Algerian, Tunisian, and Moroccan Students Abroad in France: The Importance of History in Understanding the International Student Experience

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Algerian, Tunisian and Moroccan Students Abroad in France

The Importance of History in Understanding the International Student Experience

Hannah Ulrich
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Introduction

In the wake of two major terrorist attacks in the past year, the presence in France of a large Arab-Muslim population has gained new global attention. The worst attack in decades took place January 7, 2015 when two gunmen slaughtered 10 employees of the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*. Later that same year six coordinated attacks hit Paris on November 13. The night ended with 130 dead and hundreds more wounded. Whether or not the perpetrators of these events held French or other European nationalities, their names and faces all said “Arab” to the public and raised questions about immigration, terrorism, Islam and the presence and status of Arab-Muslims in France. These questions are nothing new, even if they seem to take on new urgency. One could look back to the Clichy-sous-Bois riots in 2005, or farther back to the famous “Marche des Beurs” in 1983\(^1\) or even farther back to the October 17, 1961 massacre of Algerians in Paris. Even when not exploding in riots and bombings, the colonial bond between France, Tunisia, Morocco and especially Algeria resulted in discrimination, oppression and hard feelings between native French and newcomers and their children. France relinquished its colonial empire in 1962 but even into the twenty-first century, these difficulties extend beyond knee-jerk reactions to terrorism or the contested public housing of impoverished immigrants.

Since North Africans began coming to France in significant numbers in the 1920s and 1930s their place in France has been debated. During the Interwar years, most migrants were single men working in factories, mines and other menial jobs. Their experience in the French army gave them a picture of a more generous and welcoming France than they saw in the

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\(^1\)“Marche des Beurs” is the popular name of a “march for equality and against racism” which protested police violence and poor living conditions in immigrant neighborhoods in the eighties. It was the first national movement against racism on the part of second generation North African immigrants or “beurs” (French slang for *arabe*).
colonies and encouraged more to come from the Maghreb.\(^2\) Algeria’s status as three administrative departments of France since 1848 made migration all the easier.\(^3\) Although deemed the least desirable immigrant group by French scientists, sociologists, and politicians,\(^4\) many chose to stay in France and raise their children, and eventually grandchildren, often holding onto practices and religion from home. After World War II, Algerians, Moroccans, and Tunisians began to replace Italians, Poles, and Spaniards as the principal immigrant groups. The post-war economic boom in France and post-independence struggles in the three new nations drove many to France seeking work, and a policy of family reunification in the seventies allowed the numbers of Maghrebis to grow and gave them a reason to stay. At the same time, France’s losses in both World Wars and America’s rise to global prominence fueled fears among a number of French leaders that the growing immigrant population threatened their idealistic French way of life, resulting in strict immigration laws, an intensified political-cultural agenda and at times outright trampling on individual immigrant rights in favor of a culture-based notion of the “public good.”

As evidenced by conflicting reactions to the Charlie Hebdo and Paris attacks, the “Arab problem” in France is one that continues to this day. Nevertheless, North Africans continue to come to France for opportunity. Now more than ever though, that opportunity comes in the form of education rather than work in a mine or factory. Students in undergraduate, masters and doctoral programs leave home—quite possibly for the first time—and journey across the Mediterranean to a country they have heard so much about and towards which they probably

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have mixed feelings. Most have family and friends who went before, and they are certainly aware of the racial tension that continues to so often define France’s interactions with its former colonial subjects. Their position as international students and part of France’s controversial “Arab” Muslim population sets them apart from both groups and creates a unique situation for observation.

