of public space. These girls generally chose to use language and dress styles associated with the *cit * to construct a reputation as tough, independent, and unlike compliant girls who 'stay home and do the dishes,' as one adolescent put it. Their atypical verbal and clothing styles were accompanied by hanging out with friends in

'outdoors' [*dehors*] in the context of food shopping all the time--a fact that Aïcha seemed to both enjoy and feel anxiety about.

public places usually avoided by girls, including the commercial center, the train station, and neighboring *cités*.

As second and third generation adolescents within a predominantly Algerian immigrant community, girls in Chemin de l'Île are negotiating more than just gender norms. They are negotiating conflicting expectations inherent to a context where discourses about femininity shift between rejections of 'French' (im)morality and re-imaginings of 'Arab' or Muslim 'tradition'. Also at play are emergent *cité* codes of conduct that often conflict with both of the above discursive positions, but which still posit public space and *cité* identity as the domain of boys and men, adding to the ambivalence about social roles for girls and women in the community. Mobilizing these multiple discursive positions, residents in the neighborhood often interpreted girls who used competitive verbal genres and clothing styles typical of the *cité* as co-opting masculine linguistic and behavioral styles. In fact, girls' own meanings of these performances are more akin to a rejection of constraining discourses about femininity and 'tradition,' including the tendency to associate femininity and masculinity respectively with private and public spaces in the neighborhood. In performing this resistance, they draw on locally-available genres and styles of speech — those the neighborhood takes to be primarily the symbolic and linguistic resources of boys.

As I discussed in more detail in Chapter Two, the label *cité* encompasses many cultural assumptions in France. Any reference to a *cité* connotes a few, infamous low-income housing projects that the media has repeatedly represented in tandem with crime, drugs, and immigration, often positing immigration as a cause of the former two problems [Bonnafous 1991]. Chemin de l'Île is relatively calm; it has one of the lowest crime rates in Nanterre.¹³³ Despite this, its popular designation as a *cité* and its official status as a Priority Educational Zone or 'ZEP' indicate that many of its residents experience both material and representational inequities. Parallel to the stigmatization of *cités*, academic research and journalistic publications describe an emergent, youthful *cité* identity with attendant dress, music, and speech styles. These new French subjects, generally called 'youth of the *cité*', are depicted as overwhelmingly male, non-white, that

is, generally Arab or Black, and violent. As I explore in more detail in Chapter Two, the most commonly reproduced image of this ‘youth’ is the hyper-masculine and violent figure of the *racaille* [‘street tough’], a stereotype reproduced in popular French media as well as in everyday discourse, both within and outside of Chemin de l’Ile.

The French media’s stigmatization of public space and language in the *cité* is reinforced by everyday discourses in Chemin de l’Ile. For example, people in Chemin de l’Ile often use the French word *dehors* ‘outside’ to imply negative behavior including *traîner* ‘loitering’ and illicit economic activity and sexual behavior. Prohibitions against girls occupying outdoor space and exhibiting purportedly masculine speech and dress reinforce the neighborhood’s recurrent association of femininity and masculinity with indoor (i.e. home) and outdoor space respectively. These symbolic associations are elaborated in local discourses that posit female virtue as contingent upon discrete behavior at home. At the same time, local and journalistic discourses posit (violent) masculinity as contingent upon illicit behavior in the ‘street.’

Whereas, in an effort to preserve *le respect* even members of the same family avoid publicly acknowledging a member of the opposite sex on the street, this kind of respectful segregation is near impossible to maintain at gatherings in public space of neighborhood associations. Ritualized avoidance between genders is both challenged and reinforced through the ways that local associations organize gender in such public events.

¹³³ Personal communication, Michel Guirao, Neighborhood Coordinator, Mayor’s Office, Chemin de l’Ile.

GENDER AND GENERATION IN GATHERINGS AT LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS

In the consciously labeled “inter-generational” event of its kind, the association SMJ (*Société Municipale de Jeunesse* or ‘Municipal Youth Center’) sponsored a picnic and cultural event, to promote communication and understanding between ‘generations’ within the neighborhood.¹³⁴ “Generations” in this event, both during the planning meetings that I attended and the event itself, was mainly interpreted as “immigrant” parent in contrast to “second” and “third generation” adolescent children. Events to foster mutual understanding and communication included cultural displays, music performed by an older Italian man (even though the presence of the Italian community was next to none), and performances by young neighborhood kids, rap and vocalist performances. There was an after-party as well that was Djayed by a local professional. As usual, a good portion of the North African-style food on sale at the event was prepared by mothers of adolescent association members at no cost to the association except the groceries. Barbecued *halal* sausages were also grilled by a few male adolescents to earn proceeds for their upcoming summer trip.

Despite all of the good-intentioned discussion and planning about inter-generational participation, the actual event was fraught with tensions about improprieties regarding generation and gender mixing in public space. For instance, I spent a large portion of my time during the Djayed dancing urging Aïcha to dance with me to no avail. I found out later from Yemina, Aïcha’s older daughter, that Ahmed, her eldest son had begged her not to dance for fear of embarrassing him and seemingly in an effort to uphold standards for ‘respectful’ mixed-gender interaction. His older sister, Yemina, for instance, interpreted his request as evidence of how a young man’s respect among his friends is contingent (in part, at least) upon his female relatives’ behavior.

¹³⁴The rhetoric of a need for ‘intergenerational’ exchange was popular within other associations and a motivation for other events aside from the one I describe below. The logic of the ‘need’ for institutionalized intergenerational exchanges was the supposed alienation that adolescents born and raised in France felt toward their (mostly) immigrant parents. While there is certainly some truth that adolescents of immigrant descent experience feelings of alienation toward their immigrant parents, providing

Like Aïcha, no other mothers or fathers danced at this party. In fact, almost no fathers actually attended this party, which represents in itself a type of informal gender segregation practiced among North African families in the neighborhood. Events associated with school, 'youth' associations, and just school-aged children were considered the domain of women and their responsibility since they are primarily responsible for raising children. Conceivably, in their effort to foster "inter-generational" exchanges (that they seemed to interpret as largely father-son interactions), the Youth Center had neglected to allow for the fact that women in Chemin de l'Ile generally participated more in children's activities.

At this particular party, however, any 'intergenerational' interaction seemed to embarrass most of the adolescents there, lending justification for the need of such events. For example, when I tried to dance with a group of girls, some of whom I knew from Cerise, they too expressed embarrassment about my presence by exclaiming "oh no!" and stopped dancing when I approached. Undoubtedly, my status as an adult tutor at the association made it embarrassing for them to dance with me. So the "inter-generational" goal of the event was overshadowed by an overtly 'youthful' feeling at the gathering, in which 'young' seemed uncomfortable with dancing in the presence of 'elders.'

Part of the apparent tension at the gathering stemmed from the fact that cross-gendered and 'intergenerational' mixing were so at odds with everyday practices in the SMJ. This association was usually oriented to crime and gang prevention, activities assumed to involve boys more than girls and so was mostly frequented by young men. Many adolescent girls told me they never used the resources at SMJ (internet, career counseling, etc.) because they just didn't feel comfortable in that space—there were 'too many guys'. However, at this particular event, the tensions surrounding gender mixing seemed specific to the context of the 'inter-generational' setting, rather than tensions about gender mixing per se. Had teenagers only been present, the mixed-gender dancing would not have been nearly as problematic, and indeed as 'adults' (myself included) started leaving at around 8 p.m., I noticed a group of boys began to dance across the room

institutional contexts for intergenerational interaction seemed to foster new experiences of alienation and public embarrassment for adolescents, as I indicate below.

from some of the girls that I had originally pestered. All of this is to say that public gender mixing is not only considered ‘shameful’ in relation to girls’ virtue, but also inappropriate in terms of the age hierarchy in which younger members show ‘respect’ to the older members by maintaining the illusion of gender segregation.

The need for such public propriety is contingent upon whether the event involves gender mixing. For example, a very different setting in which I experienced “intergenerational” dancing was a couscous party at another neighborhood association called *Les Acacias* [‘The Acacia Trees’], named after the building complex in which it was located. The director, Françoise, who had started a program of women's literacy classes, decided to sponsor an all-women party to promote "cross-cultural friendship and understanding" among the North African and sub-Saharan African women in the association.

Having completed extensive preparations of couscous and tea cakes earlier that day, about twenty women arrived to eat and dance, including some impromptu guests, despite the express desire articulated by Françoise and Sabine that only *les adherants* [‘members’] should come. Also, although children weren’t encouraged to come, several had women brought their children anyway, making it an organically “inter-generational” event. One Algerian woman, Hanan, brought her sister, Leïla. A Moroccan woman, Fatima, brought her niece. Aïcha, the woman I would eventually live with, brought her oldest daughter Yemina. Madame BenHabib brought her adolescent daughter, Sherazade, as did another woman.

Dancing was central to the event, and everyone participated. Leïla told me that she had only agreed to bring her eight-year-old daughter on the condition that she dance. Her daughter was apparently quite shy and initially refused. Eventually she warmed up to the idea toward the end of the evening. When I complimented her on her dancing (she really was dancing well), her mom said something like “You see? You can dance when you want to.” Yemina danced, but regretted her choice of wearing pants--it wasn’t the same without a skirt, she claimed.

Within this single-sex, 'inter-generational' and semi-public space,¹³⁵ participants were open to sexualized dancing and bawdy joking, demonstrating the contextual nature of sexual discourses and practices with respect to gender and space. Madame BenHabib, Sherazade's mother came out with the first batch of tea shaking her behind (and dancing) in an exaggerated, raunchy way. I jokingly pinched her butt and then looked around the room nervously to see if people were offended. Far from it-Aïcha started to play drums on Madame BenHabib's butt, offering simply the explanation *dārbuka!* or 'drum' in Arabic. We all laughed. Afterwards, Madame BenHabib made everyone laugh all the harder because she said (in Arabic): "I only did that because there's no more tea." (She was shaking her butt as a distraction so that those without tea wouldn't feel slighted.)

A generation older than Madame BenHabib, Madame Mira is one of the most respected and politically active women in Chemin de l'Ile. She had grown up in the shantytowns (*bidonvilles*) that epitomize the Algerian immigrant experience in Nanterre and had hidden there, alone with her sister, the night of the massacre during which over 200 FLN party supporters were killed in Paris, her father fortunately not among them. On this night, however, Madame Mira was quite the image of playful impropriety as she danced with a woman from Cameroon, Yvette, who was closing in on her, hips leading the way. Madame Mira protested in a rough, masculine, and seemingly aroused voice, "You're turning me on! You're turning me on, there!" (*Tu me provoque! Tu me provoque là!*) As she said this, Madame Mira took the two ends of the scarf tied around her hips and pointed them toward Yvette, in the shape of an erect penis. Predictably, the only shocked woman in the room was the ethnographer.

