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Is Paris burning? : power and discourse in the French media coverage of the November riots 2005

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Abstract: In the town of Clichy-sous-Bois, a poor suburb just outside of Paris, two boys, running from the police for a crime they did not commit, were electrocuted in a power transformer where they attempted to hide. For the next three weeks, the poorest neighborhoods across the nation erupted in violence and vandalism that shocked the country and the world, and changed the way the French understand and represent diversity and difference. Using Michel Foucault's theories of discourse and language, this project analyzes articles in the three most widely circulated French national daily newspapers—Le Monde, Le Figaro, Liberation—and seeks to understand how the French mainstream media responded to the riots and their aftermath, in 2005. By consulting academic sources, media reports, and personal interviews collected in the fall of 2006, the project affirms that media played an essential role in the formulation and propagation of the riots, and the analyses that followed. This project maintains that the French print media coverage of the 2005 riots is representative of a specific power dynamic that positioned members of the French elite as absolute authorities on the events that took place in the *banlieues*, and their consequences. During—and because of—the riots, however, this dynamic shifted, and one year later these same media outlets restructured their arguments regarding the cause of the violence. Rather than dictating a particular version of what took place, the articles published in 2006 represent a variety of positions regarding the riots, the complex issues that surround them, and the diversity of the French population itself.

Introduction

This project examines the coverage of the Paris riots of 2005 in the three main French language national daily newspapers, *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro*, and *Libération*, in order to understand the connection between language, power, and cultural identity. On the night of October 27th, 2005, riots began taking place in the poorest neighborhoods of the poorest suburbs of France (Autain). The violence began as a reaction to the deaths of two teenagers of North African descent who were electrocuted when they tried to hide from the police in an electrical relay station and fell against a transformer. Initially, newspapers both locally and globally presented the riots as 'isolated incidents,' described by Paris city officials as "minor disruptions that should not in any way effect the [social] conditions" in the effected suburbs, let alone in all of France ("Nuit D'émeute À Clichy-Sous-Bois Après La Mort De Deux Adolescents"). But, as the violence escalated and continued into several weeks, both the media and the French government were forced to recognize the events as a significant moment in the cultural and social politics of the country.

By the 7th of November, French President Jacques Chirac declared a national state of emergency, which included nightly curfews and mass arrests. According to the *Le Monde*, the chief perpetrators were mostly (if not all) boys and young men between the ages of 14 and 20, second or third generation immigrants ("Banlieues: Qui Sont Les Jeunes En Colère?"). By November 17th, when French officials finally declared the country back to a state of normalcy, nearly 10,000 vehicles had been torched over a period of 20 days, 2,888 people had been arrested, 126 police officers had been injured, and innumerable police stations, schools, and residences had been bombed or set alight

("Banlieues: À Savoir"). What initially was considered, ‘isolated’ and ‘minor’ was, in fact, a symbolic moment for the cultural identity of France. The riots became a moment when a historical cultural exclusivity, which has defined much of the cultural identity of the Western world, was forced to confront the history of colonization and migration. The tension between lived experience and cultural representation were especially visible in the national media coverage. By focusing on the stories circulated in French language newspapers, this project addresses the significance of what came to be called the November riots in light of certain elements of French history and culture.

Events such as the uprising of ethnic minorities that took place last October in France, along with the government’s lack of control and lack of immediate response, are often perceived as conditions of the third world (Nordenstreng). But, as this project highlights, these events are not unique to the states that are considered ‘less developed’. By focusing on newspapers and news stories as particular windows to public notions of identity and as public ‘voices’, this project explains how France exists via a constructed national identity, and, like many other developed nations, lives in fear of particular aspects of globalization, such as migration and transnational identities, that threaten to erode that identity (Carey).

This project as a whole seeks to question whether or not the events that took place in the fall of 2005 offer the possibility for new discourses about identity, race, and diversity within France. In addition, because these events are recent, little to no scholarly work has examined their significance from a media studies perspective, and this project responds to this lack. By focusing on France, it adds a unique perspective on issues of

language, media representation, and cultural identity that are currently being debated in the academy.

The project is divided into four main sections. The first, a theory and method chapter, serves to outline the theoretical and methodological approaches to the project, including an brief exploration of how Michel Foucault's work may be used to analyze media texts in this context. The second chapter is a brief historical background of the current situation of immigrant minorities in France, and argues that knowledge of this history is crucial to an understanding of the problems currently presenting themselves there. Following is an analysis of the events of November 2005 and their media coverage, and a 'retrospective' chapter, which focuses on revisiting the riots a year later, in the fall of 2006, to discuss the media coverage and academic responses to the riots both while they were happening, and then again in retrospect. This third chapter also includes personal testimony from French citizens, collected during the 'anniversary' of the riots, in October and November 2006, and attempts to represent the diversity of opinion and emotion existing within the French public sphere.

Theory/Method

Introduction

This chapter outlines the theoretical and methodological approaches to this project, using the works of James Carey, Stuart Hall, Lawrence Grossberg, and Marwan Kraidy. This section explains how the course of the Paris riots and their aftermath showcase certain elements of French culture and identity as historically and ideologically constructed, and outlines the methodology of this project, which includes textual analysis

and ethnographic research. This analysis will later be discussed in relation to French history, both social and linguistic, using Michel Foucault's notion of power and discourse (Mills 2003, Foucault 1972, Payne 1997).

In keeping with Foucault's approach to language and power, this project treats 'discourse' as an understanding of the way knowledge and power are structured via language within a specific cultural and historical instance. The project discusses the ways in which discourses present in the media during the time of the riots allowed for the possibility of a break with past understandings of national identity and the notion of 'diversity' in French culture, and then explores what aspects of these understandings changed or did not change over the following year. In order to understand the changes brought about in France, both culturally and politically, the following chapter focuses on the same issues of immigration, race, diversity, and identity that arose as particularly significant within the media during the time the riots were taking place, but attempts to place them within a historical context.

Theory

In a 1997 article, James Carey defines "journalism and media studies . . . [as] sites, among others, where character is formed and expressed and the contest over culture is played out" (Carey 309). The connections made here between media and culture are crucial for this project because they emphasize, not only media's role as a window through which cultural patterns can be viewed, but also how culture is "played out" in media texts. In his 1975 essay, Carey uses the example of a newspaper to illustrate the way a media outlet may be regarded as a site for communication-as-ritual, a function that goes beyond its role as simply a way of transporting information. The newspaper

becomes, in this new light, “a form of culture invented by a particular class at a particular point of history”, and “news [becomes] a historic reality” (21).

This project draws upon two aspects of this argument: the first is the intrinsic connection between media and the nuances of the cultures they represent, and the second is the extreme importance of journalism among media as a different sort of cultural window. Carey equates journalism with the concept of democracy, arguing that “the practices of journalism are not self-justifying . . . rather, they are justified in terms of the social consequences they engender” (332). It is just such “social consequences” (or, perhaps, historical consequences) that inform this project. Carey also argues for an examination of journalism “as the practices by which the real is made under the category of the present” (333). In this way, it is then necessary to understand national journalism not only as a democratic and modern practice, but also as a historical one; one closely tied to the idea of the nation-state, and one that can only be understood through an exploration the history of the “real” that it represents.

This cultural “real” that Carey describes as being enacted and portrayed by and through media texts must be recognized as existing also within a structure of ideologies that is upheld by the mass media. In “The Whites of Their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media,” Stuart Hall maintains that ideologies are produced and enacted through language, and that it is necessary for individuals to “’speak through’ the ideologies which are active in our society and which provide us with the means of ‘making sense’ of social relations and our place in them” (90). Ideologies are not created by individuals—neither do they exist purely in the form of language; but Hall points out that individuals use language to “speak through” the sense-making elements of any culture or society. Hall

maintains that "the media construct for us a definition of what *race* is, what meaning the imagery of race carries, and what the 'problem of race' is understood to be" (90). The role of the media as that which "classifies" the world in terms of race is particularly valid in France, where the discussion or naming of the "problem of race" is considered taboo, not only socially, but politically (Hargreaves, Frader).

In his article "Identity and Cultural Studies: Is that all there is?" Lawrence Grossberg defines cultural studies as the relationship between culture and power. Grossberg's work is particularly relevant for this project because of his insistence upon cultural studies' need to work beyond models of ideology that position the "[subject as] standing outside of and against a well established structure of power." (88) Instead, cultural studies must position all potential identities within ideological structures in order to understand, not only how subaltern groups struggle for power against dominant ideologies, but how all groups use power within the discourses of contemporary (global) society. Grossberg argues that cultural studies must work on "giving up the notions of resistance that assume a subject standing entirely outside of and against a well established structure of power." The individual, who in some sense must also be representative of a whole, is eternally wrapped in a multiplicity of 'identities,' and Grossberg argues that, rather than working to define these identities, we should be asking how a culture, any culture (as all contemporary cultures are now by definition diverse and 'multicultural'), can subsist while still being comprised of so many different groupings. The events explored in this project offer a site within which these sorts of questions may be asked, and better understood in the future.

Foucault's theories have been drawn into cultural studies arguments over the years because of his efforts to re-conceptualize notions of power within societies, and the ways in which societal frameworks depict that power (Gutting, 2005). This project will use Foucault's work in a number of ways. Firstly, Foucault's theorization of discourse will be used to analyze the articles published during 2005, and then to compare the language used and the coverage of the event to reactions to these events in the media and by French scholars a year later. Foucault stresses the importance of the use of history in any attempt at understanding, if not always in interpreting, contemporary events. This project with look at how ethnic groups, specifically North African immigrants, have been categorized and represented in France, both by the political elite and the mainstream media, and by members of these minority groups.