As an American exchange student in France I made many North African friends who had come there for various educational opportunities. As a history major, I began to question their motives, and wonder how the knowledge of their countries’ shared history with France had an impact on their decision to study there. Colonialism ended decades ago, but many inequalities still exist between the “native” French and North African populations. There has been much research done on North African immigrants to France, on second-generation immigrants, and on foreign students in general, but I found nothing specifically on North African students in France nor on the influence of history on any given student group’s experience in any given country. Even within the friendly, open, international student community in Le Mans, North (and to a degree West) Africans occupied a different space than the Americans, Germans, or Chinese. While still foreign students, they often spoke better French, had family already in the country, and planned to obtain complete degrees in France, as opposed to spending a semester or year abroad. I had spent time studying the difficulties faced by second-generation Maghrevis but again, my new friends did not quite fit what I had learned about those born in France or their parents. The men and women represented in this study are students, often already possessing a degree of some sort. They are not lower class immigrants coming to work in a factory, they are not refugees and they are not French-born and fighting for their right to be considered French. Outside of the boundaries of the University however, they are lumped into the greater category
of "North Africans in France" even by scholars. They had for the most part not come to France intending to settle down, but do the French know or care that they are not necessarily immigrants? How do these students fit into the history of immigration to France and the category of “foreign student”? How do they situate themselves in the French-North African story and how do they feel the French see them? What impact does knowledge of their nations’ shared histories have on their perceptions of themselves, their homes, and France and how does it influence their experience as students? This thesis sets out to explore these questions on a small scale, using data collected from personal interviews with Algerian, Tunisian, and Moroccan students studying in Paris and Le Mans, France.

Anyone who spends time with North African students in France soon realizes that their experience differs from that of other international students. Without understanding the historical circumstances that brought so many of them to France in the first place, however, it would be difficult to grasp why their experience is so different. Armed with a base knowledge of French colonialism, French Republican rhetoric, and immigration history, I found historical connections and themes repeated in all that the students shared about the present. One might blame a global rise in Islamophobia and fear of terrorism for causing the students to feel ostracized at times, but it became clear in talking with them that the source is more specific—at least from their point of view. Richard Derderian, a French historian who works with second-generation immigrants, quotes the Algerian singer and novelist, Mounsi, saying that the delinquency of second-generation Algerians in France today “cannot be understood in isolation from the colonial and immigrant past.”\(^5\) If second-generation North Africans still wrestle with the consequences of a

violent past, then those students who come directly from the “colony” must feel it as well. Their difficulties in France cannot be understood apart from comprehending that past. In a country that does not even recognize race on the census, why do most of the students feel as though they are unwanted because of their racial/ethnic background? What would cause a French person to call a random woman on the subway “a dirty Arab” when France prides itself on “égalité” and “fraternité”? The French president recently named a Moroccan-born woman the Minister of Culture, but one of the Moroccan students calls the situation in France “total discrimination” with regard to North Africans. In the following pages I examine incidents like these in the context of French and North African history, in order to argue that only in light of the past can the students, the French and scholars make sense of the complex and often contradictory relationship which sets this group apart from the larger international student community.

The interviewees themselves showed a lack of personal interest in history and its influence on the present. Contradictorily, this lack of interest often accompanied explicit or at times implicit references to how the history of North Africa and France does impact their lives. I examine the students’ comments thematically, looking at their perceptions of the past, the lingering effects of a colonizer/colonized relationship, racist French attitudes, the singularity of Algeria, and religion. Each section begins with a revealing quote from one of the students and contains relevant information from interviews and questionnaires, all framed by secondary sources concerning race, immigration, and history in France and North Africa. Before moving into a discussion of the data, I will discuss the relevance of North African students as a unique group to study, briefly outline the framework of analysis, and give an overview of my demographic.
Why Students

Most studies about France and its Muslim/Arab population do not consider students as a separate category of analysis. They focus on those coming to France for work, marriage, or asylum, on illegal immigrants, or on the children born to immigrants in France. This gap in the literature is not surprising as until recently, students made up a very small percentage of the North African migrant population. Most colonial subjects could not read so they had little interest in coming to France to study. Before 1960, 39% of Algerian urban migrants in France were illiterate and that number rose to 62% in rural communities.6 Those who did come to France for higher education often returned home and became leaders of independence movements across North Africa, putting their new ideas about democracy, self-determination, and equality into practice by overthrowing French control. After independence, education became more available in French and Arabic and the numbers of students began to rise. Today, North Africans make up the largest percentage of foreign students in France. Perhaps the temporary status of students causes their importance to be undervalued, but they do contribute significantly to the overall Muslim population in France, even if only for a transitory period. The lines between student and immigrant can also be unclear: choosing to stay because of marriage or job opportunities is not uncommon. A long-stay visa for studies is the first step to a residence permit and remaining in France indefinitely.