This party shows the ways that neighborhood associations can create spaces for women and girls to participate in the irreverent, albeit confined, subversion of their public 'respectable' personas.¹³⁶ During daily operations of local associations, however, sex segregation was often a less conscious mode of operations that served to reinforce

¹³⁵ Unlike the 'open house' policy at the SMJ party where anyone could walk in off the street, the Acacia's party was by invitation only and took place in the basement of a local residence that normally served as a daycare center.

¹³⁶ This is not to say that single-sex events organized by local individuals don't fulfill a similar purpose. Many times I danced with Aïcha, Madame BenHabib and others in their living rooms at afternoon tea parties.

negative aspects of this cultural practice. One of the ways that the separation of girls and boys in public space is perpetuated is through neighborhood associations in Chemin de l'Île that do not mandate co-ed programs.¹³⁷ For example, while the scholastic programs for middle-school adolescents at Cerise grew more and more “feminine” over the course of the year and a half that I worked there, their “prevention” (anti-criminality) programs were almost exclusively used by adolescent boys/men. The former case occurred ‘naturally’ in that girls and boys would sign up for homework sessions the same night as their friends, resulting in some nights with mostly girls or boys respectively. As the association became more popular with middle-school aged girls, boys stopped attending as much.

Conversely, the “prevention” programs at this same association (which took place at another site) were almost exclusively male because adolescent boys constituted their target population for delinquency. However, as several of the boys involved in the program informed me, the ‘real’ delinquents weren’t usually a part of the various outings and overnight trips that the association planned because they were considered too tough (*dur*) among the association staff. The result of these practices was that adolescent boys tended to go on many more outings and trips away from the neighborhood than girls did.

In other municipally funded clubs and centers within the neighborhood such as the aforementioned SMJ, adolescent girls were also excluded from activities by design. Many of the activities that boys and young men attended at the SMJ were formally organized outings, especially during summer. When I spoke of these problems accessing girls with public services to the director of SMJ, he told me that girls did indeed receive organized outings and other services, but that girls tended to “organize themselves differently in the neighborhood” [*elle s’organisaient différemment que les garçons dans le quartier*]. Girls would approach the Youth Center with a plan in mind and many of the participants already secured. The reasons for this pattern are potentially multiple. On the one hand, as a female association worker of North African descent who had worked

¹³⁷ Contrary to state subsidized programs for the ‘integration’ of minority youth in other European countries, France does not stipulate that funds be used equally for girls and boys. In contrast, see Soysal

many other neighborhoods outside of Chemin de l’Ile pointed out to me, gender relations among adolescents in a neighborhood largely depend upon the politics of the local structures in place, including associations and whether they had a policy of creating co-ed environments or not. On the other hand, according to the director of SMJ, the general atmosphere of Nanterre is quite (religiously and culturally) conservative, compared to other, demographically similar suburbs that he’s worked in. One aspect of this “conservatism” is expressed in religious practice. Nanterre, which had its own Mosque, was a community with supposedly more practicing Muslims than other communities. However, these justifications for what I found to be fairly discriminatory practices with respect to gender ignore that ways that boys are favored by local associations in a way that tends to reinforce or establish a gender bias in the local community.

In a similar fashion, the Sports Center was often the unofficially designated space of boys and adolescent males. On the several occasions when I visited the Sports Center, girls were only present in organized sports teams and lessons whereas boys were informally playing sports on indoor and outdoor courts. Only once in a year and a half of fieldwork did a group of girls and I go over to play basketball informally. On this particular outing, I realized that some of the reason that some girls participated so little at the Sports Center was for fear of “being seen” there or on the way there, either by their parents or by other locals who would tell their parents. As I discussed in a previous section, girls worry about compromising propriety by crossing in front of the men’s residences for single immigrant workers that lay directly in the path between the association Cerise and the Sports Center.

[2001] for a discussion of the feminization of social programs in Berlin for Turkish youth.

THE ALL-GIRL SOCCER TEAM

While I conducted my fieldwork in Chemin de l’Ile, a group of girls formed a soccer team to compete in the annual neighborhood soccer tournament. Saïd, a new paid mentor at Cerise, who came originally from Marseilles and was of Cameroon heritage,¹³⁸ organized an all-girls’ soccer team to play in the tournament, which was usually comprised of only male teams. It was the first time in memory that girls had played in the tournament, and they ended up in second place, to the great pleasure of the girls on the team and Saïd. Preparations for the tournament, however, were an interesting lesson in how girls and their parents were constantly evaluating and negotiating ‘appropriate’ behavior for girls in public space to a different degree than boys. One girl, Amal, had originally signed up to play, but dropped out. When I asked her why, she simply claimed that she didn’t want to. Her continued presence at practice and the way she teased girls playing, however, seemed indicative of her own (and undoubtedly her parents’) ambivalence toward girls playing sports in public.¹³⁹ She and other girls on the sidelines would yell, “Oh, look at the guys (‘chaps’), there” [*Regards le bonhommes, là*], using a phrase that was generally used to criticize girls who dressed ‘too much like men.’ Amal was not considered one of the girls who dressed ‘like a guy’ in sweats and tennis shoes, but rather dressed in the popular “feminine” style of button-down tunics over tight black polyester pants with black leather platform shoes. Some of the other girls playing on the team, such as Fatima, appeared to be proud to be called “bonhomme” and referred to themselves that way in their own defense, e.g. “yes, I’m a ‘guy’--so what?” (*oui, j’suis un bonhomme--et alors?*).

¹³⁸ Saïd’s city and culture of origin are only relevant in that he came to work in Chemin de l’Ile with an outsider’s perspective on gender relations. This seemed to permit him to flout expectations for gender ‘propriety’, including the preference among many girls’ parents (and girls themselves) that they not compete publicly in sports, and especially not against boys.

¹³⁹ Conceivably, some parents’ discomfort with adolescent girls playing sports might have to do with their concern that their daughters maintain an intact hymen, the marker of an unmarried woman’s virtue.

INTIMATE SPACES OF *LE RESPECT*: WOMEN'S BODIES IN CULTURAL (RE)PRODUCTION

In the above sections I describe how women and girls in Chemin de l'Ile negotiate *le respect* through attention to behavior in neighborhood space, including public space outdoors *dehors* and the semi-private space in neighborhood associations. In this section I look at how adolescent girls' bodies constitute an intimate space for policing and contesting *le respect*. Whereas, in the last two sections, monitoring divisions between genders involves attention to the nuanced boundaries between "public" and "private" space, in this section, here divisions between 'male' and 'female' as well as female 'propriety' and 'impropriety' crystallize in practices regarding women's bodies, dating practices, and styles of dress.

Interactions that involve monitoring women's and girls' bodies (by other women/girls and by men/boys) constitute collaborative acts that I call "gender policing," which fits into the larger frame of "borderwork" I described above. These interactions can take the form of direct teasing for supposedly inappropriate gender behavior, forms of dress, sexuality, etc., or indirect commentary about the gender practices in one's culture or country of origin. As I have discussed in Chapter Three and as other researchers of gender and language have noted, teasing is an important mechanism of social control and central to gender ideology [Thorne 1993, Goodwin 1990]. The particular linguistic and cultural forms that teasing takes among adolescents in Chemin de l'Ile demonstrate the conflicting and coercive cultural practices and gender norms that are central to adolescent girls' experiences. Understanding how gender ideologies are emergent in discursive practices is central to understanding how adolescents elaborate and transform gendered experience and socialize each other into local gender norms and practices. For this reason, I examine interactions that, either directly or indirectly, establish and maintain standards for gender and sexual propriety.

This is not to say that establishing normative gender roles through interaction is a consistent or seamless process; as I will show in the ethnographic examples that follow, while adolescents are adept at conveying cultural preferences for gender behavior, they

are also often visibly struggling to make sense of conflicting, ambiguous, or contradictory gendered practices and ideologies. While these adolescents often make a 'game' out of monitoring each other's behavior through teasing, it is nonetheless an important part of their socialization into normative gender roles.

The burden of 'propriety' among adolescent girls in Chemin de l'Ile is, in part, related to the role that women and girls are accorded as 'bearers of culture' in North African culture generally, and in a diasporic cultural setting in particular.¹⁴⁰ Among second and third generations of descendants of North African culture in France, girls are more directly involved in Maghrebi cultural production in that they speak Arabic more fluently than boys¹⁴¹, learn to cook traditional North African food, participate in women-centered henna and marriage ceremonies, and are the bearers of familial and cultural 'respect' by approximating a semblance of "proper" sexual practices including abstaining (or appearing to abstain) from pre-marital intercourse. Adolescent boys, on the other hand, have a less direct relation to cultural transmission and reproduction, particularly in these areas. In terms of religious practice, however, boys and men's decision whether to pray publicly in the local prayer room or Mosque is often publicly debated among peers, who might tell their friend it would be 'good' to practice. In this way, boys' participation in cultural maintenance in a diasporic context centers about public religious practice whereas girls' participation is generally located in the 'private' realms of home and family.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ There are certainly exceptions to this pattern, however, both within my fieldsite and outside of it. Although girls' and women's behavior take on the semblance of a cultural 'litmus test' with respect to how 'traditional' a cultural group remains, girls' and women's behavior in Chemin de l'Ile was also the locus for cultural change and the transgression of gender norms, a pattern that Farr [1995] notes in her study of Mexicano gender roles and language use in Chicago.

¹⁴¹ In my experience, girls tended to speak Arabic more fluently than boys because they spent more time using Arabic while performing housework duties with their mothers. Being at home often involved interacting with a monolingual Arabic speaking or semi-fluent French speaking parent, generally Mom. I cannot corroborate this impression with quantitative data at this time, however. Also, birth order seemed particularly relevant for proficiency in Arabic, as well as generation. Eldest girls seemed, in my experience more proficient in Arabic than their younger siblings, probably due again to reduced expectations for household labor among younger girls. As well, children with at least one parent who had migrated directly from the *bled* ('home country') seemed to display more proficiency in Arabic than those whose parents were themselves 'second generation'.

¹⁴² As well, relegating girls to the private sphere of home takes on political implications in a diasporic setting in that it may constitute a form of resistance to or rejection of the dominant culture.

Perhaps because boys are less implicated in cultural production and “morality” as everyday practice rather than religious ritual, boys and girls tend to voice authoritative statements about what is proper for girls far more than they do for boys. In so doing, boys construct cultural and discursive authority for themselves through appeals to “tradition” or cultural purity and authenticity. Also, boys and men can claim and do claim such rights over girls’ and women’s propriety because such cultural prohibitions don’t concern them personally or morally, and because they can gain a measure of authority by playing the role of cultural critic.