Foucault's concept of 'discourse' depends on the notion that ideas or beliefs that make up 'reality' at any given time are dependant upon linguistic structures and formations that dictate the limits of a historical 'real.' In order to attempt to uncover the structures that limit the collective 'history' (or 'reality') in the present, one must treat language as an archeologist might a monument: not only as something to be interpreted in order to discover the meaning the individual author intended, but also as a representation of a past quotidian 'reality.'

Foucault argues that it is often impossible for those living within the archaeological structures of their times to 'read' the limits of these structures, similar to the ways in which individuals living within a hegemonic society might find it impossible to conceive of that hegemonic dominance (Foucault 1972). The key to decoding these formations is in the language of that time. It becomes obvious, in looking at this

explanation, that mass media is a perfect site for Foucault's archaeology. Media is often 'author-less' in the sense that it 'belongs' to no set individual: many of the articles included in this project were written by a staff of writers at one newspaper or another, and even those that site an 'author' have certainly been edited and re-edited by many other, nameless, individuals.

Foucault's works are primarily histories, of one sort or another (Gutting), and, over the past century, the mass media has become a primary source for defining history. This can be seen in looking at the many books that were published between the end of 2005 and the 'anniversary' of the riots in 2006: all sources, be they popular press non-fiction or academic works published by France's most prestigious universities, cite newspapers as the definitive authorities on the riots. As James Carey defines journalism "as the practices by which the real is made under the category of the present" (333), so these media texts may be understood, not only as sources of authority on what did or did not take place during the riots, but also windows into present 'realities' in France.

The nature of Foucault's work makes the idea of 'applying' of his theories to any particular situation contradictory. Despite his unrivaled position as one of the most prolific and influential figures of postmodern, much of his life's work was dedicated to breaking down traditional constructs of knowledge that divide truth and fiction (Mills). While attempting not to simplify Foucault's ideas beyond recognition, this project will use some aspects of his work in order to analyze the media texts discussed below, their differences and similarities, as well as what they mean for France today.

Method/ Ethnography

In his article "The Global, the Local, and the Hybrid: a Native Ethnography of Glocalization," Marwan Kraidy stresses the value of the ethnographic model in studying hybrid cultures through communication practices (Kraidy 1999). Like Grossberg, Kraidy is concerned with challenging simplistic answers to questions about identity, and uses ethnography, defined as "an embodied method of cultural inquiry focusing on everyday life" (460), in hopes of addressing the complexity of discourses of identity in a global society. While Kraidy focuses mainly on native ethnography in the form of personal interviews, this paper will use both ethnography and archival research in the form of newspaper articles published during the time of the 2005 riots.

Kraidy defends his use of "native ethnography" by arguing that the significance of his position does not rest on his "native" status, but rather on his ability to "appropriate a voice by a subject whose speaking position is located on the borderline between two worldviews" (461). This project attempts a similar approach toward the study of the increasingly diverse and "hybrid" cultures within France, and will use Kraidy's notion of the need for a "re-direction of the ethnographic lens" (461) in the use of archival sources that both provide a base for, and also serve to compliment, the ethnographic research methods. In this way, both through an analysis of archival and French-language academic sources, and through using French as the primary language for interviews, the project attempts to stand on this "borderline" between the French and the foreign worldviews.

Like the subjects of Kraidy's interviews, many of the interviewees for this project were friends and acquaintances. Unlike Kraidy's subjects, however, the age,

socioeconomic status, and region of the French citizens interviewed vary greatly, due in part to the availability of the subjects, and in part to an attempt to represent the diversity of the French public. Because of the time-sensitive nature of this project, the majority of the fieldwork was carried out during the week following the one-year anniversary of the riots, October 27th through November 3rd 2006, in Paris. During this time, French national sentiment, as viewed through media coverage, political debate, and memorials conducted by local institutions, revisited and responded to the riots of the previous year, and mourned the young men who were killed.

Open-ended questions were posed to French citizens, of all ages and origins, around Paris, primarily in cafes. More specifically, the following questions were asked: "May I ask you two questions?" if the answer is "yes:" "Are you a French citizen?" again, if the answer is "yes:" "What is your opinion/ what do you think about the riots last year and their media coverage?" Twenty-two people in all were questioned, of whom seventeen responded at some length with comments that were relevant to the project. The answers ranged from "I don't have an opinion," to rather lengthy discussions about the upcoming French elections and how the images shown on national television during the riots have aided or thwarted the chances of one candidate or another. More in-depth interviews were carried out before and after this time, both with Parisians and with French citizens from other parts of the country. The majority of the more in-depth interviews were carried out in French, although certain interviewees tended to switch back and forth between French and English, knowing the nationality of their interviewer.

History: France and French Print Media

In order to understand the public discourse surrounding the civil unrest in Paris, this project relies on the news stories published in three well-known French national newspapers: *Le Monde* (The World), *Le Figaro* (The Figaro), and *Libération* (Liberation). *Le Monde* is the most intellectual and internationally renowned of French national daily papers, often equated with *The New York Times* (Kuhn 32). *Le Figaro* is positioned as the right-wing newspaper, and is assumed to have more conservative viewpoints on social issues, often siding with government officials (École Supérieure de Journalisme de Lille). *Libération*, the primary left-wing, socialist paper, was founded by philosopher and public intellectual Jean-Paul Sartre, and is widely accepted to be the most progressive of the three. These newspapers represent three competing mainstream social views that are publicized as valid by leading intellectuals and government officials, and are acknowledged as authoritative. They are also representative of the role of the media in France: a focal point of national pride, highly respected, objective, and at the forefront of social change (École Supérieure de Journalisme de Lille).

All three of these papers printed extensive, front-page stories and in-depth reports throughout the period of rioting, which lasted for three weeks. This project will focus on the articles published in the weekend editions following the first two nights of rioting (October 28th and 29th), two days exactly a week after (November 4th and 5th) and one week after that (November 11th and 12th), when the French President declared the country to be in a state of emergency. There is very little recent research in English concerning the French media; the best source, Raymond Kuhn's *The Media in France*, is more than ten years old. Therefore, this project relies mostly on French-language sources for more

up to date information about French print media, including websites of French universities, such as the French National School of Journalism, and independent groups such as "Media Metrie," a research organization that publishes surveys and articles chronicling French media audiences, and "Acrimed," an media studies organization that releases a number of publications, both in print and online.

As in the United States, the consumption of print media in France, especially daily newspapers, has dropped significantly over the past decade. Only about 36 percent of the population now reads a daily newspaper (Charbon). This is due in part to electronic media's appropriation of print media audiences, but also to the large selection of magazines and periodicals, the diversity of which rivals that of much larger countries (Charon). Despite their lack of large scale readership, many French newspapers, and most specifically those used as archival sources for this project, play an important role in French society (Kuhn 25).

Unlike American or British journalism, the French press still receives a significant amount of funding from the government every year, and the €150 million in given as "direct support" is modest in comparison to the "indirect support" given as tax reductions and exemptions: the total in 2004 alone came to nearly €2 billion (Charon). This financial support is intended to encourage a more diverse media, but its routine classification of French newspapers and periodicals into 'opinion', or 'popular' media outlets, and those that are considered 'quality', or 'serious' (Charon), allow both the industry and the public to easily differentiate between 'popular' papers and those that hold more authority. *Le Monde, Le Figaro,* and *Liberation* all fall into the second category, and are considered 'serious' sources. There are, understandably, many more

‘popular’ press outlets than ‘serious’ one’s, creating the façade of a diversified media. Because of the ways in which newspapers and periodicals are evaluated, however, for both financial and political reasons (other well-known and often-read dailies include *L’Humanité*, owned by the French Communist Party, and *Le Croix*, a Roman Catholic sponsored newspaper), most periodicals and daily papers are understood to be biased towards one socio-political faction or another. The three national dailies used as archival sources for this project are the most widely-read of the few ‘quality’ papers, and their content is viewed by the French public as somewhat definitive in communicating the sentiment of the country’s political and intellectual elite (Kuhn). Because of the position of these national newspapers within French society, they provide a unique insight into accepted dominant ideologies in France at any given time.

Analysis and Historical Background

In an interview with Paul Rabinow in 1984, Michel Foucault says “I think there is a widespread and facile tendency, which one should combat, to designate that which has just occurred as the primary enemy, as if this were always the principle form of oppression from which one had to liberate oneself” (Cultural Studies Reader 137). In order to recognize the significance of these most recent events, of “that which has just occurred”, it becomes necessary to explore where the current understanding of race and immigration in France originated. This chapter will attempt to outline the history of immigrants and immigration in France, and then to introduce possible discussions about the future of the diversity of the French population, as supported by this history. The main purpose of this chapter is not to dictate a simple or easily implemented solution to

the questions that have arisen surrounding the 2005 riots, but rather to stress the need for further discussion, as well as to present opportunities and directions for future research.

Foucault is interested, in many of his works, in categorizing history in order to better understand problems within contemporary society (Gutting). The goal of Foucault's "history of the present," according to Gary Gutting, is "to use an understanding of the past to understand something that is intolerable in the present" (Gutting 10). This involves more than simply documenting past events that have led up to a current 'intolerability'; rather, Foucault questions the assumption that the present is the inevitable product of a static past that progresses seamlessly into the future (Foucault 1972). Instead, he argues that by looking to history one can determine alternate discourses, or social and historical constructions of knowledge, that are noticeably different from those that govern our present understanding of reality.

There are two elements of Foucault's 'history of the present' that are particularly useful for this project. The first is the idea that the present is not separate or distinct from the past, no matter how much it may appear to be so. Therefore, it is always necessary to contextualize the events and dilemmas of the present within history. Secondly, by mapping the organization of knowledge within history, it becomes possible to observe contemporary discourses more clearly.