Between 2006 and 2011, 43% of all visas issued went to foreign students obtaining first-time long-term visas to study in France.7 A long-stay visa is required for a student to live in France for longer than 3 months and expires after a year. Five countries supplied just under half of those long-stay students: China, United States, Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. The first two

7 Main Study, “Immigration of International Students to France,” (French Contact Point of the European Migration Network (EMN) September, 2012.) 35
have larger populations overall from which to pull study-abroad students, but the last three still make up the largest percentages of international students in France. Of the 218,364 foreign students enrolled in French universities in 2010, the top four countries of origin included Morocco with 11%, Algeria with 8% and Tunisia with 5%. China was in second place with 10%. These numbers shifted a bit in 2014, but the overall percentage of Maghrebi students stayed about the same (21%) as shown by Table 1. The table also shows each country’s students in France as a percentage of the total number of students abroad.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Morocco</th>
<th>Algeria</th>
<th>Tunisia</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of students in France (2014)</td>
<td>23 617</td>
<td>17 466</td>
<td>8 925</td>
<td>25 234</td>
<td>3 204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of foreign students in France</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of students abroad in France (2014)</td>
<td>61% (of 38 599)</td>
<td>84% (of 20 695)</td>
<td>53% (of 16 889)</td>
<td>4% (of 712 157)</td>
<td>5% (of 60 292)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of students receiving first-time residence permits (2010)</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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8 Ibid, 46
10 Main Study, 41
In addition to comprising a large percentage of international students in France, Maghrebi students also receive the most financial aid to study there. Every year the Ministry of Foreign Affairs distributes 16,000 scholarships and grants to cover the costs of education and living expenses for foreign students. Maghrebi students make up 20% of grant recipients and Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia are the top three countries represented, respectively.11

While not grossly over represented, North African students still comprise a significant portion of the international student population and there is little explanation for this outside of far-reaching historical connections. One could argue for language, societal similarities, or political agreements (and some of the interviewees do) but none of these can be separated from their historical contexts. The EMN Main Study and the Campus France Notes on international students in France consistently place the Maghreb in a separate category from the rest of Africa and the Middle East when discussing data, further reflecting the region’s unique history and relationship with France. It is worth noting that while all international students wishing to pursue a bachelors or masters in France must receive a long-stay, renewable visa, this does not apply to Algerians, whose status is covered by the Franco-Algerian Agreement of December 27, 1968. This official differentiation of Algerian students reflects the special place Algeria holds in French history and memory.

The students may be unique among North Africans in France because of their status as students, but in their daily lives there is little distinction,12 and their experience differs greatly from their Chinese and American counterparts. All of the students in this study but one told stories of hearing comments like “dégage” (get out!), or other racist remarks, something that a

11 Ibid, 29 The study did not indicate if this was because these students have the most need or if they were simply more likely to apply than other national groups.
12 Much has been written elsewhere on the situation of North African and Arab immigrants and their children living in France and some will be explored throughout later sections of this paper.
Chinese student may experience but an American certainly would not. Experiences of racism affect them all, but do not discourage most of them from wanting to stay. According to the EMN study, more North African students stay in France after graduation than any other group. Of the 9,500 who changed to employee status in 2011, North Africans again made up the majority, with 18.5% being Moroccan, 14.1% Algerian, and 9.5% Tunisian (Chinese students were third with 10.7%). Again, these are not overwhelming numbers, but it is because of the large numbers of North African Arabs and Berbers already in France that these students stand out. According to 2008 census data 1,602,000 Algerians, Moroccans and Tunisians live in France, and Algerians constitute 13% of all immigrants, which is same percentage as all other African nationalities combined. This number is only counting those born outside of France and does not take into account all of the children and grandchildren of former immigrants.