At times, boys invoke supposed religious or cultural “tradition” to gain the upper hand in interactions with girls. One day in the association *Cerise*, Leïla, a girl of about 12, was teasing two boys about the same age. One of the boys told Leïla that it was *haram* [forbidden for Muslims] for girls to tease boys.¹⁴³ Apparently Leïla believed their claim, at least initially, because she stopped teasing them. As the only girl who veiled at the association, Leïla was very invested in her image as a “good girl,” both as a Muslim and student. Her responsiveness to the boys’ claim of gender privilege in the guise of supposed religious propriety shows how girls are subjected to judgements of their individual behavior through revoicings of authoritative religious and cultural discourse, despite how preposterous this particular instance may seem. In subsequent letters with Leïla (which literally means ‘night’ in Arabic), she told me that she preferred the name Sheïla, since she feared that the connotations of ‘night’ were too suggestive. In this instance, Leïla is choosing to police her own self-image in relation to elicit behavior and sexuality.

An older, sixteen-year-old boy, Bilal, who frequented the association for homework help was a veritable study in personal authority, cultural ‘tradition’, and interactional style. I frequently observed him creating authority for himself by talking a strict ‘cultural tradition’ line and using it to intimidate other kids. For example, on one occasion he publicly accused Gonul, a twelve-year-old Muslim girl of Turkish origin, of not observing Ramadan by fasting, which she vehemently denied. On another occasion, he teased Fatima, a Muslim girl of Kabyle origin (Algerian Berber) that she wasn’t really

Muslim, seeing as how she was Kabyle and not Arab.¹⁴⁴ In both of these interactions, Bilal used supposed ‘tradition’ and cultural authority to question the propriety of his female peers. While such teasing is obviously the product of adolescent gender relations, which are often conflictual in this and other cultural settings due to sexual tensions that are difficult for adolescents to express, it is nonetheless interesting that Bilal appealed to cultural propriety to tease his female peers.

In a different type of interaction with two adult mentors at Cerise, Sami and Momo, Bilal questioned the cultural propriety of Tunisian women, in an effort to goad Momo, who is French of Tunisian origin and in his early twenties. (Sami is French of Moroccan origin and was under 25 at the time.) The context was a tutoring session during which Momo was telling Bilal that he ‘could’ succeed at school, if he wanted to. Bilal was a notoriously poor student, having repeated the equivalent of eighth grade twice. At the time of the interaction, Bilal was sixteen and still in middle school. To my own ears, and undoubtedly to those of Bilal, Momo’s ‘friendly advice’ about school sounded a bit patronizing and overly confident: “You see, you can succeed if you want to. You just have to know when to study. [At your age] I went out a lot, I had a lot of fun. I didn’t work incredibly hard in school, but I still succeeded.” [*Tu vois, tu peux réussir si tu veux. Il faut simplement savoir quand il faut travailler. Moi, je suis beaucoup sorti, je me suis bien amusé. J’ai pas énormément travaillé à l’école, mais j’ai réussi quand même.*]

To this ‘motivational’ discourse, Bilal replied with a smile, “Yes, but you aren’t as close to your [cultural] roots as Sami.” [*Oui, mais tu n’est pas aussi proche que Sami*

¹⁴³ Needless to say, it is not written in the Qur’an that girls should not tease boys.

¹⁴⁴ While some scholars emphasize the relative cultural and political unity of Berber and Arab populations, particularly in response to French colonialism in Morocco [Kapchan 1996:63], others have noted that Algerian Kabyle populations have tended to be more politically organized around obtaining distinct cultural and linguistic rights than Moroccan Berber communities [Tilmatine & Suleiman 1996:166-7]. Such lingering cultural and political antagonisms between Arabs and Kabyles in Algeria were occasionally played out among adolescents in Chemin de l’Ile. However, there were far fewer families of Kabyle culture than Arabic culture, and so it was also common for children of Kabyle parents to claim that they were “also Arab.” Although both of her parents were from Kabyle Algerian families, Fatima sometimes claimed to be “Arab,” perhaps because she, as many in France do, conflated Muslim and Arab identities or because she had grown up around primarily Arabs in Chemin de l’Ile. She herself did not speak Arabic or Kabyle, but used Arabic loan words in her speech regularly, as did most of the other adolescents in Chemin de l’Ile, regardless of fluency in Arabic.

à tes racines.] Bilal continued: “I went to a Tunisian wedding and the women had dresses cut down to there,” (pointing to the middle of his chest). “We’re losing modesty.” [*Je suis allé dans un mariage Tunisien et les femmes étaient décolletées jusqu’à là. On perd la pudeur.*] As a way to vindicate himself in the face of Momo’s patronizing comment, Bilal questioned Momo’s cultural authenticity. In contrast to the model of ‘success’ that Momo proposes to Bilal, he counters that cultural authenticity has ‘real’ symbolic value, and claims that Momo’s success has come at the expense of closeness to cultural ‘roots’. The comparison with Sami is harder to interpret, except that Bilal’s relative praise of Sami serves as another way to reject Momo. Also, Tunisians are often criticized by Algerians for being too culturally or morally ‘loose’, even when compared to Moroccans, who are also mocked by Algerians for their supposed weak character.¹⁴⁵ But the absent insulted party here is, of course, Tunisian women, who are supposedly losing their ‘modesty’. Bilal’s discursive authority lies in assuming a higher moral-cultural ground at the expense of women’s supposed lack of cultural purity. As such, the example shows that competition between young men and the policing of ‘appropriate’ standards for masculinity often occurs through the symbolic policing of women’s bodies and feminine virtue.¹⁴⁶ In the next section, I’ll discuss how dating is a practice that calls into question girls’ sexual propriety and how they manage these risks to their *le respect*.

¹⁴⁵ As the Algerian joke goes, “Moroccans are Kings, Algerians are men, and Tunisians are women.” Moroccans are often criticized by Algerians for having a king, which supposedly implies they are not ‘real (self-determining) men’. Tunisians fare even worse in the joke, as the men are not even masculine enough to be considered separate from women. Here again, at issue is the supposed inability of Tunisians to control ‘their’ women. This image of strong Tunisian women and weak Tunisian men may also derive from the fact that Tunisian women have achieved more civil rights than women in other North African countries [Tetreault/Wihtol de Wenden 2000].

¹⁴⁶ This pattern is by no means intrinsic to North African communities. If anything, it is potentially a phenomenon of patriarchal cultures. Arguably too, it has less to do with ‘Arab’ or ‘Muslim’ culture than it does with Mediterranean culture [cf. Brandes 1980, Herzfeld 1985]

DATING, SEXUALITY, AND MARRIAGE

Dating among adolescents in Chemin de l’Ile was a complex undertaking that required the utmost secrecy to protect the couple’s identities and the fact that they were actively involved in a relationship. Aside from one ‘couple’ (Lisa and Tariq, both fourteen), that was openly dating each other, I had no knowledge of other adolescent couples, even though most claimed ambiguously to be seeing ‘someone’. Even Lisa and Tariq were never seen holding hands or kissing in outdoor spaces in the neighborhood. Part of the secrecy about dating among adolescents had to do with keeping personal information from parents and older siblings. This privacy was considered particularly important for girls, since many told me that they would be punished or made to stay at home if their parents found out they were actively dating. The all-importance of maintaining secrecy—for example, never being seen in public with one’s boyfriend--was something even women in their twenties claimed to practice in the neighborhood.

One such woman was Fatima, a volunteer mentor at Cerise who had grown up in the neighborhood, and, at the time of my interview with her, was 23 years old. She explained that she was currently dating a man who had also grown up in the neighborhood, and who continued to live there with his extended family, as did she.¹⁴⁷ She told me that it was ‘impossible’ for her relationship be public knowledge in the neighborhood, and avoided being seen with him in the neighborhood. She laughingly complained that, ironically, she and her boyfriend had to take the RER separately to Paris whenever they wanted to see each other. Only when and if Fatima and her boyfriend decided to marry and got engaged could she feel at ease with their relationship being public information.

In this same informal interview, Fatima told me that, when she was in middle school, her older brother wouldn’t let his friends even look at her in his presence. She found out about his protectiveness only because she attended high school with a number

¹⁴⁷ The vast majority of young women and men I knew in their twenties in Chemin de l’Ile continued to live in their parents’ homes, and expected to do so until married.

of his friends, while her brother attended trade school instead. This example demonstrates how a potential romantic relationship between a boy's friend and sister poses problems to the ideology of male sibling as sexual "protector." This is not to say that all adolescent boys and men claim this culturally sanctioned moral authority over their sisters, wives, and mothers. In many families that I was familiar with in Chemin de l'Île, older and younger brothers had little or no authority over their sisters. Of course, the fact that there exists a culturally sanctioned role for brothers to act as protectors of their sisters might cause women and girls to censure their own romantic desires.

This kind of division between genders in public is generalizable to the space of the *cité* and not just among youth of North African descent. Another example from the SMJ 'intergenerational' party gives evidence for how typically North African codes of behavior are being translated and adopted by non-North Africans in the neighborhood. Yemina overheard Thomas, a black (non-Arab), middle school aged boy say to a boy of North African descent "don't stand next to my sister." The other boy answered back "We're just talking" and Thomas said "You're standing next to my sister and you know that isn't done [*Tu sais que ça n'se fait pas*"]]. Seeing how the other boy would not comply with his demand, Thomas told his sister to go home, and she left the party.

To avoid the potential impropriety of dating a boy in the neighborhood, some girls used the strategy of absenting themselves from the local space for dating purposes. I was told by many adolescents that it was 'dangerous' to date a boy from the neighborhood as peers and consequently relatives could find out, and respond by curtailing outings and freedoms for fear of the girl's threatened virtue (i.e. virginity, but also *le respect*). Other girls claimed that since "all the guys know each other" from the nearby *cités*, it was not safe to date boys from another neighborhood either. However, in apparent contradiction to the fears attached to openly dating, meeting with new boyfriends was sometimes orchestrated by one's female peer. This practice could lead to conflict between friends as this next anecdote about Fatima and Brigitte illustrates.

At one time, Brigitte was going out with a boy that she really liked, but that had apparently disrespected her in public. Fatima took objection to this treatment and convinced Brigitte to break up with the boy and to start going out with another boy that

she had picked for her. Brigitte did, in fact, begin dating this other boy for a short time, and Fatima felt he treated Brigitte better than the first boy. But Brigitte decided she preferred the first boy, and started going out with him again, to the intense disapproval of Fatima. She argued directly with Brigitte about her choice and later criticized Brigitte publicly for her decision to date a boy who would disrespect her. This conflict was so intense that it temporarily interrupted the girls' friendship.