Language does not control ideology, but it is only through language that ideologies may be seen, translated, and understood (Hall). Although the youths of North African origin who were held responsible for the riots were almost without exception French citizens, the language that has been traditionally used to describe them, and others like them, has situated them within the role of 'other.' This is true of most, if not all

minorities in France, be they first, second or third-generation immigrants. Alec Hargreaves argues that those the French label 'immigrant' (immigré) are the equivalent of the American 'ethnic minority'. This definition has become increasingly problematic as France's 'immigrants' now constitute almost a third of the population (Hargreaves), and are almost all French citizens born in France. The following section gives a brief overview of how immigrants in France came to be imagined in this way.

History of Immigration in France

The history of immigration in France is complex, and its conceptualization by both French authorities and the French public is even more so. Until the late 1980s, there was little or no discussion of immigrants within France, their place in French society, or French history. According to one scholar, "the Republican creed holds that France is one and indivisible, that everyone's ancestors are the Gauls, that there is no room for the hyphenated French citizen, no place for the Antillean-French, the Algerian-French" (Smith 177). The lack of recognition for the "hyphenated French citizen" seems strange in light of the way the national media classified Zyed and Bouna, among others, as "of Turkish origin" or "of Malian origin", but it has much to do with how the idea of a French national identity has be formulated as "one and indivisible", despite the nation's long history of diversity and immigration.

In order to understand the significance of recent events in light race relations, it is necessary to explore how race and immigration have functioned throughout history within the notion of the French national identity. France is a diverse nation, and always has been. From the 15th century, when Francois I first united the region of what is now France under one flag, the strength of the French identity has been carefully constructed

via national education, language, and history. Opposition to the idea of France as a homogenized nation-state is not only present within that history, it is part of the cultural heritage of many regions, including Brittany, Alsace, and the Basque country. As an old country with an older heritage, each region in France exists as distinct and independent historically, culturally, and even linguistically, while at the same time submitting readily to a strong central government that regulates everything from education to the price of books nationwide (Smith).

Many of the pillars of French national identity, as expressed both politically and culturally, originated at the time of the 1789 revolution, and a discussion of race and immigration must also begin there. Anxious to differentiate the new French Republic from the Old Regime, the revolutionaries discarded past ideals of aristocratic privilege and regional power, and instead constructed a French nation around the principle of individual agency and equality before the state. They sought to limit the power of the Catholic Church, which had caused rifts in the French public in the past, and to confine religious and cultural differences to the private sphere while promoting the notion of citizenship as an individual choice and right. The revolutionaries "insisted on the irrelevance of religious, ethnic, or racial difference in the exercise of rights" (Chapman and Frader). Building upon this context, the following section will explore how the history of immigration has intersected with the issue of race in the collective French imagination, and the ways in which language has paralleled this history.

Although census records beginning in the mid-19th century show foreign immigrants making up as much as eight percent of the population, until middle of the 20th century, they were primarily European in origin. These foreigners came to France from

neighboring countries, for both economic and political reasons, from the Italian and Spanish refugees in the early 1920s and 30s, to large numbers of unskilled Belgian and Polish laborers who fulfilled the increased need for workers in northern coal mines (Silverman, Hargreaves). At the end of Second World War, the French government anticipated the need for a significant increase in immigration to compensate for economic and population loss. In 1945 the first definitive French immigration policies were formed in order to address these needs.

The 1945 constitution had laid out preliminary regulations concerning demographic quotas on incoming immigrants to France, but they were vague and unclear, in part because of the French parliament's reticence to create ethnic regulations resembling those of the Vichy Regime so soon after the war (Hargreaves 178). Despite the lack of formal quotas, French authorities made a conscious effort to attract European immigrants: immigration offices were set up in Italy, but nowhere else. Despite attempts to attract the 'right' sort of immigrant population, European immigration into France fell drastically in the period following the war.

In the past, immigrants from Belgium, Italy, and Germany had adapted easily to French life: they had entered in small numbers and were interspersed throughout a nation notorious for the strength of its local culture. The immigrants who entered France after the War were encouraged to bring their families and make lives fom themselves in their new country. It was well understood by the French government that they were needed, not only for economic and demographic growth, but for political and cultural reasons, as well: these immigrants were expected to develop as a new generation for post-war France

(Hargreaves). They were not only expected to assimilate into French culture, they were expected to become French completely, their past lives as foreigners forgotten.

The Power of Language: 'Immigrés, Banlieues, and 'Verlan'

Unlike the multicultural Anglo-American model, the French Republican model does not officially recognize ethnic difference, and "does not recognize racial or ethnic groups either as legitimate social or political categories or as targets for policy" (Lieberman 189). For these reasons, among others, France was never formulated within the popular consciousness, either before or after 1945, as an immigrant nation, neither by her citizens, nor by the government elite, despite the large number of immigrants who resided there.

By the late 1960s, the French authorities began to questions their previous decision to disregard immigration as a serious political and social issue, in part because of the abominable conditions under which many immigrants were living, and in part because of their objectionable ethnic composition. These immigrants, primarily of North African origin, had confronted severe discrimination in the housing and labor markets, forcing them to work and live at the outskirts of major cities where they set up shantytowns, or 'bidonvilles', illegally on vacant land plots. By the mid-1960s, 75,000 people were officially living in these areas. A variety of organizations, assembled by the government, worked to accommodate those living in the bidonvilles, investing in hostel living arrangements for foreign workers, primarily Algerian men.

Until 1972, when regulations condemning racism were passed, there were virtually no laws controlling the demographics of the immigrant population entering

France, for a number of different reasons. The two most obvious were the increased need for workers, of any kind, during the economic 'boom' period directly following the Second World War, a need that disregarded race or origin, and the lack of regulations controlling the movement into France of residents of French colonies or former French colonies, Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia in particular. These reasons had as much to do with the economic rebuilding of the country than with any political or social considerations (Hargreaves, Silverstein). In 1966, the French Minister for Social Affairs, Jean-Marcel Jeanneney, stated blatantly that "illegal immigration has its uses, for if we adhere rigidly to the regulations and international agreements we would perhaps be short of labor" (quoted by Alec Hargreaves 179). During this time, a 'laissez-faire' approach dominated the French attitude toward its immigrant foreigners, and almost no attention was paid to them by the elite political sphere.

As the economic boom following the war slowed in the mid-1970s, the nation declared an end to all open immigration from outside Europe (European nationals being automatically allowed to immigrate between member nations of the European community (Silverstein, Hargreaves 181)). Since 1974, French politicians have been promising an "end of immigration", meaning, more specifically, an end to illegal immigration from non-European countries. Hargreaves has argued that "'immigration' has come to denote, not simply the process of movement from one country to another, but everything associated with the permanent settlement of people of foreign origin within the receiving society" (1). Immigration has become representative of 'globalization', Because of this, the term 'immigration', and even 'immigrant' (immigré in French) has come to have

negative connotations. A politician who promises 'the end of immigration' is also promising the end of a plethora of woes that are common in France today, including, most significantly, high unemployment, low productivity, and an increase in petty crime (Smith). Understanding this definition is important in understanding how far France has come in the last ten years: while discussions regarding race or ethnicity were considered taboo at the time when Hargreaves published this first book, they are now considered not only acceptable, but necessary (Silverstein, Baubérot).

This is the history of immigration that parallels its definition, acceptance, or rejection through language. For example, during the Second World War, French soldiers communicated with one another in code, so as to protect themselves from an enemy that was often fluent in their language. The code they created, 'verlan', involved the turning of words, so the word 'verlan' itself is the backwards version of the word 'l'inverse', or backwards, in reverse. After the war, 'verlan' became a kind of slang, a sign of linguistic national pride. This backwards-language has evolved over the decades, and is now used primarily by the banlieusards, the residents of the banlieues.

'Verlan' has been used by immigrant generations to reconceptualize their space within French society. The best example of this is the 'verlan' version of the word 'Arab', a word second generation immigrants perceived to have been given negative connotations by mainstream French society. The 'Beurs' are one of the most vocal and recognizable minority groups within France, in part because of their ability to rename themselves under their own terms. In the 1980s, there was yet another reversal of that word, 'Beur' becoming 'Rabin' when the word 'Beur' was felt to be appropriated and

then demonized by the dominant group in France, the (white) native French population. This linguistic progression (the push-pull of the power to define) mirrors the troubled history of immigrant minorities in France.

According to the Larousse, the word 'banlieue' comes from the words 'ban', meaning the law or jurisdiction of a city or state, and 'lieu', meaning space or place. Therefore, the original meaning of the word is "a local within the environment of a city that participates in its existence," and is under its jurisdiction. This is only one definition of the word, however. According to numerous French scholars, the 'banlieue' is the historic location outside of the walls of a medieval city or fortress to where criminals were banned, or banished. The current banlieues of Paris are located outside the 'périphérique', the eight-lane motorway that surrounds the city, making the capital almost inaccessible via public transportation, as Paris's intricate network of trains and buses ends at the périphérique.

Because of the complex history of these spaces as well as their current position 'outside' of and inaccessible from metropolitan centers,

Media Coverage of the Riots of 2005

This chapter chronicles the coverage of the November riots in over one hundred articles published France's three most widely-distributed newspapers, *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro*, and *Libération.* The articles were published in the weekend editions of the three papers between October 27th when the riots began, and November 17th, when the nightly curfew was lifted and the country was said to be back to 'normal' ("Nicolas Sarkozy sort renforcé de la crise des banlieues"). The function of this chapter is not to argue for some truthful account of the events that took place, nor to explain why they happened the way

that they did. Instead, it serves to analyze the testimony of the media, and to question what assumptions lie beneath the 'truths' presented there.