**Framework and limitations**

In her book, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*, Ann Stoler features a chapter on oral history and memory work with elderly Javanese, former domestic workers for Dutch colonials. She looks at perceptual dissonance between what the Dutch reported and what the Indonesians remembered (or chose to remember) about colonialism, finding a contrast between the cozy, sentimental memories of the Dutch and the cold, business-minded recollections of the Javanese. However, Stoler also found variation within Javanese memories. She cautions the historian against approaching memory work with too much assurance of finding “colonial memories,” a term she problematizes by explaining that the memories themselves are impacted by imperialist structures and not all will fit into the “great

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13 Main Study, 64
14 «Immigrés et descendants des immigrés en France. » *Fiches thématiques : population immigré*. Table 1. 2012. 101. [http://www.insee.fr/fr/fiche/docs_flic/ref/IMMFRA12_g_Flot1_pop.pdf](http://www.insee.fr/fr/fiche/docs_flic/ref/IMMFRA12_g_Flot1_pop.pdf)
15 Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*, (Berkeley: University of California, 2002), 164
narrative or counter narrative.”¹⁶ My work does not fit into the category of memory work in the same way hers does, since I am asking students about their current experiences and their knowledge about a past they themselves cannot remember. Nonetheless, like Stoler, I did not find a “shared” narrative told by the students about their time in France, but received mixed feedback and emotional responses. Because of the personal and limited nature of the interviews, this study will not attempt to make any overreaching claims about North African students in France as a whole, but will endeavor to connect individual experiences with the larger narrative of North African interaction with France. Plenty has been written about France and North Africans, but this paper will allow the theories and themes to be explored on a personal level. How the students see themselves in France, how they feel the French see them, and how they view the history between the two regions confirms and challenges the secondary sources even as the secondary sources help clarify and explain what the students say. I found that in spite of the students’ efforts to remain grounded in the present, their different experiences and contradicting reactions cannot be separated from the historical baggage carried by France and North Africa.

**Demographic**

In all, 12 students were interviewed, including 6 females and 6 males and 3 Moroccans, 1 Tunisian and 8 Algerians. Of the interviewees, 5 are my close friends and the others are friends of those friends or casual acquaintances made while studying abroad. Eight students studied in the mid-sized town of Le Mans in the Loire valley and the other 4 in Paris. Paris receives a lot of media attention for its large population of Maghrebis (the highest concentration in France) and is of course the first place most people think of when they hear “France.” Contrary to popular belief, it does not, in fact, represent the whole nation. Incorporating students from Le Mans, a city of about 150,000, far from Paris and its infamous banlieues, brings more depth to the study.

¹⁶ Ibid, 169
by providing examples of different types of exclusion outside of Paris. All of the students but two came to France for the sole purpose of completing one or more degrees and all but one came to France within the last 5 years. As I refer to the thoughts and opinions of each student, I will use pseudonyms to protect anonymity. Some students were much more forthcoming than others on their questionnaires and some I knew personally, which allowed me to have more insight into their situations. I have included a brief biography of each respondent as an appendix as well as a sample of my questions. I conducted Skype interviews with Abdullah and Ahmed, thanks to the close friendship we developed while I was in France. The rest of the students filled out a detailed questionnaire and responded to further questions over email.

**Overview**

Overall the students have had positive experiences in France, and some plan to stay indefinitely. Since our time together in France, Ahmed has graduated and now lives and works in Paris. Mona’s parents live in Le Mans, so she plans to stay in Europe if not necessarily in France. Nora has also settled down in Le Mans since I met her, marrying a cousin and having a baby. Except for Raina, Lais, and Abdullah, the rest expressed willingness if not a strong desire to live in France, especially if the right job presents itself. Despite wanting to stay, all but one expressed that they feel the French see Arab/Muslim culture as “inferior,” “unacceptable,” “bizarre,” or “incomprehensible,” and most have been victims of blatant racism in one form or another. According to Mohamed, the hardest thing about living in France is “accepting each day that one is not welcome [here].” Despite this and despite multiple references to the colonization of their countries, none of the students expressed sharp disdain for France, its culture, or its people and repeatedly said that one finds good and bad people everywhere. However, I found that the more closely I knew the interviewee, the more heartfelt and in-depth his or her responses were, and the