Other young women worked to reduce the level of control that boyfriends can demand over the 'appropriateness' of their self-presentation, including dress and hair styles. Mina, an employee from Cerise who was 22 when I knew her, told me that her four older brothers had never told her who or how to date. She said that she could talk about everything with them, including guys. Her latest love interest, however, did not work out because of her perception that he was too controlling of her. (The young man in question was French of Tunisian origin, as was Mina.) Mina recounted that she had once gone to meet him in a short skirt and stockings, and he complained "what is that skirt you're wearing?!" [*hé c'est quoi cette jupe?!*]. On another occasion, he told her to put up her hair and not to wear makeup. When she decided to break up with him, her mother consoled her—saying as long as she didn't lose her virginity, she could do what she wanted. Her mother added that in the Qur'an, there's nothing that prohibits girls and women from going out, only that they must stay virgins until marriage. However, when Mina told this story to me, the non-Muslim ethnographer she quipped: "I'm still a virgin, I'm not ashamed to say it" [*je suis encore vierge, j'ai pas honte de le dire*]. The contrast between her ex-boyfriend's behavior, her mother's advice, and her admission to me that she wasn't 'ashamed' to be a virgin together highlight the contradiction and ambivalence that young French women of North African descent negotiate when choosing how to date and with whom.

Speaking more generally, however, the relative secrecy with which young women and men conducted their dating practices is common to North Africa generally as well as French *cités*, and is tied to a continuity of the social value of women's sexual virtue in both contexts. For example, Giovannini notes that whereas "honor" has been the focus of a disproportionate amount of scholarship focusing on Mediterranean societies, the

cultural value of female chastity might be a cultural construct that recurs more frequently in the area [1987:61].

Nevertheless, such gender and sexual ideologies were often applied more strictly in Chemin de l’Ile than in many parts of current North Africa, particularly in large cities [Kapchan 1996, Ossman 1994]. For instance, Fatima, one of the cultural informants discussed above, noted ironically to me that when she returned to Algeria to visit her cousins, she was scandalized at how openly they dated men, including men they had ‘picked up’ on the street, as well as by their choice to dress in short skirts. The relative loosening of cultural constraints toward unmarried women in large cities in North African and the relative “return” to “traditional” values in French *cités* must be understood in the context of immigration. On the one hand, most populations migrating to France have been rural and/or working class, and so potentially less interested in emulating a putative “French” (or European) model for dating and gender roles. On the other hand, and perhaps more importantly, the supposed ‘return’ (or invention) of cultural traditionalism in French *cités* seems related to parents’ and adolescents’ active rejection of the supposedly corrupting influence of French culture and social values. This ‘return’ to ‘traditionalism’ can be seen in wedding celebrations in Chemin de l’Ile as well.

Weddings are social events often fraught with tensions surrounding tradition and sexuality in Chemin de l’Ile, as this next conversation illustrates. One afternoon at Cerise, Soumeya, around 12, described to Nora, 16, a wedding that she had recently attended. The conversation began with a discussion of make-up and when and how it was appropriate to wear it. An adult mentor, Nadege, who is French, took out a lipstick, put a bit on her lower lip, and teasingly offered Soumeya some. Soumeya laughingly refused, and asked Nora why she never wore lipstick. Nora claimed that she didn’t because “it shows up too much on me” [*ça se voit trop sur moi*]. Soumeya recalled a recent local wedding that she had attended, noting that the girl didn’t usually wear make-up, but that she had at the wedding and exclaimed, “wow, she was beautiful!” Soumeya then opined that wearing makeup everyday could take away from one’s beauty because then there’s nothing out of the ordinary about special events. Soumeya also mentioned

that her mother wouldn't let her wear make-up, telling her to wait until she gets married. Nora, however, claimed that 16 (her age) was the 'right' age to start wearing makeup.

Soumeya then mentioned that the wedding she had attended was "traditional," asking Nora, "Do you like traditional weddings" [*Tu aimes les mariages traditionnels?*] Nora refused to respond and so Soumeya offered: "They're stupid, I don't like them" [*C'est nul, j'aime pas moi*]. I asked Soumeya what she meant by 'traditional' and she replied that the wedding lasted three days and the men and women were separated the whole time—adding, "we didn't even see 'them' [the bride and groom] together. It was stupid." [*Oui, ça durait trois jours et les hommes et les femmes étaient séparés - On les voyait même pas ensemble, c'est nul.*]. Nora asked Soumeya, "Maybe that's because the girl was 16? That's why isn't it?" [*C'est peut-être parce qu'elle a seize ans la fille? C'est pour ça, non?*]. Soumeya confirmed, "Yes, she's sixteen" and Nora claimed that 'wasn't good' because she was 'too young'. [*C'est pas bien, c'est trop jeune.*]

This short interaction reveals a profusion of contestation surrounding girls' bodily practices with respect to make-up and marriage. On the one hand, both girls are obviously interested in make-up and weddings, but are together struggling to determine appropriate limits to each, both in terms of what they perceive to be 'respectable' limits to sexualizing their bodies through make up and 'reasonable' cultural limits in the practice of weddings, including the age of the bride and social tone of the ceremony.

THE POLITICS OF DRESS STYLES

Dress styles are another domain in which gender propriety is debated among adolescent girls. Our conversation that day with Soumeya and Nora in *Cerise* turned to the practice of veiling and a debate about the reasonable age limits of this practice. The topic was initiated by Nadege, the adult mentor, who compared Soumeya to her mother in terms of looks. Nadege asked me if I knew who her mother is and stated that she thought that Soumeya looked enormously like her, as Soumeya looked uncomfortably at both of us. Nadege then asked Soumeya the culturally sensitive question of whether she and her mother both had the same light hair. As Soumeya's mother veils, this question was a bit delicate. Instead of responding, Soumeya taunted Nadege: You have no business knowing that. "*Tu n'as pas à savoir*" to which Nadege exasperatedly replied "Yes, I should have known you wouldn't say." [*Oui, j'aurai du savoir qu tu ne dirais pas.*]

Soumeya then commented that she herself didn't want to veil until she was fifty: "*Moi, je veux pas me voiler. Je ne veux pas me voiler avant l'age de cinquante ans.*" She added as a justification that she liked to swim and when one veiled going to the beach wasn't possible: "For me, I like to swim a lot, and when you veil you can't go to the beach." [*Moi, j'aime bien nager et quand on se voile on peut pas aller à la plage.*] She also added that her mother didn't like the beach, thereby rationalizing both her refusal of the veil and her mother's choice to wear it: "My mother doesn't like the beach so..." [*Ma mère, elle n'aime pas la plage, alors...*] Our discussion turned to Leïla, the only girl at *Cerise* who veiled. Soumeya claimed that it was her father that made her and that she couldn't even swim at school, where French law prohibits veiling: "It's her father who makes her veil. She's not allowed to swim, even at school." [*C'est son père qui l'oblige à se voiler. Elle n'a pas droit de nager même à l'école.*] Her critique of Leïla's father's strict requirements extended to his purported requirement that all his children pray five times a day, including once at dawn (one of the five religious edicts for being a practicing Muslim). Soumeya reported: "And even the little ones at the age of 5 and 6 have to get up to pray" [*Et même les petits à l'age de 5, 6 ans ils sont obligés de se*

lever pour faire la prière.] In a similar fashion to our previous discussion about make-up and weddings, our conversation here attempts to delimit a space between ‘respectable’ and ‘reasonable’ standards for cultural and religious practice, including veiling and prayer.

A more coercive type of negotiation among peers occurs in relation to appropriate secular dress styles among adolescent girls. In the next example, Samia and Mounia (both around twelve) discuss Fatima’s (sixteen) unconventional dress styles with Momo and Sami in the kitchen at Cerise. Girls, like Fatima, who are perceived by their peers as foraying too far into styles and behaviors associated with a tough *cit * identity are criticized as ‘wanting to be men,’ either overtly or through playful teasing. Girls and boys tend to have different interactional styles for monitoring their peers’ behavior and dress styles, however. Whereas boys tend to use direct teasing and mimicry in order to monitor girls’ access to verbal and dress styles associated with masculinity, girls tend to use subtler forms of critique such as reported speech and superficially friendly comments, rather than direct teasing. In the below example taken from a conversation at Cerise, Samia and Mounia voice their disapproval of Fatima’s ‘masculine’ dress by attributing their own critique to the adult mentors, Sami and Momo. The two younger girls were sitting with the two adult mentors in the kitchen when Fatima walked in with a greeting and then left to go to another room. When she had left the room, Mounia initiated a discussion about what she was wearing.

Example 5.1

Mounia h  elle a son jean Fatima?
*Hey is she wearing her jeans Fatima?*¹⁴⁸

vous avez pas remarqu  qu’elle s’est habill e en meuf pour une fois?
you didn’t notice that she’s dressed like a girl for once?

Momo ah ouais c’est vrai en plus
Oh yeah, it’s even true

¹⁴⁸ In contrast to the sweatpants that many of these older girls wear, jeans are considered feminine, perhaps because, as they are generally worn snugly in France, jeans show more of the body’s form than sweatpants.

j' croyais qu'elle était en racaille avec un gros survet
I thought she was in 'hood' style with a big jacket

tu t' rappelles avec sa veste rouge? [laughingly]
you remember with her red jacket?

Sami [laughs]

Samia elle l'a encore?
Does she still have it?

Sami allez
Let's go [Let's start on your homework]

Samia **ḥagar!** [to Momo]
Bully!

Fatima! ils parlent de toi [yelling to Fatima another room]
Fatima! They're talking about you

ils disent ta veste rouge **ta' bəkri**
*they're saying 'your red jacket **from before**'*

ils ont dit combien de fois tu t'habillais en mec
they said how many times you dressed like a guy

[Fatima comes into the kitchen and looks at Sami and Momo.]