The chapter is divided into four sections: the first three are dedicated to analyzing the way different phases of the riots are described and framed, the fourth to using the work of Michel Foucault to further explore what these descriptions and frames mean about the workings of power in France at the time the riots took place. The first section of analyses focuses on the initial coverage of the riots, which, in the case of all three newspapers, began two days after the first night of rioting and consisted primarily of attempts to find the 'truth' behind the deaths of two boys, Zyed and Bouna. This first section also introduces the stylistic and political patterns or tendencies of all three papers, in order to better understand how these patterns might contribute to or influence the reporting. The way each of these sources constructs the 'truth' within this initial story reveals from where authority originates in this first stage of the riots.

The second section covers what numerous academic and popular sources have called the 'second wave' or 'second phase' of the riots (*Le Monde,* Roché, Oberti), wherein the focus shifted from the spatially and temporally specific events that lead to Zyed and Bouna's deaths, to a discussion regarding social injustice and diversity in the 'troubled' or 'sensitive' areas within France. Although the articles published in these November 5th editions reflect barely a week of rioting, the changes in the coverage is clearly evident, and the question of 'truth' appeared even more elusive.

The third section, focusing on the articles published in the Saturday, November 12th editions of the national dailies, is an analysis of the media coverage of a national phenomenon. What began with the unfortunate deaths of two boys in a 'troubled'

community is now in danger of spreading to the French capital, and the media coverage, which had once focused on the safely enclosed space of Clichy-sous-Bois, reveals that the fires of the banlieues now threaten to engulf the whole nation.

October 29th: Fact and Fiction

What actually happened the night of October 27th is unclear, and one of the main goals of the media, during weeks that followed, was the construction of facts from what began as rumors. The first articles published in *Le Monde, Le Figaro,* and *Libération* were dedicated to representing factual accounts of the deaths of two adolescent boys in the Paris suburb of Clichy-sous-Bois, but each account is noticeably unique. It is not just linguistic or stylistic differences that distinguish between these first articles, although these differences certainly exist; rather, the 'facts' presented in each article are presented in such a way that they not only vie for the position of 'most factual,' and in very different ways: they also question specific aspects of the events, positioning some of them firmly in the realm of truth and others in the realm of fiction.

The number of cars burned each night, the number of youths involved in violent police-civilian confrontations, the spread of vandalism from one banlieue to another: accounts of these things differ as well, but none of them seem as contested, or as essential to the "reclaiming" of the *banlieues* from the lawlessness of the rioters, as the 'truth' behind the deaths of Zyed and Bouna.

The way these 'truths' are presented—what qualifies them as 'truths', from what authorities they are produced—is also significant, and differs significantly between the three national papers. *Le Monde*, the most widely read and most prestigious of the three, published two articles directly pertaining to the deaths of the two boys, one on the first

page and one, significantly longer, in the 'Societé' section of the paper. The article in *Le Figaro* presents two sets of truths: one understood as that of impartial French authorities, described unquestionably in the passive voice, the second is that of individuals in Clichy-sous-Bois, "a completely different version." The *Libération* article, which appears on page 15 of the weekend edition, presents a compelling narration that draws the reader into the events with simpler language and time-stamped exact accounts of the deaths of Zyed and Bouna, and yet asks as many questions as it answers in order to describe the vagueness of the 'facts' presented.

The first of the two articles in *Le Monde*, "Violent affrontments dans des cites de Seine-Saint-Denis," ("Violent confrontations in the urban developments of Seine-Saint-Denis") is relatively short and was published on the first page of the October 29th weekend edition. This first piece presents a particularly clear image of how the riots and those who took part in them were viewed by the media, and therefore by the country as a whole. The article explains briefly how "two French youths of Turkish and Malian origin" were electrocuted, and subsequently died, when they hid beside an electrical transformer while running from the police. The "particularly violent confrontations" between the authorities (firemen and police) and the "bands of young people, furious at the death of two of their friends," ended around 2 am. The article states that six people were arrested, a fire station was attacked, vehicles were burned, and buildings "stoned" (using the slang term "caillassé", meaning to throw stones aggressively, in inverted commas).

The article is written in the passive voice, the only authority mentioned being the Mayor of Clichy, Claude Dilain, who "declared that [the night's events] would not lead to

the degradation of the situation in his town." The reasons for the violence in this first account of 151 words are very clear: two French boys of immigrant origin died, another was gravely wounded, and their friends reacted to this. The Mayor, a government authority and a member of the national Socialist Party, stated that the violence would go no further, and the article confirms this, explaining that the confrontations ceased by 2am on Friday morning (the weekend edition of *Le Monde* is released on Friday afternoon).

The *Le Monde* 'Societé' article, "Nuit d'émeute à Clichy-sous-Bois après le mort de deux adolescents", is much longer than the first page summary, and the language denoting fact is vague, insisting that the details given are only "according to primary indications", the "primary version of the report", "according to the police", or "according to the Mayor". The events of Thursday night are introduced by the declaration that "Clichy-sous-Bois awoke to calmness Friday morning," therein promising that the violence is over. After this introduction, the remainder of the article (967 words, the longest of any of the preliminary articles published about the riots that weekend) focuses on finding a way to sort out the 'truth' and the 'fiction' of the previous-nights events.

The wording is simple, and the information revealed in short sentences, describing the events according to when exactly during the night they took place ("7h 30", "8h 12"), in the style of a police report. After the initial dry description of the events—"23 cars were torched . . . The lifeless bodies of the two boys were discovered. The judicial police department was given the investigation."—a number of statements made by local authorities present the situation as tragic, but unique, and more than under control. "This neighborhood is not particularly dangerous," declares a middle school teacher, "this could have happened anywhere." Various testimonies reveal similar

emotions: the imam of the local mosque swears that in the twenty years he has lived in Clichy he has never seen "this sort of situation." He proposes that the violence was perhaps caused by the fact that the police were often brutal when making arrests, and the youth felt humiliated by their treatment.

The only national authority (not a pre-school teacher or a local imam) quoted is Nicholas Sarkozy, the Interior Minister, whose six words defend the local police, promising that "the police did not physically pursue" the adolescents, and should not therefore be held accountable for their deaths. This same quote is used by all three dailies, although in different ways. There is no elaboration upon where or when or under what circumstances the Interior Minister made this statement, nor is there any description of how his words were received. This would not be significant if it were not for the extreme politicization of both Sarkozy and his language, as the riots continued.

The initial article in *Le Figaro* is introduced as an account, not by the youths or citizens of the communities, but rather from the point of view of the national and regional French authorities. This slant is clear from the first sentence: "A judicial investigation was begun yesterday by the public prosecutor of Bobigny after the deaths of two young inhabitants of Clichy-sous-Bois, electrocuted in an EDF transformer, in a non-elucidated context." Here it is the investigation that takes precedence and holds agency over the two boys who were killed and their communities. The article continues in this vein, removed from the 'human' elements of the story by using the passive voice throughout and by citing government officials rather than locals. When local sources are mentioned, they are presented as powerless in the face of the violence that is taking place. "It was anarchy," one young woman, described as a "helpless observer," is quoted to have said.

Halfway through the article, as the viewpoint shifts from national authorities to local voices, and the author allows that "it was another version [of the story] entirely that was circulated today in the housing projects." Unlike those quoted in *Le Monde*, the residents depicted in *Le Figaro*'s article emphasize not only the tragedy of Zyed and Bouna's deaths, but also the sense of impending doom that hangs over the town, described as a "climate of tension", or an increasing rise in lawlessness. The riots are described as "fueled by hatred [for the police]," rather than the acts of frustration and mourning committed by Zyed and Bouna's childhood friends, and the citizens of Clichy, rather than presenting a united front, as they appear to in *Le Monde*, defending their town and its inhabitants, appear defeatist and frightened, calling on the French authorities to take control.

If *Le Monde*'s article presented the events from the point of view of the local residents and law enforcement, while *Le Figaro* tended to favor the position of national authorities, *Liberation*'s account of the Thursday night incident in Clichy reads a bit like a mystery novel. As in *Le Monde*, the first day following the deaths of the two adolescents showed no record in *Liberation.* The first article (440 words) was published on the 29th, with a rather detailed account of the situation entitled "Violence à Clichy-sous-Bois après la mort de deux jeunes." Like *Le Monde, Liberation* uses specific times throughout the event to describe detail and depict a realistic and dramatic story for the reader: "[the town] is located 800 meters from the transformer. It is 8:15. At 8:30 an EDF technician arrived at the transformer, protected by the wall . . ."

Despite the use of exact times and measurements to illustrate realism, the language used also expresses the confusion and lack of clarity surrounding the events,

and questions the stereotypes usually applied to the banlieues. "New violence erupted late Friday evening between youths from 'sensitive' neighborhoods and forces of order (police)," begins the article. The inverted commas around "sensitive" assumes the reader will understand, not only the meaning of the term when used to describe a particular neighborhood (a dangerous neighborhood, populated primarily by immigrants of various generations), but also the significance of using such a word while insinuating that its meaning is somehow incorrect, or at least questionable. Similarly, *Liberation* does not use the term 'banlieue', doubtless because of its negative connotations. Instead, Clichy is described as a "ville limitrophe," a city situated at the limits of Paris. The use of this language in *Libération* is the first indication of how traditional images and ideas pertaining to the banlieues and their inhabitants would be placed under scrutiny by the mainstream media during the riots.