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17 Aisha, questionnaire, October 25, 2015
more likely he or she seemed to share difficulties and frustrations. It was interesting to compare the replies of some on the questionnaire with our interactions in France. Mohamed, for example, was always very pleasant and involved on campus. I did not expect to hear him say he felt unwelcome in France, which caused me to wonder if he exaggerated his stories to tell me what he thought I wanted to hear. One of the questions explicitly asked about personal experiences of racism, and Mohamed started his story with “Finally, a direct question…” 18 The rest of his answers mixed praise of France with censure of an institutionalized discrimination. The balance of his criticism with praise (which I found in all the students’ responses) spoke against exaggeration and increased my interest in his choice of France for studies. He even assured me that other foreign students “coming from the entire world” agree with him that they are not welcome in France. Of the students in this study, all except Nora insisted that they encountered kind and welcoming French people, and a few of them did not have any bad experiences to share at all. Nevertheless, even those who like France and adamantly want to stay expressed awareness of, if not exasperation with, what they consider a general attitude of distaste and close-mindedness towards their culture, religion, and people.

An oft repeated accusation was that the French “generalize” and believe everything they see in the media. The students worked hard to avoid complete generalizations themselves, more than one qualifying their stories of being treated poorly with the phrase “you find bad and good people everywhere,” as if to insist that they recognize that not all French people are racist. Seeking to understand prejudice does not mean it does not bother them though. Ahmed shared: “On the one hand I understand, on the other I don’t agree. If you’ve never met a Muslim, you only see terrorism, you see what is said in the media and you believe it and you think that Muslims are all monsters. You think that they are all monsters. But why do people generalize?

18 Mohammed, questionnaire, February 7, 2016
That’s what I don’t like.”\(^{19}\) Certain students made comments that suggest more bias than they claimed. Abdullah seems predisposed to think all French are closed minded, full of generalizations, and raised to be afraid of Arabs. In our interview he referenced a French friend, saying that he jokes with him that he is not really French because of his openness and friendliness. I heard him make similar statements about one or two other girls with whom we spent time at the University. When he related how a co-worker jokingly told him that he looks like a terrorist, he admitted to being shocked and hurt, but said, “I will not judge her because she was raised this way. Her parents were talking about this. This is a terrorist, this is an Arabic mother f**ker and you know, she’s so naïve…imagine people saying this and you’re two years old…”\(^{20}\) Others made references to how people are raised, the media, religion, and cultural differences in order to explain feeling excluded and disdained by the French. Some of the students also invoked historical explanations to make sense of their place in France today, but few of them said more than a general “colonialism makes them racist.” The question remains, why are some French people raised to see North Africans as violent or less civilized and what about their relationship causes the students to accuse the French of generalizing while simultaneously explaining it and trying to avoid similar generalizations? The remainder of this thesis will seek to explain the unique relationship between North African students and their French hosts through the prism of history, and argues that without an understanding of history, this complicated and contradictory relationship does not make sense. A few of the students grasped the importance of history more than others and one in particular repeatedly and consciously connected his present day suffering to a colonial past. For the rest, it was usually

\(^{19}\) Ahmed, skype interview with author, November 3, 2015

\(^{20}\) Abdullah, skype interview with the author, September 12, 2015 Because of his education, we spoke both French and English during our interviews and he could swear fluently in both languages. His exact word choice here was “mother f**ker.” All communication with the other interviewees was in French.
enough to say that “the French are prejudiced,” maybe adding “because of a history of colonialism.” Their comments about history, however, make it clear that they situate their experiences today within that history and use it to make sense of what they see as otherwise senseless behavior by certain French people.