Sami nan on se permet pas
No we wouldn't do that ['permit ourselves']

Momo tu sais très bien qu'on se permet pas nous
You know very well that we don't do that ['we don't permit ourselves']

Fatima sur le **Qur'an** [To Samia and Mounia]
On the Qur'an

toujours en train de manger
[you are] eating all the time

vous changez pas vous
you two don't change

In this example, Mounia instigates a conversation criticizing Fatima's dress styles, mentioning that she had "dressed like a girl for once" that night. Here the fashion distinction in question is the choice of wearing jeans as opposed to sweat pants, the former being characterized as highly feminine with respect to the 'masculine' look of sweat pants. Momo adds to Mounia's description of Fatima as masculine, claiming that he thought she was dressed as a 'hood' that night, using the term *racaille*. As explained in detail in Chapter Two, *racaille* ['hood' or 'street tough'] is a highly salient social type that embodies the most stereotypical characteristics of the *cit *, being tough, young, violent, territorial, involved in illicit activities (e.g. selling drugs), and, in most cases, male. Interestingly, when Sami entreats the girls to start their homework ("*allez*," "Let's go), Samia turns on both of the older male mentors (in their 20s) and yells to Fatima in the other room: "They're talking about you! They're saying 'your red jacket from before.' They said how many times you dressed like a guy!" To Fatima's stare, who had returned to the kitchen, the two men are forced to deny any wrongdoing: "You know very well that we don't do that." Fatima accordingly turns her anger toward Samia and Mounia, accusing them of "eating all the time." For Samia, in particular, this insult is sharp, as she was a bit heavy--I observed many of her peers accuse her of having a "big stomach."

Both the younger girls' criticisms of Fatima's dress styles and Fatima's response to them are indicative of the ways that girls who violate the norms for femininity are subject to criticism. In the space of the *cit *, norms for dress styles for girls revolve around seemingly minor distinctions such as whether one 'dresses like a guy' in sweatsuits and tennis shoes, or 'like a girl' in jeans. Strategies for dress styles on summer trips to Algeria, however, are sometimes simplified by the choice to wear traditional clothing. After the above criticism of Fatima's clothing styles occurred, another conversation ensued between Samia and Hourriya about Fatima's dress styles in Algeria, serving to contrast the two countries as distinct cultural spaces, with distinct rules for appropriate feminine dress. The evaluative contrast that Samia makes in the first versus the second description of Fatima's dress styles is thus not only an evaluative

commentary about Fatima's 'masculine' and 'feminine' sides, but also a cultural contrast about appropriate behavior 'here' in France versus 'there' in the *bled*, (Algeria).

Example 5.2

Samia je suis partie au bled chez elle
I went to her[Fatima's] house in the 'country' [Algeria]

tu sais j'ai vu sa maison
you know I saw her house

et comment son père, il me fait, **dukh-li, dukh-li**
and how her father went to me 'come in, come in'

avec les cheveux lâchés
[she had] her hair down

avec une robe moulante
with a form-fitting dress

Chantal ah bon?
Oh really?

Samia elle partait dans un mariage
She was going to a wedding

Here, Samia seems to extol Fatima's sexy, feminine look and to draw a sharp contrast between her self presentation 'there' and her overly masculine choice of dress styles 'here.' Whereas virtually no adolescent girls wear 'traditional' North African dress in Chemin de l'Ile, going to the 'home country' [*bled*] in summer is a time when most girls significantly change their wardrobes, opting either for more feminine Western styles, or *djellebas*, long loose dresses. Part of this shift has to do undoubtedly with pressures to 'fit it' in another cultural context. Girls (and boys) from Chemin de l'Ile are often painfully aware that they are not considered to be 'from Algeria' while they're there. Taking on more traditional North African or feminine Western dress is a way of conforming to the current styles and gender expectations in the *bled* or 'home country'.

Many of the pressures that girls experience around dress styles in Chemin de l’Ile, however, have less to do with aesthetic preferences than pressures to conform to an image of sexual propriety. In an interview that I conducted with a group of about eight adolescent girls, ranging in age from fourteen to sixteen, dressing “*comme un bonhomme*” [‘like a man’] was touted as a strategy to circumvent criticism for appearing too sexualized. As Salima told me, “Chantal, when we wear a skirt, they [the boys] call us whores. When we wear pants, they call us ‘men’.” Mabrouka also added a personal narrative about wearing an ankle length skirt to school. She claimed that she was criticized for dressing ‘like a slut’ and so she went home to change back into her sweatpants.

Criticisms from boys about their female peers’ overly masculine dress styles can emerge from the perception of girls as competitors for the same clothing, which is sometimes a rare commodity in that much of it circulates as low cost goods resold by their older peers (some stolen and some not). I was told an interesting story about a teenaged girl, Miriam, who had a bunch of BodyGlove T-shirts that she was selling for 50F (roughly \$ 9) to other kids. How she got the T-shirts was unclear, but in any case, they were selling like hotcakes to both the girls and the boys at the association. Apparently several of the boys at Cerise complained that the girls were buying all the T-shirts, which were ‘men’s styles’--the implicit complaint being that because the girls were buying them, there remained less for those boys who wanted to buy them. Mabrouka, a girl who was present when the boys criticized them for buying all the T-shirts exclaimed, “*Oui, on est des bonhommes, et alors?*” [Yes, we are ‘men’, and so what?]. She thus answered the boys’ critique that they were acting like “men” rather than appropriately girl-like by accepting their critique and minimizing it by her acceptance of it. These girls often acknowledge and accept their behavior as atypical, “freakish”, and ‘masculine’, to minimize the stigmatizing power of the critique that they ‘dress like men.’

Mabrouka, in particular, had a highly sophisticated analysis about the strategic reasons for adopting a masculine dress and demeanor that surpassed concerns about her male peers. She claimed that it’s in relation to their mothers that she and her friends choose a masculine identity to avoid work at home. Mabrouka maintained that as long as

she didn't know how to cook, her mother would leave her alone--if she was completely ignorant of how to do "womanly" tasks then her mother would not depend on her to do them. She noted that her mother would be all too happy if she learned *la broderie* ['crocheting'] so that she could count on Mabrouka to help her around the house. However, in refusing to learn her 'appropriate' gender role, Mabrouka exempted herself from participation in household work. Mabrouka's discourse is reminiscent of a comment that Fatima made once when we were on the bus on our way to visit another *cit *, an illicit activity for these girls. In respect to their flouting the tacit rule of staying within the neighborhood, Fatima said, "*oui on n'est pas trop le genre de fille de rester   la maison et de faire la vaisselle!*" ['Yeah, we're not really the type of girls who stay home and do the dishes'].

It seems, thus, that adopting 'unfeminine behaviors and styles of dress is a multi-valenced strategy. Not only do these girls use non-feminine dress as a way to circumvent parental expectations for properly "girlish" behavior, but also to avoid appearing inappropriately sexualized to their peers. Further, as I address in detail in the next section, a reason that girls potentially adopt and maintain an unfeminine image is to have access to the 'tough' reputation that boys use to construct their personal authority in the *cit *.

However, the rejection of purportedly feminine styles of dress and behavior is often interpreted as attempting to 'be men' by these girls peers. For example, I once observed Hatice, a typically 'feminine' girl, complimenting Fatima on her clothing: 'I like your style, it's funny (*marrant*)—half man and half woman.' In the guise of a compliment, Hatice indicated that Fatima had crossed appropriate gender boundaries by dressing 'half man.' Interestingly, rather than capitulate to Hatice's depiction of her as 'half man', Fatima provocatively corrected Hatice, 'No, you mean half dyke and half fag,' showing that she was beyond such conventional gender norms as 'woman' and 'man'.¹⁴⁹ In the examples explored below, a similar pattern emerges, where girls resist gender norms through adopting locally "masculine" speech styles and genres, while their peers

¹⁴⁹ *Tu veux dire moit  guine et moit  dep.* The word *dep* is verlan for *p d *, a pejorative term that originates from the word *p d raste* ('pederast').

attempt to police girls' identities by constraining access to these gendered linguistic practices.

Fatima's claim to be 'half dyke and half fag' is complex in the way it positions her not only between genders, but also between transgressive homosexual identities. Her choice to evoke and blend the categories of 'dyke' and 'fag' are all the more transgressive due to the widely espoused ideology of heteronormativity in the neighborhood.¹⁵⁰ Whereas Fatima's claim to be a 'dyke' and 'fag' might be interpreted as a literal expression of her sexual orientation, the comment seems rather to be a claim of her transgressive identity generally. Fatima was openly interested in boys and when I saw her several years later, she had turned to dying her hair blonde, wearing jewelry, and very feminine styles of clothing. Nevertheless, I can never claim to know her internal sexual desires. In any case, regardless of Fatima's sexual orientation or practices, she would undoubtedly keep any homosexual relationships secret, as the stigma against homosexuality was quite strong among adolescents and their parents in Chemin de l'Ile.

¹⁵⁰ This is, of course, not to say that even supposedly 'straight' adolescents did not engage in homosexual sex. In one case, an informant recounted the story of a young man in the neighborhood who had consented to sexual intercourse with another adolescent boy, a fact that was known among several of his peers. Subsequently, however, he received little respect from these so-called friends; for example, if he criticized behavior of his peers, they threatened to publicly shame him by 'taking out his file' (*sortir son dossier*), that is, recount in public the details of the event in front of his peers.

REPUTATION: *CITÉ* STYLES AND GENDERED PERFORMANCES IN PRACTICE

As discussed here, ‘reputation’ is useful for conveying the centrality of public verbal performances to self-presentation among adolescents generally in Chemin de l’Île. That is, despite the association of competitive verbal genres and public space with masculinity, girls regard a display of competence in these public performances as central to their own social standing among peers as well. And yet boys’ frequent claim that girls were ‘acting like men’ when they strategically used these resources demonstrates a level of symbolic competition between boys and girls over the right to perform verbal genres that are considered emblematic of local public space. For this reason, girls who focused their energies on attaining reputational status at the expense of a more stereotypical feminine *le respect*, were more vulnerable to teasing and criticism by their female and male peers.

In this section, I explore the prevalence of purportedly masculine language among adolescent girls in Chemin de l’Île. I argue that girls strategically use verbal styles associated with the *cit * for constructing a tough personal authority and for contesting local gender ideologies. As I will also demonstrate, however, these performances are not an uncomplicated means for girls to gain the social authority often associated with these styles. Rather, the use of *cit * styles of speech and dress among girls is often criticized as too masculine, demonstrating the limitations of such performances as a form of social critique. In the examples below, I show that the use of purportedly masculine verbal and dress styles represents both a means for girls to craft transgressive gendered identities for themselves and also an opportunity for their peers to critique their subversion of expected gender norms. I argue that the ambivalent response to girls’ performances of *cit * styles of speech constitute the interactional enactment of the more general ambivalence toward the role of girls in public space that I discuss above. Furthermore, the controversy that surrounds girls’ use of supposedly masculine *cit * styles demonstrates a larger struggle over the symbolic meaning of these interactional styles and the symbolic boundaries of gender categories in the neighborhood. In the case of *cit * styles of speech and dress in

Chemin de l'Ile, these linguistic and symbolic resources directly index social stances such as working class urbanity, youth, and toughness that indirectly come to represent masculinity in the neighborhood.