The framing of each of these first accounts as plausible 'truths' is largely dependent upon the presentation of various individuals as authorities to whom 'truths' are attributed. Each article uses a variety of authorities that range from adolescents on the street, to the Mayor of Clichy, to the Prime and Interior Ministers, Dominique de Villepin and Nicolas Sarkozy. Sarkozy in particular becomes increasingly politicized as the violence continues—a figure representative of a naïve and disconnected elite—but at this point he still represents an almost unquestionable authority. This is manifest in *Le Figaro* in particular, where his title, not his name, is used to justify his quote as innately 'truthful.' Like the nameless citizens of the 'sensitive' areas, whose actions are

automatically suspect regardless of their individual motives, the Interior Minister is significant only because his words represent truth.

Sarkozy is quoted by all three papers as affirming the innocence of the police in the deaths of Zyed and Bouna. More specifically, he is quoted as affirming that the police did not "physically pursue the adolescents" who were later found dead. This quote appears in various forms in each of the papers: in *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro*, it appears in quotations as written above. *Libération* prints the quote as somewhat more ambiguous: "The police formally contest that the youths were physically pursued." The differences between these quotes are slight, but they do point out how 'truths' presented by the same individual authority can be understood in very different ways depending on the framework within which they are introduced. In the first example, it appears that Sarkozy is defending the police, while the version printed in *Libération* presents him as a careful leader who doesn't quite know all the facts and is attempting to present them as impartially as possible.

Sarkozy's comments are conclusive at this point in the plot, and it is not until a few days later that his position of authority will be questioned as his ill-chosen word, 'racaille' (translated alternately as 'scum', 'hoodlum', or 'lowlife') fans the flames of the banlieue fire. Although the word was later associated with the riots, Sarkozy first used the word on October 26th, a day before Zyed and Bouna's deaths, while giving a speech advocating the use of affirmative action in France to a group of 'immigrés' youths ("M. Sarkozy veut promouvoir l'égalité des chances par la loi."). When a young woman (wearing a headscarf, as the media was quick to mention) complained to him about the conditions of the banlieues, where cars were burned and other types of vandalism were

only too common, he responded to her: “we will get rid of those ‘racailles’ for you.” Less than a week later, these words would become emblematic, for many minorities across the country, of greater problems within France.

The facts represented by the three initial accounts are vague and inconclusive: two adolescents were killed accidentally, but it is unclear under what circumstances (were they being chased by the police? Were they guilty of any crime?); a theft took place elsewhere, in another ‘troubled’ *cité,* but there appears to have been no connection between the crime committed and the two boys who were killed; car-burning and various other acts of vandalism took place in and around Clichy (not significantly more than should be expected, considering the ‘sensitive’ nature of the neighborhood), and it is again unclear how much of this was in response to or even remotely connected to the deaths.

November 5th: Space and Time

A little over a week after the events that sparked their beginning, the riots reached what would later be viewed as their peak. The nightly violence was spreading at an alarming rate by the weekend of November 5th, and national media struggled to keep up. From the five articles of the previous week, the three dailies published a total of 44 articles covering the riots on November 5th. *Le Figaro* alone published 22 articles. Besides covering the riots on the first page and in various sections (Politics, Society, France), *Liberation* published a separate section filled with reports and articles about the banlieues and their residents. The sheer the number of articles published clearly shows the increased importance of the riots in the national interest: every media outlet, from the

national television stations to international newspapers of record, was filled with images of torched cars and speculation about both the possible causes of the riots and what could be done to stop them from continuing.

Of the 44 articles published, only one in *Le Monde* revisits the initial 'cause' of the riots: the deaths of Zyed and Bouna ("Les circonstances de la mort des adolescents rest floues"). Although the two boys are mentioned in other articles, they are no longer spoken of as delinquents who may or may not have been criminals, who may or may not have been chased: they have becomes national figures, mourned and held aloft as martyrs for a cause("Un petit Mai '68 dans les banlieues", "L'innocent d'Epinay", "Piegés"). The cause they stand for is as yet unclear. Instead, the focus has expanded, like the riots, from where they began, in Clichy-sous-Bois, to consume not only the 'troubled' banlieues, but all that which represents the 'other' within France.

As the riots spread, a steady flow of analysis and speculation filled the French media. There were a number of articles, both editorials written by citizens and essays by prominent French and British intellectuals, which aim to explain or interpret the events within a wider context. Apart from simply addressing public sentiment that questioned how well French authorities were handling the situation ("L'orientation repressive de la police est remise en question", "Rappelés à l'ordre par l'Elysée"), these pieces began to deal with the much larger question that would be asked in earnest by all factions of French society soon enough: what do these events mean for the future of France?

The majority of these opinion-based articles were published in *Le Monde*, along with an in-depth report exploring the 'reality' behind the banlieue-youth, their "fractured

destinies," and a slew of possible hardships that might lead them to do the things they were doing. Similar to its opening coverage of the riots, *Le Figaro* continued to stay focused on the way the authorities were handling the crisis, rather than the other two papers' more sympathetic portraits of the rioters. While *Le Monde* focused on producing a profile of the rioting youths as individuals with individual histories (an article published documenting the first arrests is a particularly good example of this), *Le Figaro* tended to portray them as abstract problems, while printing extensive coverage on the misery they produced for the remaining banlieues' population.

The one *Figaro* article that offers a humanizing portrait of the rioters gives detailed and contextualized profiles of the rioters: a few 'delinquent' ringleaders commit the worst of the crimes, such as car-burning and window-smashing, while many others, who fit the stereotypes of the 'ruined' or 'sacrificed generation' of young people, specifically young men, who have nothing better to do than roam the streets. "The most common [type of rioter] bears an uncanny resemblance to those who describe them," the article hints, thereby leading the reader to the assumption that even the 'good' banlieue residents, who come out to talk to reporters during the day, spend their evenings torching shops and nursery schools, possibly against their better judgment.

The article holds two main flaws in its logic. The first is that it assumes that those reading the paper come from outside the banlieue, but also from a culture or space where the stereotypes of the 'sacrificed' youths are well known. This is made clear from the descriptions of these stereotypes, in quotations, that assume the audience is familiar with not only the types of men described, but the words and phrases used to describe them. There is also an assumption that the stereotypes are justified because this is the way these

people refer to themselves: the quotations are positioned just after a quote from "Omar," an eighteen year old resident of Clichy-sous-Bois, saying "We all know who set the fire."

The *Figaro*'s unwillingness to sympathize with the delinquent youths may have been an attempt at self-censorship. Both the French and the international media had received criticism for sensationalizing the events and romanticizing the rioters. Unlike the coverage of the previous week, the articles published on November 5th show an increased self-consciousness. *Le Monde* published two stories about international media coverage of the riots, and all three papers were filled with articles defining these particular riots as "something different" from previous "problems" in the banlieues (Un petit Mai '68 dans les banlieues").

By the weekend of November 5th, the gray lines between fact and fiction had become even harder to distinguish. The 'factual' elements that caused the riots had shifted at some point during the week from the specific and individualized space occupied by the two boys to the larger and more conceptual space within which the 'immigrés' and their position in French society abide. Throughout the ongoing discussion, there are continual references to the location of the riots and those who are rioting, and the significance of this location as both central (close to Paris) and peripheral (outside of Paris) within the larger context of France.

If the articles of October 29th focused almost completely on finding and defining the 'truth' behind the initial riots, the coverage on November 5th strove to define the space within which the riots were taking place. The 'banlieues,' the 'troubled' or 'sensitive' spaces in which the riots broke out are described in subsequent articles as removed from the rest of France both in their location outside of the major metropolitan

areas, Paris in particular, and in their inability to be properly French. Each paper was by this time publishing daily reports referencing which communities had been "affected" the previous night, how many cars burned, police injured, and youths arrested. Many media outlets also published or broadcast maps, pinpointing which towns were involved by color-coding the areas around Paris, or adding animated flames. All of these tactics served to separate the 'troubled' spaces from the rest of France, even as they demonstrated their close proximity to the nation's capital.

The role of the authorities was also changing, if slowly. The majority of the articles published mentioned Sarkozy, and nine presented the possibility that he was directly responsible for the rioting. Sarkozy's comments on the 26th of October were framed by all three papers as a reaction to the riots, a mistake few media outlets bothered to correct, even after the country was back to 'normal'. Of all members of the French government, Sarkozy was the only one who refused to recognize the riots, at any point, as something other than senseless violence, and he quickly became the scapegoat for residents of the banlieues and others throughout France who were beginning to view the riots as more.

The marked difference between the coverage of the first night of rioting and the coverage one week later is embodied by this shift from the specific to the general, and from a search for one kind of 'truth' (what 'really' happened the night of October 27th?) to the search for another: what do these events 'mean', not just for the people whom they are directly affecting, but for all of France? By the second week of rioting, the focus of the media coverage had changed from the search for an explanation of the initial spark

that set off the riots, and become a exploration of the environment and the individuals who had allowed this spark to create a fire. As a second week of riots became a third, the space that was once confined to Clichy-sous-Bois, and then to the banlieues more generally, was expanded to include all of France, and perhaps all of Europe. The question of 'What happened that these boys died?' had become 'What has happened that France has ended up in this situation of social injustice and collapse, within which the riots are only a symptom of a much greater problem?'

November 12th 2005: National Emergency

On November 12, the riots had been going on for more than two weeks, and they appeared likely to continue. Although greatly decreased in intensity—the number of vehicles burned had peaked at over 1,400 on November 6th, but during the night of the 10th 'only' 463 cars were torched ("Banlieues: a savoir.")—the nature of the rioting had remained much the same. The reaction to the riots by French authorities, and by French and international media, however, was extremely different. In all, 56 articles dealing directly with the riots were published in *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro*, and *Libération* in the November 12th weekend publications. Over half of these articles (29) deal directly with the growing distrust of traditional authorities in France, while others present personal testimonies from across France, stressing the need for new perspectives and new voices that may give some insight into the 'crisis of the banlieues'.