“Anyone who wants to leave Algeria is going to think of France. This is our mentality…I’m going to Europe and Europe is what? Europe is France. There’s a, how do you say, there’s a link between Algeria and France. Spain is good…but they don’t go there because there’s no link…from independence people just wanted to go to France…they stereotype like [sic] France, France, France for Algerians…” –Abdullah. 21

When students leave the Maghreb, the vast majority go to France. Algeria has the highest percentage of any country with 89% of those studying overseas choosing France. 22 Fifty years after independence, France also remains each country’s most important bilateral trading partner. For the most part, the students’ understanding of this link is based on language, culture, and family but they made many references to the past in their responses to questions which only asked about the present. The most common reason most of the interviewees gave for why students from North Africa choose France for studies is because of the shared language and/or social and historical links between their country and France. A few referred to the fact that everyone knows someone in France—an aunt, cousin, or neighbor. But even that is closely connected to a shared history, and the ones whom I know for certain have family there seemed to take it for granted and did not even mention it. Hisham also said that despite many differences, his culture resembles France’s because “they lived in our land for 130 years and we kept some of

21 Skype interview with the author, September 12, 2015
their culture.”23 Mohammed gave better education and life experiences as reasons to go to France, adding “…that it’s a question of histories and that France is indebted to the countries of the Maghreb because she colonized them for a brief moment and it’s thanks to the Maghreb that France was able to win her former world wars.”24 Here we see an acknowledgement of the “brief” historical period of colonization but also an allusion to the former colonies’ role in the World Wars, a chapter of history to which only he referred. Mona, when speaking about Moroccan stereotypes of the French, said she found that they behave coldly “towards the citizens of a formerly colonized country.”25 In discussing why some French are racist towards North Africans, she described how she sees a fear of Islam and a misunderstanding of Arab-Muslim culture, finishing with “colonization has left is marks on these people.” In response to the same question, Raina made an explicit connection between history and racism:

In my opinion the French are racist following an old heritage and way of life. Certainly the state’s place as a world power at the time [of colonization] as well as their role of colonizer of third world countries taught the French, even simple citizens, to act as managers of the colonies inhabitants and this direction has evolved into a relation between ‘the master’ and the employees but unfortunately these habits have been inherited by the French and that’s why the elderly are racist.26

She also said later that culture and lifestyle in Tunisia and France are very similar because of colonization.

Others feel the connection even if they did not try to explain it. Ahmed said that he did not have much culture shock “because of the link between North Africa and France,” which

23 Hisham, questionnaire, December 12, 2015
24 Mohammed, questionnaire, February 7, 2016.
25 Mona, questionnaire, October 20, 2015
26 Raina, questionnaire, October, 9 2015
creates many similarities between their cultures. Tamir took it a step farther, repeating that he “knew France” (connaissait la France) before coming, so he did not encounter culture shock or unfulfilled expectations. In his opinion, students come to France from Algeria because their culture is “nearly the same” (quasi-pareille), and historically the two countries share many common points. These students made no mention of why or how Algeria resembles France in some ways even though a violent colonial regime created most of the similarities. Whether they fully appreciate and acknowledge the past or not, it is clear from the students’ comments that the history between France and North Africa colors their perceptions and opinions about France and their place there.

So what exactly are these “links” the students speak of between France, Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia? A few said that geographic proximity is important, but proximity alone does not account for such a vast majority of North African students choosing to study in France or for most foreign students in France come from North Africa. Even the fact that they go because of language only makes sense in a historical context—North Africa speaks French because France colonized it. If it is simply a question of geography or language, then why do only negligible percentages of French students head across the Mediterranean to study in North Africa?27 Again, historically, there a widespread notion existed that the only things worth learning originate in France and Europe, so French and Europeans have little motivation to go south. The histories of both France and North Africa are long and varied, so for the purposes of this paper I will present only a brief account from their first significant contact in 1830 to the present to provide perspective into why so much ties the two regions together.

While not originally Arab, the Maghreb had been conquered by Arab tribes in the seventh century and then ruled by the Ottoman Empire from the 16th century until French occupation. Ottoman rule was distant, and, compared to what came later, non-intrusive. In 1830, French troops took Algiers and quickly replaced the Ottoman structure with direct French political and military control. They encouraged European settlement, used oppressive measures to subdue the native population, and finally incorporated Algeria into France as three *departments*. If asked, most Frenchmen before 1956 and would have said the Algeria *was* France and anyone born there *was* French—as least by nationality. Arabs and Berbers fell under the category of “French Muslim” and did not actually hold citizenship, subjecting them to most of the inconveniences of being “French” without any of the benefits. Sephardic Jews gained full citizenship in 1870, creating more division within the colony. In all, France maintained tight political, economic, and even cultural control of Algeria for 132 years.