Adolescent girls and boys often evaluate such verbal performances as they occur, thus revealing 'an active process of negotiation in which participants reflexively examine the discourse as it is emerging' (Bauman and Briggs.:69). Thus participants actively shape the meaning of girls' performances of *cité* styles through their ongoing interpretation. In keeping with the varied contexts and interpretations of these performances, the examples analyzed below are diverse. The first shows how adolescent girls perform and evaluate their peers' ability to perform interactional styles associated with the *cité*. The second example demonstrates how both the adolescent girls who use these verbal styles and the peers who criticize them for it associate these styles with toughness and masculinity, although in different ways. Finally, the third example shows how the social authority that girls attempt to access by using *cité* styles is subverted through humorous teasing by their peers. The discussion of these three examples follows the progression of my argument; that is, although girls perform styles associated with the *cité* in order to craft social and verbal authority for themselves, their use of these styles is interpreted as inappropriately masculine, and thus discouraged by their peers through teasing.

Despite the indirect relationship between linguistic style and gender identity, many adolescents, and especially adolescent boys, construct *cité* styles as the exclusive symbolic property of boys and men. While some girls attempt to use stylistic markers of the *cité* to their social and verbal advantage, they are teased by both boys and girls for acting in an overly masculine fashion, even though they may be attempting to 'act tough' rather than 'act like a man.' Girls are subject to contradictory expectations with regard to these verbal styles. On one hand, both adolescent boys and girls in Chemin de l'Ile consider the ability to defend oneself against teasing and insults an important part of self presentation in the neighborhood.¹⁵¹ On the other hand, the very public nature of these

¹⁵¹ Goffman (1967) discusses self presentation as the process of crafting a public 'face' in relation to others through interaction.

competitive verbal performances, which usually take place in front of an audience at school, in the park, or at neighborhood associations, mean that they contribute to a self presentation that is regarded by adolescents as more typical of boys than girls. In this way, local cultural ideologies that construct public space as a more appropriate realm for men than women coincide with local linguistic ideologies that posit competitive verbal performance as a more suitable activity for boys than girls.

‘TO MAKE A BLOW OF PRESSURE’: COMPETITIVE BRAGGING ROUTINES

One sunny spring day around four o’clock in the afternoon, I happened upon Naima sitting alone on the low wall on the side of the playground where older girls would usually sit to talk. A girl of about 12, Naima greeted me warmly, and I stopped to talk. Like many of her peers, Naima was fascinated with my being American, and told me about the clothing and shoes that her older brother had brought her and her family back from *les States*. Her enthusiasm for comparing the price and quality of brands of clothing continued to be central to our discussion when two older girls, Brigitte and Sarah, stopped by. Soon all three girls were comparing brands and competitively bragging about the quality of their clothing and shoes, citing the country that produced each product.¹⁵² Much as these girls and other adolescents use brands of clothing as resources to construct a local system of social distinction, they use competitive verbal genres to construct their individual reputations as competent performers of local speech genres.

Brigitte and Sarah were both around fifteen at the time and close friends, but their relationship with Naima was limited to being neighbors and attending the same school. However, because the two older girls knew Naima’s older brothers, Brigitte and Sarah had already established teasing rights with her. In the playful bragging and ritualized insults about clothing and brand names that follow, Naima and the older girls turn their keen interest in these status markers into a motif on which to build a verbal competition. Naima’s attempts to out-brag these older girls might also be viewed as a bid for their attention and an attempt to craft a verbal performance that would earn their respect.

Featured in this example is the genre of competitive bragging, *mettre un coup de pression*. Being able to successfully *mettre un coup de pression* means that one is able to

¹⁵² The country cited in these instances is generally where a brand name’s company headquarters are located and not where the item is actually fabricated. Furthermore, attention to the imputed provenance of brand name clothing is paired with a highly developed fear of ‘fakes,’ which can supposedly be distinguished from the ‘real’ goods by the label. For example, a piece of clothing made by Nike would only be beyond suspicion if the label stated clearly ‘made in U.S.A.’, which is almost never the case given the globalization of the clothing industry. However, clothing that one or one’s friends or family brings back to France from the United States (or another European country) is considered to be authentic regardless of what the tag states.

out-brag or out-insult a peer. As in the case of Brigitte's comments below, an evaluation of a speaker's verbal performance is often embedded within the performance itself as adolescent peers judge each other's attempts to insult and brag. In the transcriptions, words spoken in Arabic are shown in bold type, not only to distinguish them from French, but also to emphasize the prevalence of Arabic loan words in verbal performances among these adolescents.

Example 5.3: Performing 'a Blow of Pressure'

- | | | |
|---|----------|---|
| 1 | Sarah | Moi, mon pul c'est un Décathlon ¹⁵³
<i>Me, my sweater is a Décathlon</i> |
| | | et mon slip c'est un Sloggy, alors hein, ta gueule!
<i>and my underwear's a Sloggy, so huh, shut up!</i> |
| 2 | Naima | [pointing to the other girls' sweatpants and then her own]
Hé Décathlon, Décathlon, Décathlon et k- et et Air Max.
<i>Hey Décathlon, Décathlon, Décathlon and k- and and Air Max.</i> |
| 3 | | Alors s'il te plaît ta bouche maintenant
<i>So please shut your mouth now</i> |
| | | et ka'b chez-toi don- druk!
<i>and go home no- now!</i> |
| 4 | Brigitte | Hé Naima elle met des coups de pression en ce moment.
<i>Hey Naima's talking trash lately.</i> |
| 5 | | 'n'sais pas ce qu'elle a dans le cul.
<i>I don't know what she has up her ass.</i> |

The above exchange demonstrates how girls use competitive verbal styles common to this and other *cités* to distinguish themselves among their peers. The act of instigating a bragging session is a means for adolescents in Chemin de l'Ile to build

positive reputations for themselves through self-aggrandisement. At the same time, these performances provide the opportunity to engage a peer in interaction that is both challenging and inclusive, giving the other speaker the chance to construct her own reputation as a competent verbal performer. This particular performance incorporates both playful and challenging qualities, showing that the girls are using this interaction to create a feeling of familiarity, but also to compete with one another individually. Genres such as the above *coup de pression* contribute to both a shared aesthetic for everyday interaction within the neighborhood and to the individual reputations of adolescents who verbally challenge one another. In a pattern common to many of these verbal competitions, here two of the girls, Sarah and Naima, exchange bragging and insults while a third, Brigitte, evaluates the interaction. Initially, Sarah verbally challenges the other girls by bragging about her sweater and underwear and by adding the insult, ‘shut up’ (line 1). Naima responds to this challenge by bragging about her own and the other girls’ clothing, implying that Sarah’s clothes are no more prestigious than their own (line 2). Naima also completes her bragging by insulting Sarah, ‘shut your mouth now, and go home now’ (line 3).

The older girls’ willingness to engage in such an interaction with a younger girl shows how these ritualized interactions are used by older adolescents to socialize their younger peers into performing local speech genres. Naima’s response is hesitant — she corrects herself and repeats ‘and’ (line 2) and initially mispronounces **druk** (‘now’) (line 3). This hesitancy also seems indicative of Naima’s status as a younger and less experienced verbal challenger, who loses her nerve when responding to the older girl, Sarah. With respect to this hesitation, Brigitte’s assessment of Naima’s performance—‘Hey Naima’s talking trash lately. I don’t know what she has up her ass.’ (lines 4-5) is significant in that Brigitte comments about Naima’s performance rather than directly responding to her challenge. Thus while the older girls overtly recognize Naima’s response to Sarah as a type of verbal challenge, neither Sarah nor Brigitte chooses to respond to it, perhaps because it isn’t skillful enough to warrant engaging in the trash-

¹⁵³ 'Décathlon' is a popular French brand of sporting wear and 'Sloggy' a popular brand of underwear. Likewise, in the next line, 'Air Max' is a popular type of Nike sneakers.

talking. Nonetheless, the exchange demonstrates how these girls value competitive verbal genres by the way that they perform, name, and evaluate them collectively.

In demonstrating the centrality of *cité* verbal styles such as *mettre un coup de pression* to social interactions between girls, the above example shows that, despite the local (and external) association of these styles with toughness and masculinity, they remain important to how girls construct personal reputations among their peers. Such performances can thus be viewed as attempts on the part of adolescent girls to construct personal authority within a larger context that encodes these styles and genres of interaction as incongruous with femininity, and yet central to individual self-expression. Because the use of these genres and styles are considered atypical and thus inappropriate for girls, they may be criticized for using such performances to gain personal status, as shown in the third example below. Further, as I will show in the third example, teasing and verbal contests in which boys and girls confront one another demonstrate another level of discursive contest at which boys and girls compete for ownership over the symbolic and linguistic terrain of self expression.

NARRATIVE BRAGGING AND GENDER EXPECTATIONS

The next example represents a conversation at the *Cerise* association in which two girls, Fatima (15) and Cécile (16), brag to a boy, Pierre (16), about disrupting class. The exchange illustrates bragging in narrative form, describing, as the kids put it, *foutre le bordel* (literally ‘making the brothel’, here translated as ‘raising hell’). Rather than brag about herself, Fatima brags to Pierre about Cécile, present at the time, by describing how she disrupted detention hour with a teacher named Chanudeau. Fatima’s bragging serves the double function of reporting her contempt for school authority and of portraying Cécile and, by association, herself as tough, presumably to gain the respect and approbation of Pierre. Pierre had established a reputation for toughness in the neighborhood because he had assaulted a teacher and had been expelled from school for it. In this sense, he was a well chosen audience for Fatima’s bragging in that he was associated with the kind of tough reputation that Fatima and Cécile were attempting to craft for themselves. At the same time, like many other adolescents I encountered in Chemin de l’Ile, both male and female, Pierre expressed reservations about girls ‘trying to be men.’ Pierre once told me in an interview, ‘Why should girls want to act like men when they do it less well than we do?’ In depicting girls’ attempts to appear tough as a desire to act like men, Pierre reveals tensions surrounding gender identifications in the neighborhood, where toughness, arguably a beneficial attribute for living in the neighborhood, is constructed as synonymous with masculinity. The authority that girls like Fatima and Cécile construct for themselves by acting ‘tough’ is thus diminished by critiques of them as ‘tomboys’ (or *garçons manqués*, literally ‘missed boys’) who ‘want to be men,’ but fall short.

Example 5.4: ‘Making the Brothel’

1 Fatima On a tous foutu notre bordel chez Chanudeau, euh cinq à six.
 We all raised hell in Chanudeau’s class, uh from five to six.

expectations for girls in the neighborhood. Even as he seems to imply that this type of troublemaking is unusual for girls, Pierre also seems to indicate that girls at school tend to behave worse than boys: ‘Last year it was the same thing’ (line 9). In both of his statements, Pierre voices expectations that girls should have different social behavior than boys, in his initial surprise that they ‘raise hell’ and in his subsequent insinuation that, contrary to his expectations, the girls in Fatima’s class both this year and last act ‘worse’ than boys. Pierre’s response points to how ‘troublemaking’ by girls is both valorized by peers as a form of transgression and critiqued as deviant gender behavior.