On November 6th, Jacques Chirac had held a small press conference, his first since the riots began, during which he gave a vague, five-sentence statement assuring the representatives of the national media that "we have made a certain number of decisions to reinforce police action and justice, because today our absolute priority is to reestablish

security and public order" ("La déclaration de Jacques Chirac sur les violences dans les banlieues"). The media were not impressed. The French media responded with outrage, the international media with surprise and doubt, citing Chirac's failure to speak out about the riots as indicative of the seriousness of the situation ("Chirac, Lover of Spotlight, Avoids Glare of France's Fires").

Liberation published an article documenting the reactions of African media outlets, specifically those from ex-French colonies, self-importantly critiquing the riots as the downfall of the "French republican soul" ("Des articles au vitriol dénoncent le sort reserve aux 'fils d'immigrés'"). The irony of the Ivory Coast's critique of France's civil unrest is not lost in translation: "France closes its doors to foreigners, those from outside as well as those within," the article begins, and then continues with a plethora of quotes from African media sources, filled with disparaging remarks and biting sarcasm, citing the injustices of colonialism that are now shown to be present within France itself. This article in particular demonstrates the conceptual shift in the French mentality, from two weeks previously, when the first articles documenting the 'truth' of Zyed and Bouna's deaths were published, to the November 5th coverage that described the riots as significant for a certain demographic living in particular spaces within France. The events that were once classified as singular and contained were now affecting all of France, and had succeeded in reversing colonial patterns that had once cited French authorities as omniscient and omnipotent.

By this, the third week, the apparent endlessness of the riots had produced a significant response from all levels of society, the media included. On November 10th, an

executive at one of France's premier television networks, TF1, Jean-Claude Dassier, admitted to censoring his channel's coverage of the riots, three days after France3, another national station, stopped releasing the locations and casualties of the nightly rights, according to an article in *The Guardian*. Dassier claimed his censorship was not a symptom of media's caving in to government pressure, but rather an attempt to avoid supporting extreme right-wing political parties, who he saw as capitalizing upon the violent images to justify positions of xenophobia and racism. Patrick Lecocq, the editor-in-chief of France2, another popular station, was more blatant in his reasoning. "Do we send teams of journalists because cars are burning, or are cars burning because we send teams of journalists?" ("French TV Boss Admits Censoring Riots Coverage"), he asks, incredulously, echoing the opinions of many French citizens, both in and out of the media.

The pressure applied to television media had little to no affect on the national dailies, but a different sort of responsibility was demanded by the President on November 15th when, as promised, he confronted the nation in the wake of the rioting. In the beginning his address, the president of the republic announced a continuation of National State of Emergency, stressed the importance of "upholding the law" and the futility of senseless violence. The bulk of his speech, however, had little to do with France's return to "order". Instead, he concentrated on promising an end to racism, discrimination, and injustice, stressing the need for the French state and the French people to recognize "diversity", and to learn to accommodate it ("Declaration aux Français de Monsieur Jacques Chirac, Président de la République"). At the end of his address, he urged the media to "better reflect the reality of France today".

According to many articles published on November 12th, by the time Chirac finally spoke to the French people regarding the riots, many of them had stopped listening ("Message croisés", "Un discourse ecrit tout specialement pour Jacques Chirac, à l'occasion de la crise profonde des banlieues"). Tehar Ben Jelloun, a prominent Moroccan-French author and well known critic of racism in France, wrote a piece addressing the French people, published in *Libération*, entitled "A written discourse especially for Jacques Chirac on the occasion of the profound crisis of the banlieues." Jelloun's article does not condemn the rioters as 'delinquents' or criminals, but instead argues that "these projects that burn, these young people who revolt, are a piece of France that calls us . . . just as the child who misbehaves at school tells us with his acts that he will not respect an institution that neither gives him the knowledge he needs, nor opens doors for him."

Jelloun's essay reads like a public address, from his opening and continued use of "Français, Françaises", "Frenchmen, French women", to his final call, "Vive la France métissée! Vive la République!" ("Long live a diverse France, Long live the Republic!") He calls for the nation to rally, to address this problem that "concerns all of Europe", and create a "new politic" that recognizes all spaces within society. The words he uses are different, but the ideals represented will be reaffirmed five days later, by the president of the republic. That Jelloun's sentiments are mirrored in this way by Chirac demonstrates an important reversal in authority. The immigrant intellectual, by choosing to speak for the residents of the banlieue, becomes an authority whom Chirac must reference in order to speak to all of France.

Analysis

The media coverage of the riots, as demonstrated above, upset the balance of power between French authorities and those citizens at the very bottom of the social spectrum, the inhabitants of the banlieues. Much of Foucault's work analyzes power as it passes between social institutions and the individuals around whom they are built. Rather than viewing power as a purely negative and repressive force, Foucault attempts to analyze the ways in which power works both to control and to resist, arguing that "individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application" (Foucault 1980, 98). By considering power in this way, it becomes possible to understand and describe the ways in which power exists within all points of society.

There are many assumptions regarding power and agency in French society that can be gleaned from an analysis of the media coverage throughout the November riots. As discussed above, the initial articles written about the riots tended to focus on the deaths of the two youths, Zyed and Bouna, and to frame their story as dependent upon a vague and ungraspable 'truth' that begged to be discovered. The riots that took place the nights of October 27th and 28th were understood to be caused by these deaths, as well as explained by the eventual 'truth' behind them: it is assumed in the articles that if the deaths of the two youths were discovered to be accidental, the nightly violence would end. When this did not take place, the role of Zyed and Bouna and their story changed. Although their direct presence in the media decreased as time went on, their significance did not: they became emblematic of the rioters, and the injustice they came to represent (Sire-Marin).

Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy is quoted as calling Zyed and Bouna "delinquents" when he described them shortly after their deaths, although they had committed no crime and had no criminal records at the time of their deaths. Sarkozy was referenced by all three of the articles, and his initial comments were valued as a version of 'truth' because of his position of authority. As days and weeks of nightly rioting followed, however, the testimony of the authorities that had once gone unquestioned was debated and disputed.

As the riots continued, so did the reactions they incited from all levels of French society. While the initial authorities on the riots were the police records, the Interior Minister, and a variety of local residents who are considered powerful or knowledgeable (an imam, a professor, a mayor), as time passed, the greatest 'authorities' came to be the poorest residents of the banlieues, and the rioters in particular. Knowledge of how and when, and possibly even why, these young men were torching cars and breaking windows, throwing rocks and tagging walls, became coveted knowledge, not only for academics, politicians, or artists, but for all of France.

Foucault warns against a conception of the 'State' as an all-powerful entity with a singular aim to control (Foucault 1991). The riots display the French 'state' for what it really is, "no more than a composite reality in a mythicised abstraction, whose importance is a lot more limited than many of us think" ("Governmentality" 103). This "mythicised abstraction", as Foucault calls it, is re-imagined in the media coverage as a frail and malleable structure. As the authority of the state is questioned the 'peripheral spaces' of the banlieues become central.

Retrospective: The November Riots One Year Later

This chapter serves as an overview of the response to the riots between November 18, 2005, when the nation was declared back to a state of 'normalcy', and what was classified the 'anniversary' of the events, in October and November 2006. More specifically, the chapter reviews the riots 'in retrospective' through the academic reactions they produced, their continued visibility in the national and international media, and the personal testimony of French citizens.

One Year Later: Academic Response

There was an enormous response to the riots by the academic community in France, both during and after they took place. Web sites and journals sprung up overnight documenting possible explanations for what happened, and many large universities published some kind of response, be it an overall report, as in the case of the prestigious Science-Po *Débats* ("Emeutes et protestations: une singularité française"), or a collection of essays, like those published by Regards and La Dispute ("Banlieue, lendemains de revolte"). On top of those surveys that discussed the riots directly, a number of prominent French academics cited elements of the riots as examples of the failure of various parts of the French republican "model" (Roché, Baubérot, Cesari). Although much of this work is being conducted in French, the international community has been quick to analyze the events and their aftermath.

Far from existing only in academic circles, much of the discussion concerning the significance of the riots to the future of France took place in the media, both during the

riots and continually afterwards. Most significantly, the media became the basis for 'factual' information regarding the riots, so that articles from *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro*, and *Libération* were used as primary sources for academic research and debate. The importance of the role the media played in promoting the riots and the issues surrounding them, both within France and internationally, is widely acknowledged (Oberti, Dufoix, Beaud et Pialoux).

One Year Later: Media Coverage

The media coverage of the 'anniversary' of the riots was significant, especially in the print media. There was a resurgence of violence that was covered by the national news, specifically in the form of public buses being burned, in some cases with the passengers still inside, but this took place primarily in Marseille, a city that the November riots had left strangely untouched. The Parisian banlieues seemed oddly quiet as the nation focused its attention on Marseille, France's original immigrant city. One of the reasons the 2005 riots had been so significant, many French sources insist, is because they took place so close to Paris ("Une petit Mai '68 dans les banlieues"). Although every region in France has its share of 'patrimoine', or cultural heritage, the capital embodies an amalgamation of history that represents France in its entirety, both for the French themselves and internationally. The fact that the riots happened in close proximity to the capital, so close that they threatened to overwhelm it, demonstrates the power of the rioters and the complete lack of control over them by the French authorities.

There was a silent march through the streets of Clichy—something between a demonstration and a mourning ceremony for Zyed and Bouna—that received some amount of publicity, but in general the press kept quiet, in part due to requests from

authorities who feared the possible power of media coverage to incite a reenactment of the 2005 events. Nicolas Sarkozy in particular, by then a hopeful candidate for the French presidency, was careful to exert his power over the situation by asserting his views that the riots were nothing more than a violent outbreak ("M. Sarkozy ne veut pas entendre parler de l' 'anniversaire' des émeutes"). He refused to visit Clichy-sous-Bois during what was called the "anniversary of Zyed and Bouna's deaths", *not* the "anniversary of the riots."

There was also a large photography exhibition, displaying the work of international photographers, claiming to depict the 'real' Clichy-sous-Bois, rather than the violent media image (the "tsunami mediatique") that besieged the city a year before. The exhibition, now displayed on the website www.clichysanscliche.com ("Clichy without clichés"), was shown in an enormous gallery in the community, where the photos were enlarged until the inhabitants of the town, some dressed in traditional North African garb, some posing in graffitied streets and stairwells, became larger than life. Between the 15th and the 28th of November 2006, the exhibition was displayed in a gallery in the center of Paris, and received some amount of media recognition during its grand opening, attended by the Mayor of Paris.

Le Monde Diplomatique, an internationally published magazine that is also printed and distributed in France, published a thick, glossy, art-and-essay filled magazine entitled "Banlieues: Trente ans d'Histoire et de Revoltes" ("Banlieues: Thirty years of History and Revolt"). Nearly 100 pages of photographs, essays, detailed timelines, original art, and excerpts from the previous year's newspaper coverage written with line-breaks to look like poetry ("Mais peut-il y avoir ordre civil/ dans le désordre social?"), *Le*

Monde's publication exemplifies how the meaning of the riots and what they represented had changed even more drastically between the Fall of 2005 and 2006. While the riots had been initially constructed as a problem 'foreign' to France, be it religious fundamentalism, cultural incompatibility, or the unwillingness or immigrants to assimilate into French society, they were now re-imagined as a characteristically French movement, the participants of which shared a French heritage.

There were also a number of articles published in other French newspapers that attempted to theorize the riots in retrospect, and they too were concerned with making them symbolically French. While the articles published in 2005 varied between routine reports of the nightly violence, official responses to the events, personal testimony from the rioters themselves or the residents of the banlieues, and responses from artists and public intellectuals. One year later, there is no longer any doubt that the events of 2005 were culturally and historically, as well as politically significant. They are no longer treated simply as violent outbreaks that must be addressed by the law enforcement, but rather as a rupture worthy of recognition as a 'revolution' in the French intellectual tradition.

The international media continue to exemplify how the riots have changed the world's perception of France. In the October 26th 2006 issue of the *Economist* magazine, a survey on the future of France argued that the 'crisis of the banlieues' is not so much a problem in and of itself as much as a symptom of the failure of France in general**.** **"**Something seems very wrong with this country," begins the report. "Once the very model of a modern major power—stable, rich and smug—it appears beset now by political and economic instability and by civil unrest and disorder." ("The art of the

impossible") Unlike the French mainstream media, which has attempted to conceptualize the riots as a problem that has always existed and is only now making itself known ("Quartiers populaires et désert politique"), Anglo-American media outlets have presented the riots as yet another example of France's failure to enter the global world.

The national and international media responded to the 'anniversary' of the riots by reevaluating and re-conceptualizing them as significant historically, politically, and culturally, in one way or another. By the fall of 2006, the events of the previous year were understood to be indicative of greater problems within French culture, and the participants were classified as French.

One Year Later: Personal Testimony and Analysis

Between October 27th and November 3rd, 2006, research was conducted in the form of personal interviews with acquaintances, friends, and other people willing to answer questions on the streets or in the cafés of Paris. In general, people who agreed to answer two questions ("Are you a French citizen? What is your opinion" or "what do you think about the riots last year and their media coverage?") were curious about the project and willing to engage in conversation. Of the twenty-two people questioned, seventeen responses developed into longer conversations, and many interviewees answered further questions. Overall, one common factor among those who did answer in any length was their willingness to elaborate and give their opinions about the situation. This commonality (general exuberance and curiosity) supports the assumption that, although the French may be unsure of what to make of the riots and their repercussions (or lack thereof), there is no shortage of speculation and discussion about the topic, once it has been raised.

By the fall of 2006, many French people continued to be preoccupied with the events of the previous year. The constitutional referendum (in May 2005, the French public voted against the formation of the European constitution their government had fought for and helped produce), the violence in the banlieues, and the student protests of early 2006 all promoted the notion that France's social and economic model was somehow incompatible with a global future. The interviews recorded for this project demonstrate that the riots had much less of an impact on the lives of Parisians than one might imagine, having viewed the media coverage of the previous year. The media itself was eerily silent on the 'anniversary' of the riots (a word Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy asked not be used). Some of those interviewed for this project needed to be reminded of exactly what riots the questions pertained to: there was, after all, more than one account of social upheaval that took place in France between 2005 and 2006.

Some interviewees, when asked about their thoughts concerning "last year's riots" asked "Which riots?" Florent, a young man who grew up in Paris and has friends in the 'troubled' neighborhoods outside the city, knew exactly which riots were being referring to: "People don't call the student protests riots, because they weren't. They were demonstrations, non-violent protests against a specific law." When I asked how the November riots were treated by the media, Florent said he thought the media tried to make a spectacle of the neighborhoods and their inhabitants. "People love to hear about things going wrong in those areas, because it makes them feel safe because they live in Paris, or wherever. You can't even really get to most of those places by train, so you wouldn't go there if you didn't really have to. They are like another country." Florent

says that what happened last year is not going to change this distance that is felt between the people living in the banlieues and those who live in the rest of France. "People have forgotten about [the banlieues] again, for the most part, and I don't think anything is going to change there."

Nic is a recent university graduate who now works for a financial consulting company in Paris. "How stupid do you have to be to hide in a power transformer?" he says, sarcastically. "Those two boys were pretty dumb," speaking of Zyed and Bouna on the one-year anniversary of their deaths, when the town of Clichy-sous-Bois was shut down to make way for hundreds of sympathetic mourners who marched, peacefully, and in silence. "The [rioters] used [Zyed and Bouna's] deaths as an excuse to make a lot of trouble for people in those neighborhoods, and now people are mourning them. I don't see why they care."

Nic's comments seem callous, and they also contradict the opinions of almost all the other interviewees. Isabelle, who has lived in Paris all her life, says the first thing she thinks about is not the burning cars, but the deaths of Zyed and Bouna. "Their story is the real tragedy here because it represents the ignorance and the helplessness of these people: they were running from the police and they didn't even know why. They were running for the sake of running." When I asked her whether she thought they had been "killed for nothing", the slogan printed on t-shirts worn by people who marched in Clichy on the anniversary of the riots, she said she didn't know. "I don't know if things will change. I really believe that France needs to move forward, but people are also afraid

because they don't understand it, because they think it will [affect them badly], because they don't know what will happen, and [change] frightens them."

One of the differences cited between the November riots and the student demonstrations against the CPE labor law was the issue of change. While the rioters were demanding change, the students were fighting it. While the students succeeded, it is yet to be discovered whether or not the rioters will be successful. "It is always easier to stay the same," Isabelle told me. Although the CPE demonstrations took place in the same sphere as the May '68 unrest—both were student movements that paralyzed the nation from Paris's universities—it is the November riots that are compared to the '68 'revolution', and for good reason. The students, unions, and professionals who marched and barricaded the streets in 1968 were fighting to change a system of government that they perceived to be stagnant, and detrimental to the French people. They fought to change that system, and they succeeded.

According to the people interviewed, there are other differences between the sort of social unrest that took place in the banlieues and the student demonstrations that shut down many universities and organizations across the country a few months later. While the student demonstrations were viewed as 'organized' protests against a specific law (the CPE), the November riots were perceived as violent and unorganized disturbances that threatened the security of the entire nation. The very 'unorganized' and unorthodox nation of the riots may also be their greatest strength. Stéphane Dufoix, in his article "More Than Riots: A Question of Spheres", posits that perhaps the voicelessness of the riots is a revolution within itself, that the riots offered an "expression of violence as a

non-discourse as compared to state discourse". Because they had no other 'language' with which to revolt, they chose to burn cars and throw stones. Looking back from the perspective of 2006, it seems that some of their revolt has translated into the French consciousness.

Although a few of the people I spoke to, like Florent, had direct connections to the banlieues and knew people who lived there, most people said they felt completely removed from what was happening there. "It was like watching another world," says Sandrine, referring to watching news coverage shot in the banlieues during the nightly riots while she was at home in her apartment in the 14th arrondissement of the Paris.

Sandrine moved to Paris from a small town in the east of France to get her business degree, and now works in a bank here. Although she wasn't affected personally by the riots while they were taking place, her family and friends back home shared their concerns with her based on what they saw happening on television and in the newspapers. "[My family] was worried about me being here, maybe because they have never lived in Paris, so they don't understand what it's like, that there are all sorts of people who live here. It is very different from where they live now, from where I grew up." Did she hear about the riots from watching television, or from talking to people she knew? "My friends [in Paris] didn't really talk about what was happening. I think my parents were more concerned because they live in a more isolated area, and Paris seems so far away for them. I think the stories on television made [the riots] seem more real [for them], closer to me than they really were."

Sandrine's comments demonstrate how the presence of the violence on television news channels, or on the front pages of the national papers, were somehow felt to have justified the gravity or importance of the riots for France as a whole, and not just for those who were affected directly. French news programs often have more international news stories than their counterparts in the United States, and there is rarely any focus on local crime. The fact that the nightly news and the front pages of almost every French newspaper for three weeks headlined stories about the riots was unusual, to say the least.