Throughout the exchange, Cécile’s denials of disruptive behavior, ‘who raised hell?’ (lines 6 & 8), are ignored by both of the other participants. With her repeated question, Cécile seems to imply that it was, in fact, Fatima who was ‘raising hell’ and not herself. Fatima’s ironic claim that Cécile is not a girl—‘That? You call that a girl?’—functions, in part, as a teasing response to Cécile’s attempt to blame her for the trouble. But Fatima’s comment is more importantly a clever response to Pierre’s surprise at her claims of rowdy behavior in school. By ironically asking whether Pierre can really consider Cécile a girl, Fatima further challenges conventional gender boundaries by proposing that Cécile’s gender identity is determined by behavior rather than biology. Fatima’s response also further raises the stakes of her bragging about ‘raising hell’ in that she implies that Cécile isn’t just refusing to act like a girl, she isn’t one. By explicitly refusing to describe Cécile as female, Fatima strengthens her description of Cécile (and by extension, herself) as a troublemaker: she’s so tough, she can’t even be considered a girl. Rather than an insult, Fatima’s comment appears to be an appreciative form of teasing with respect to Cécile and another level of bragging with respect to Pierre.

In this example, both Pierre and Fatima are associating masculinity with toughness, but in different ways. Pierre is pointing to the ways that toughness is unusual (and thus deviant) among girls, whereas Fatima is provocatively embracing gender deviance by refusing a female identity for Cécile as a way of further claiming a tough identity for her friend. Whereas the first example demonstrated how girls aspire to toughness, the above example shows how both boys and girls conflate toughness and masculinity, but to different ends. For example, Fatima appears to be strategically

invoking the ambiguity between toughness and masculinity to further emphasize the transgressive behavior she describes to Pierre. In addition, Fatima's claim to a masculine identity for Cécile appears to be a calculated subversion of gender categories, and thus a critical response to the insinuation that the two girls are engaging in 'atypical' gendered behavior, that is, if she is not considered a girl, she can't be expected to act like one.

‘MY NAME IS CÉCILE’: (RE)VOICING GENDER IDENTITIES

The final example illustrates the centrality of verbal play, and particularly teasing, for the construction of adolescent gender roles. In this extract, two of Cécile’s male peers, Salim, fifteen years old, and Tarik, fourteen, parody her speaking style using my tape recorder to conduct a feigned interview. Through satirical performance, the two boys subvert the toughness of Cécile’s verbal style by representing it as an imitation of the real thing, for their own comedic purposes. By mockingly performing Cécile as male, Salim and Tarik point out that while she is not a man, she acts like one and that is laughable. Thus the personal authority that girls bid for when adopting *cit * styles of talk is subject to a level of ironic ridicule by their male peers, who, in parodying girls’ performances, reclaim these styles for themselves.

Example. 5.5: ‘Taking’ Cécile’s Voice

- 1 Salim (pointing the microphone at Cécile)
Une question pour un homme.
A question for a man.
- 2 Y a un homme devant moi. J’n’sais comment il s’appelle.
There’s a man in front of me. I don’t know his name.
- 3 Comment tu t’appelles? Comment t’appelles-tu?
What’s your name? What is your name?
- 4 Ahmed (answers for Cécile while laughing.)
Cécile!
Cécile!
- 5 Salim Comment t’appelles-tu s’il te pla t?
What is your name please?
- 6 Cécile Ta gueule.
Shut up.

- 7 Tarik (taking microphone from Salim)
 Attends!
 Wait!
- 8 Je m'appelle Cécile, une **qaḥaba**.
 *My name is Cécile, a **whore**.*
- 9 Salim (to Tarik)
 Nan mais là, mais **ḥashəm**.
 *No but there, but **have some shame**.*
- (Salim and Tarik struggle over the microphone.)
- 10 Salim Attends!
 Wait!
- 11 Tarik Attends! attends! attends!
 Wait! wait! wait!
- 12 Salim Nique Cerise! Je m'appelle Cécile!
 Fuck Cerise! (neighborhood association) My name is Cécile!
 (group laughter)
- 13 Alors je m'appelle Cécile,
 So my name is Cécile,
- 14 en fait j'suis alcoolique et toxicomane.
 in fact I'm an alcoholic and drug addict.
- 15 J'ai des biceps¹⁵⁴, et euh,
 I have big biceps, and uh,
- 16 bon fermes ta gueule un petit peu hein?!
 well shut up a little huh?!
 (more laughter)

¹⁵⁴ *Biscs* is short for the word *biscoteaux* ('biscuits'), a slang term for biceps.

17 Cécile (rather softly)
Ta gueule.
Shut up.

In this example, Salim, using my microphone as a prop, performs the voice of a French interviewer, addresses Cécile as a ‘man’, and pretends not to know her name: ‘There’s a man in front of me. I don’t know his name’ (line 2). When Cécile doesn’t answer, Ahmed answers for her by laughingly replying ‘Cécile’ (line 4), thus starting a round of teasing in which other boys compete for the microphone and the chance to symbolically take Cécile’s voice. Tarik first makes a bid to parody Cécile as inappropriately feminine by taking on a falsetto voice and insultingly calling her a **qaḥaba** in Arabic, or ‘whore’ (line 8). Salim protests ‘no but there, but **ḥaṣḥam** ‘have some shame’ (line 9), implying that Tarik has gone too far, and takes the microphone. Rather than take on a stereotypically feminine voice, Salim performs Cécile’s voice as violently and exaggeratedly masculine, using a low pitched voice and explosive consonants to loudly proclaim ‘Fuck *Cerise*! My name is Cécile!’ (line 12).

Having drawn loud laughs from the small crowd that has gathered, Salim continues in the creaky voice of a heavy smoker, ‘so, my name is Cécile, in fact I’m an alcoholic and drug addict’ (lines 13-14). Salim’s depiction of Cécile as exaggeratedly masculine is represented in his voice style and depiction of her as a drug addict and alcoholic, both social identities that are considered socially taboo and thus especially unsuitable for a young woman. This masculine portrayal of Cécile is further emphasized by the description of her anatomy, ‘I have big biceps’ (line 15) and by the verbal challenge that Salim imputes to Cécile, ‘shut up a little, huh?’ (line 16), which indexes aggression and thereby masculinity in the neighborhood’s system of stylistic resources. In response to Salim’s appropriation of her voice, Cécile softly responds ‘shut up’ (line 17). Although she tries to stop Salim and Tarik’s teasing with these words, Cécile is effectively silenced by their symbolic appropriation of her voice.

In the above example, Salim and Tarik subvert Cécile’s bid for a tough identity through humorously depicting her as inappropriately masculine. Their purpose is to perform a humorous sketch to make their audience laugh, but at the same time they

reinforce the social ideology which attributes distinct essential properties, both linguistic and interactional, to boys and girls. By symbolically taking Cécile's voice, Tarik and Salim are performing a representation of what they perceive to be the discontinuity between Cécile's biological sex and her behavior and speech, which they take to be the exclusive property of males. As such, this interaction is an example of what Thorne calls borderwork, an 'interaction based on, or even strengthening gender boundaries' (Thorne 1993:137) because the performance constructs boys and girls as two antagonistic groups. This example shows that when girls attempt to cross ideological borders between masculine and feminine, their peers police these borders with heteroglossic parody. In this case, by momentarily taking ownership over Cécile's speaking voice, Salim and Tarik reclaim symbolic ownership over the competitive interactional and verbal styles that she uses. In this very public, mixed-gender setting, Salim and Tarik are enacting a competitive performance with Cécile that, despite its playfulness, has nuanced and far-reaching implications. By ridiculing Cécile's use of linguistic and interactional styles imputed as being too 'masculine' for her, Salim and Tarik claim ownership over these styles for themselves and for boys generally. Such competitive teasing draws the boundaries of gender identity through the terrain of local space in that the boys are claiming for themselves styles of self presentation which are central to belonging to this *cit *, but which they construct as exclusively masculine.

CONCLUSION

In the above examples, girls and boys use interactional styles associated with the local space of the *cité* to strategically assign, subvert, and enforce gender categories. In so doing, these adolescents demonstrate their ability to performatively enact both the ‘rules’ of gender and also the transgression of those rules. But a discrepancy exists in how boys and girls are interpreting the boundaries of gender identity in relation to local space and to interactional styles associated with this space. Girls who attempt to construct an atypical gender identity for themselves are using linguistic and interactional styles associated with the *cité* to construct reputations for themselves as tough and independent. In so doing, they challenge local discourses that girls should remain socially dependent and outside the realm of public space.

Their male peers, on the other hand, are attempting to construct linguistic and interactional styles associated with the local space of the *cité* as their exclusive symbolic domain. By undermining the girls’ verbal crossing through teasing and mimicry, boys re-establish the boundaries of gender and exert their control over those interactional styles deemed ‘masculine’ by the local community and by dominant French discourses more generally. Thus, girls’ performances of *cité* interactional styles generate ambivalent consequences; while their verbal crossing is a means to voice critique of dominant gender ideologies, their peers enact borderwork to re-establish the normative boundaries of gender that are reinforced by local and dominant gender ideologies. In this way, although strategic uses of *cité* styles provide adolescent girls a means for constructing positive reputations among their peers, girls’ access to these symbolic resources for self presentation is compromised by their peers’ construction of these styles as masculine. As such, girls’ performances of interactional styles associated with the local space of the *cité* can provide them only ephemeral social authority.

The particular and intricate tensions surrounding gender, local space, and language practices discussed here hold broader implications for scholarship that addresses the construction of gender through verbal performance. The partial authority

that girls gain by emulating ‘tough’ *cit * styles shows that we need not only consider gender and language in terms of genre and performance, but also how performances are received, critiqued, and subverted by audience members. That is, gendered performances must be examined and discussed in relation to circulating, ideological or prescriptive discourses for gendered identities and gendered behavior. As I have shown, these ideologies and prescriptions are also emergent in interaction. In this way, expectations for girls’ “respectable” behavior exist in apparent conflict and contradiction with girls’ attempts to attain tough reputations. At the same time, girls’ performances of tough identities sometimes incorporate a rejection of a feminine sexuality that is compatible with normative prescriptions against girls’ sexual freedom that attempt to control their bodies and actions.