Michaele is in her late 60s and has lived in Paris for most of her life. She lives in one of the nicest neighborhoods in the city, in the 5th arrondissement, and her life revolves around this area, from her work at a finance office nearby, to her dinner at the same café every night. The waiter there knows just what Merlot to bring as she sits down. I asked Michaele whether she thought what happened last year was different from previous social 'revolutions' that have happened in France in the past.

"This was very different: in the past things have been peaceful, but this was very dangerous. These people are dangerous." Michaele's opinions match some of those touted by the French mainstream media. She can't articulate exactly why the youths of the suburbs are more "dangerous" than, say, the elite university students who revolted against the government during May of 1968, although she hints that it has something to do with their location, and something to do with their 'foreignness'. Michaele voices the concerns of many French citizens. Although the November rioters were mostly French, they were perceived as being foreign by many people watching the riots from afar. Nicolas Sarkozy exacerbated the situations by threatening to send the "criminals back from where they came from", although most of them were born in France.

Alain is a farmer in a village in the south of France. He is in his late 50s and still lives in the same farmhouse he was born in. Although he is part of a generation and a demographic (rural, 'native' French) that is normally more anti-'immigrant', he says that he sympathizes with the youths of the suburbs: "It's not their fault that they were born into this kind of life, and so many people see them and say 'we live in a fair society, there is no reason why they can't [make their lives better]. I don't think that's always true." He has little hope for a future in which the elites of France respond to the demands of the downtrodden, however. "[The people in the banlieues] didn't know what they were doing when they started [rioting]. In reality, they were justifying the positions of [the extreme right]," the political sector run by the fanatical and xenophobic Jean-Marie le Pen, who won a shocking 18 percent of the vote in 2002, before being beaten out in the second round by the incumbent Jacques Chirac ("Le Pen"). Alain voted for Chirac in 2002. "People voted for [Le Pen] because they wanted to say 'hey, we don't agree with what the [current administration] is doing, so we're going to vote for this bastard. They didn't expect he would win any real support, but he was voted onto the [final ballot]."

Alain isn't the only person interviewed who saw a connection between the popularity of Le Pen's Front Nationale and unrest among minorities in the banlieues. Vincent, a university student who has lived in Paris, Marseille, Lyon, and the United States, told me I shouldn't be writing about the riots because they were "no big deal." "This [kind of social unrest] has happened before, and the only reason people made a big deal about it this time around was because it was slightly more serious." Why was it serious? Vincent explained that these riots in particular were representative of much

bigger problems in France as a whole. "There is this big division in French society just now, which is why you have these two sides—Le Pen and [the rioters]. These two sides can equal one another out in most situations, but when something like this (Zyed and Bouna's death) happens, it throws off the balance."

This 'unbalancing,' as Vincent described it, can be viewed in two ways. When the 'balance' is indicative of a past French status quo, 'the way things used to be' before isolated groups, such as immigrants and people who support Le Pen, began causing rifts in French society, it represents something imaginary, and positions realities (such as the diversity of the French population) outside of the purity of that ideal. When it is described as an 'unbalance,' however, and understood as dynamic, it enhances our ability to view the complexities of France's future. Understood in this way, the riots created a discussion that challenges the assumption that everyone in France is happy and equal, that race and differing histories do not exist.

Like almost all the people I spoke to, although Vincent felt that the riots were "no big deal," he had a lot of strong opinions about them and the circumstances surrounding the people whom they affected. Vincent was also quick to justify his position as an 'insider' who could speak for the youth of the banlieues. "I have lots of friends who live in those neighborhoods," he assured me, "news travels fast there, faster than someone turning on the television. The media may have kept people outside the banlieues watching what was going on, because it was something different, something they had never scene before, really, in France, but [the media coverage] wouldn't have mattered that much to the people who were [in the middle of it.]"

Nicolas, another university student who hopes to move to the US with his Bulgarian fiancée after they graduate, feels strongly about the social inequality and racism the riots represent, although he says the events themselves didn't affect his life in downtown Paris very much. Nicholas grew up just outside of Paris, in one of the nicer towns on the periphery of the city that correspond more with an American idea of an affluent suburb than the French stereotype of a 'banlieue.' "I saw one car burning, while I was driving to my grandmother's house, but other than that, it was just another scandal on TV." Did he think the media exacerbated the situation? "I'm sure the media coverage was important in keeping the riots going, but I believe that it was no more important than the media coverage of the student demonstrations that happened [in January 2006] was important to the people who took part in them."

The different ways in which the 'rioters' and the student 'demonstrators' responded to and used the national and international media is significant to how each movement has been defined then and since. The first was qualified as a violent problem, 'riots,' and it took place at night, in the peripheral (both literally and figuratively) spaces most French citizens prefer to ignore (Giry). The second was staged in daylight by groups of students at some of the finest universities in France, in the center of the capital city where the slogans splashed across the demonstrators' posters could be clearly read by the passersby, and by those watching the events on national television. While the student demonstrations have been understood as a strategic use of protest (protest being a daily and legal occurrence in France, if not quite at the scale at which it took place in January 2006) to contest changes to the law that would affect young French citizens, the

November riots were initially defined as either senseless and random, or dangerous attempts by gangs to overrun the country.

"They weren't organized—don't be ridiculous," says Sara, a young woman who wears a headscarf and is quick to talk about the rioters, but who's male companion refuses to comment. "These are kids, not some sort of organized [gang] that you might have [in the United States]. They are upset, they feel upset and angry about their lives, and—look!—someone gives them a way to express this: they burn cars, as usual, but this time they are burning more cars, they are more upset because they have something real to be upset about. First it was [Zyed and Bouna], and then, when that [stopped], the Interior Minister calls them "caïds" and "scum," and now they are upset at him, and he's easy to be mad at." She also asserts that religion—Muslim or otherwise—had nothing to do with the rioting. "If they were [practicing] Muslims, they wouldn't be burning cars."

Although many French and international media sources defined the riots as a stand-off between a historically and politically secular French state and a radical religious minority, Stephanie Giry, quoting authorities and citizens within the 'troubled' communities and throughout France, argues that Islam really had nothing to do with the events of Fall 2005. Instead, Giry maintains that the youths who took part in the riots were motivated by political and economic factors, rather than religious ones. Furthermore, Giry argues, most Muslims (as well as most ethnic minorities) in France are well 'assimilated' into French culture, and the positioning of the riots as representative of an Islam-secular divide serves as a justification of fanatical conservative viewpoints within France and around the world that see Islam as a threat to rational, secular thought.

Conclusion

(French) Discontentment with the (French) Status Quo

Over the past few years, France has suffered one setback after another: the disproportional amount of votes for Jean-Marie Le Pen in the 2002 election, the resounding "Non" in the vote for a European constitution, and the new and dissenting nature of the candidates for the upcoming 2007 election have al been perceived as signs that the French republican model is not compatible with an increasingly global world. While the sense that France is experiencing a 'failure' of some sort or another is not new, the formulation of the November riots as an example of that 'failure' is forcing French authorities to recognize the 'crisis of the banlieues' as not only a valid issue, but one that is significant of larger problems within France that need to be addressed.

The significant nature of the media coverage during the riots and their continued discussion in the French and international media are both signs that the 'crisis of the banlieues' is still present in the minds of the French public, indicating the universality of this 'crisis'. Stephanie Giry argues that what are commonly perceived to be problems regarding the integration of minorities into mainstream French society are, in reality, issues of economic stagnation that are effecting all French citizens. She also maintains that the situation is not as bad as it is made to seem by French elites and in the media. "The public discourse tends to pathologize [minorities] and blame them for standing out while overlooking promising developments that could paint a more balanced picture" (Giry 95). The fact that unemployment for all French citizens is higher than it has been since WWII must not be overlooked, and France as a whole is beginning to recognize that

problems of social inequality and unemployment affect the whole country, not just those citizens residing in the banlieues.

Despite all of these evident issues, the past year has brought more discussion regarding French minorities than ever before, and Nicolas Sarkozy has been one of the most outspoken politicians demanding 'discrimination positive'—affirmative action—among other measures that will hopefully begin to break down the racist ideologies that are so strongly rooted in French history. Still, there is a sense that the 'banlieusards' are not ready to forgive the now ex-Interior Minister for past mistakes, and he still refuses to acknowledge them as such.

In an interview with the BBC on April 18th 2007, the Caribbean-born soccer phenomenon Lilian Thuram, who grew up in the Parisian banlieues and went on to play on France's 1998 winning World Cup team, explained why he has been such an outspoken opponent of Nicholas Sarkozy. He insists that Sarkozy, with his tough language and harsh approach to law inforcement, has normalized the racist attitudes of Jean-Marie Le Pen, changing French discourse on race and ethnicity for the worse ("French Star Thurman Slams Sarkozy"). "France doesn't have an integration problem," Thuram insists, "it has a citizenship problem. People are French, but they don't see themselves as French."

Alec Hargreaves describes this same notion in another way. The periodic "disorders," as he called them in 1995, that break out in the banlieues, are not caused by the failure of ethnic minorities to properly assimilate. "On the contrary, it is precisely because they share to a large extent the values and aspirations common to the majority of people in France, but are denied equal opportunities for the fulfillment of their ambitions,

that immigrant-born youths have sometimes vented their frustration in violent attacks on property and the representatives of the state" (212). According to Hargreaves, it is their very Frenchness that makes the youth of the banlieues revolt against French injustice. More than ten years after this statement was written, it continues to be the best explanation for these sorts of events. Whether or not the rioters were successful in displaying themselves as revolutionaries in the French tradition, their discontent with the current state of France and their hope for a new diversification of the French national identity continues to be rewritten in the national and international media today.

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