Conclusion

This dissertation analyzes identity formation as a collaborative, dynamic process that occurs in everyday forms of discourse and in response to more broadly circulating ideologies. Language identity research has emphasized the ephemeral quality of speakers' identifications with social categories and has constructed identity as a series of performances which, much like items of clothing, can be taken on and off [LePage 1985, Rampton 1995, yet Walters 1999 stands as an exception]. While this dissertation is also evidence of the performative and partial processes of social identity, I have tried to demonstrate the ways in which stereotypes and stigmatized representations of *les arabes* pervade adolescents' everyday improvisation of teenage peer identity in Chemin de l'Ile. In so doing, I have explored the extent to which even performances of social identities for other peers are permeated with the voices of dominant discourse-makers in France, such as Jean-Marie LePen and Jacques Chirac.

With respect to the relationship between everyday discourse and larger circulating ideologies, my dissertation illustrates three theoretical points. First, I show that among adolescents who experience the stigmatized identity of being "Arab" in France, discursive production represents a very high degree of intertextuality [Briggs and Bauman 1992] with dominant discourses about *les arabes* and *la cité* that circulate through French news, politics, and media representations. Second, my detailed data and in-depth analysis demonstrate the emergent processes whereby self and group representations of adolescent identity intersect and clash with larger representations of social categories [Cantwell 1993]. Third, such detailed analysis illuminates the interconnection between "discourse" as emergent, spontaneous conversational production and "Discourse" as historically situated ideologies [Foucault 1978].

More specifically, this dissertation represents an attempt to understand adolescents' particular experiences and expressions of being *arabe* and *français* in a national and local context in which these identities are constructed as mutually exclusive. To this end, I have examined how ideologies of 'race', space, and social stigma

determine and inform one another through exclusionary practices and ideologies directed at *les jeunes de la cité*. In Chapter Two, this focus takes shape through charting a political history of low-income housing projects (*cités*) and describing their intricate interweaving with politics of race and immigration through the stigmatizing of particular racialized groups such as Algerians.

In the remainder of the dissertation, however, this focus has taken shape in adolescents' own expression and imagining of relationships among 'race', space, and stigma. Throughout, I look at everyday performances that inform and express the complicated relationship between stigmatized racial identity and stigmatized spatial belonging. In this regard, I am interested in the ways that representations of *cités* in French media and political discourse build upon and reflect negatively racialized depictions of their Arab inhabitants. This amalgamation of space and 'race' is reflected in adolescents' own imaginings of themselves as inhabitants of *la cité* and as non-French.

More importantly, my analysis reveals the ways that adolescents of varying backgrounds, Algerian, Moroccan, and Portuguese, rally around their own construction as "immigrants" and "non-French" to create a peer group identity. This collaborative effort may afford these adolescents a common defense against racism, and a means to withstand the constant barrage of negative stereotypes about *les arabes* and to account for the relative racial and ethnic diversity in the neighborhood. In this regard, it was common for adolescents of non-Arab Algerian origin to self-identify as *arabe*, even though their parents were actually *kabyle* or Berber. This pattern demonstrates the degree to which children of immigrants are constructing their identities in France through the use of operative stereotypes that routinely conflate Algerians, Arabs, and Muslims. Further, adolescents of non-Arab descent tended to identify with the most stigmatized ethnic or immigrant group in their background, demonstrating a kind of self-ascribed hypodescent (the practice of identifying as the most stigmatized group in one's racial background).

For example, one adolescent routinely self-identified as "Portuguese" even though she was half German and only one quarter Portuguese. In any case, for all adolescents with whom I worked with it was common practice *not* to identify as "French" even though all of my young informants would be technically considered so under the rules of

French citizenship, having been born in the country. Again, the interesting point here is that adolescents are self-ascribing a non-French identity in a fashion that mimics dominant French stereotypes that certain stigmatized groups, such as Arabs, are excluded from cultural inclusion in ideal representations of “Frenchness” despite valid claims to citizenship. A larger goal of this dissertation then, is to respond to social and political scientists in France who argue that participation in the French state is forged through the recognition of individuals, and not ethnic or immigrant groups. While this may be true on a juridical level, my research indicates that on symbolic, cultural, and linguistic levels adolescents of immigrant origin are defining themselves against normative definitions of Frenchness that are racialized and exclusive of *les arabes*.

In addition to examining the interrelationship of subcultural style and stigma, the theoretical framework of *le respect* and *reputation* has provided a means to tie together the various types of identity "work" that adolescents in Chemin de l’Ile engage in. On the one hand, I look at the ways that adolescents craft personal reputations through competitive performances of verbal genres such as “parental name calling.” My study shows that adolescents innovate discursive genres which borrow from both traditional Arabic and emergent *cite* interactional norms, in that these performances both foreground an Arabic-styled notion of *le respect* and subvert this ideal through the public teasing of a peer. As well, discursive performances of personal reputation provide an opportunity for adolescent girls to transgress conventional identity boundaries by appropriating purportedly masculine forms of dress and speech for their own subversive identity needs. In verbal exchanges that blend cultural and linguistic expectations from traditional North African age and gender hierarchy with those that correspond to ideals about personal reputation, adolescent speakers elaborate their relationship, on the one hand, to their immigrant origins, and other the other, to an emergent youthful subculture.

In a larger sense, however, this dissertation deals with adolescent symbolic practices that adolescents improvise to navigate their position as both *arabe* and *français*. For instance, in Chapter Three, adolescent girls of various origins construct a shared "immigrant" and non-French collective identity to collectively critique "French" racist practices toward *les Arabes*. The free-form examples of verbal play later in that chapter,

however, show that adolescents are cultural and stylistic *bricoleurs* [Hebdige 1979], mixing and blurring boundaries of *français* and *arabe*. This symbolic innovation is demonstrated by adolescents during Ramadan--adolescents often paint henna on their hands in the shape of a Nike™ ‘swoosh’. In so doing they use 'traditional' forms of cultural and religious expression (henna) in entirely new ways that bespeak their particular location as practicing Muslims living in a consumer global economy. Such symbolic performances demonstrate the cultural and linguistic hybridity that these adolescents experience at the local, everyday level.

Adolescents thus seem to be responding to the discursive and social tensions between *français* and *arabe* with cultural and linguistic performances that lay bare the contradictions and conflicts inherent to embodying both of these subject positions. It is precisely the contradiction and partiality of adolescent performances that reveal the challenges that French adolescents of Algerian descent experience in relation to social identity. These contradictions and conflicts emerge particularly in the innovative genre “parental name calling.” Although adolescents everywhere occupy a tenuous position in relation to their parents, in the case of adolescents of Algerian descent in France, their relationship to parents also entails a connection to their immigrant origins and to attendant French prejudices. As evidenced by the emphasis on verbal play surrounding adolescents’ parents’ names that I address in Chapter Four, adolescents play with the boundaries of insult and respect when they challenge one another by evoking their parents’ names and immigrant identities. At the same time, adolescents elaborate new understandings of *arabe* and *français* as mutually informing identities through the local creation and expression of globally-flavored and locally practiced *cité* styles.

Glossary of Arabic Terms

balək -- *watch out, be careful*

bəkri -- *before, in earlier days, in the past*

druk -- *now*

dukh-li -- *come in*

hadi --- *that, that one*

ḥagar / ḥagara – literally *lowly or despised*, figuratively *bully*

This term most likely originates from the Classical Arabic term **ḥaqaara**, which means lowness, vulgarity, meanness, baseness. Its pronunciation in the French linguistic context has shifted (from consonant q to g) and its meaning specifically refers to bullying or overly aggressive behavior. The addition of the **a** on the end of the term renders it feminine.

ḥala --- literally *state of being*, figuratively *chaos or ruff raff*

The term derives from the original Classical Arabic term **ḥal** which means ‘a state of being’. However, the term takes on a new meaning in the context of borrowing in France. For example, the expression “*faire le ḥala*” is equivalent to “*faire le bordel*” which literally translates as ‘to make the brothel’ or figuratively as ‘to raise hell’ or ‘to create chaos’. As well, the expression *le ḥala* roughly translates as ‘screw ups’ or ‘riff raff’.

ḥami --- literally *hot*, figuratively *excited or agitated*

While this word is pronounced identically to the Classical Arabic term **ḥami**, its meaning and usage have shifted in the French context to mean 'excited' and is used in ways similar to the English term. For example, **ḥami** can be used to mean angry, sexual, and happy ‘excitement’--its precise meaning changes in context.

ḥashək -- *forgive men for mentioning it, sparing your presence*

This term is used throughout North Africa as a politeness formula when specific, unseemly (culturally taboo) topics are mentioned, such as prostitutes. Among adolescent users, however, the term was most often used to excuse excessive teasing, similar to ‘I’m sorry’ or ‘I didn’t mean it’, and appeared after a peer expressed offense. Thus, there is a

functional similarity between use in France and North Africa, that is, the expression is used in both contexts for ritually reversing offense to one's interlocutor, yet the context for use has radically shifted.

ḥashəm -- *'have some shame'*

This term derives from the term **ḥshuma**, which roughly translates as 'shame'. The term is used extensively in North Africa and the Middle East, as well as in France. (See Chapter Four for a discussion of the cultural significance of this concept.)

ḥasul -- *like or you know* [a discourse marker]

ka'b --- *go, get out of here*

This term may originate from the Arabic term **ka'b** for 'heel' [of a shoe] or 'cube' and roughly translates as 'to leave' (thus perhaps drawing on the original meaning of 'heel'). However, it is generally used as an insulting way to tell someone to leave, as in the expression "**ka'b chez toi**" which translates as the command 'go home' or 'get out of here'. However, the term was alternately used in the expression "*je t'ai ka'b*," which is practically equivalent to the French expression "*je t'ai eu*" meaning 'I got one over on you' or 'I took advantage of you'. Both uses of the term are particular to second generation speakers in France.

kaḥəl -- *literally to blacken, figuratively, to take advantage of or fool [someone]*

This term most likely originates from the Classical Arabic verb [kḥl], meaning 'to blacken or darken with kohl' or **kaḥəl**, 'darkened with kohl'. Much like **ka'b**, the term was used in the expression "*je t'ai kaḥəl*" or "*je t'ai eu*" ['I fooled you' or 'I got one over on you'].

kathir -- *a lot*

khra' -- *shit*

khariyya -- *shitter*

khuya -- *brother*

Llah na'l shaytan --- *"God curse the Devil"*

qaḥaba -- *whore*

ta' -- *of, possessive form*

tfliya -- "a conversational genre which involves joking and teasing in a performative mode" [Kapchan 1996:245]

wallah -- *by God, I swear*

wash bik -- *what's up, what's your problem*

za'ma -- *that is [to say], like* [a discourse marker]

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Vita

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