The taking of Algeria predated the European grab for land in Africa which drove involvement in Morocco and Tunisia. One does not want to make light of the latter two nations’ colonial experiences because France did assume full political control through protectorates in 1881 and 1912 respectively. However, the nature of that control, according to Willis, was “different and ultimately less destructive to the existing political, economic and social structures” than it was to Algeria. Rather than do away with existing structures and rulers, France allowed the *bey* in Tunisia and the king in Morocco to keep their nominal positions and settled for indirect yet complete control. While still devastating for national development and identity, when independence came Morocco and Tunisia had more structure and stability and could move forward a bit more quickly. In Algeria everything political had to be built from

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29 Willis, Loc 391.
scratch. Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria’s colonial experiences and the differences between them would have significant consequences later on for relations with France, immigration, and eventually, student life.

Colonialism reached into every area of North African life, but family history in particular had less of an impact on the students than I anticipated. Independence only took place sixty years ago, meaning that most of the students’ grandparents and maybe even parents lived through at least part of the Algerian War. While I did not ask any questions about family stories, I did inquire into their families’ reactions to their choosing France for study, expecting to hear how a parent or uncle or grandma had been horrified and told them not to go, or told them awful stories about the French. The opposite happened. All of the students said their family was “encouraging” of their decision. One or two gave more detail such as their family knew it would be good for their professional formation. In two cases the parents themselves had immigrated to France as well. It appears that the benefits of education and life in France outweighed any ill feelings or worries. Or perhaps there are none. I also did not have an equal personal connection with each student which may have led them to be less forthcoming. My close friendship with Abdullah throughout my six months in France gives me more insight into his story. His grandfather was a soldier in the war and expressed some dissatisfaction with him choosing France, but his parents only felt anxious about their son leaving home for the first time; according to him they never spoke negatively about France. In fact, he insisted that his parents have never spoken about it at all, even though his father at least lived through the whole Algerian War.

Abdullah’s experience cannot be applied to the whole group, but the fact that not one student expressed resistance from his or her family, or even any hesitancy themselves to go to a country they know as a former colonizer, raises questions about how young North Africans
understand their history and about how much memory plays a role in their perceptions of France. In her work on oral histories of Dutch colonization of Indonesia, Ann Stoler found a lack of interest in history among the young Javanese and reluctance on the part of the elderly to discuss their experiences under colonial rule.30 This occurred within a specific set of historical, political and social circumstances, but it is possible that the trauma and violence of North African liberation have caused many to purposely forget or avoid discussing it. Or as Hisham said: “As for the history of my country and France, it’s necessary to forget and learn to forgive in order to move forward and to prevent hate from rising up and to reach the goal of living together.” But does simply forgetting truly allow moving on? Recent scholarship on France and Algeria has turned specifically to the role that memory and forgetting play in constructing identity in the present. Richard Derderian contends that the Algerian War in particular “is a drama that still has no end in sight” and calls for a complex understanding of the past that allows for good and bad on both sides.31 He specifically studies the memory work of second-generation Algerians, many of whom see the past as profoundly shaping their place in France and who seek to create a space for themselves by giving the past an Algerian voice. As for the French themselves, colonial involvement was something to be forgotten until recently. Only in 1999 did President Jacques Chirac publicly acknowledge that the nation fought a war in Algeria and that its generals regularly used torture to deal with Algerian freedom fighters. David Prochaska claims that Algeria in particular never experienced a similar public resolution of the conflict and that thanks to continuing unrest, violence and political conflict in the country, their French encounter

30 Stoler, “Memory-Work in Java: A Cautionary Tale,” in Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power, 162-203
31 Derderian, 251, 248
remains “an open wound requiring immediate attention.”32 The absence of public closure for the Algerian people as a whole may explain the lack of historical interest expressed by most of the Algerian students. I will not attempt to apply the same reasoning to the Moroccan and Tunisian students, whose countries have their own unique relationships and shared memories with France. A later section will deal with the differences between the Algerian, Tunisian, and Moroccan experiences more in depth.

In light of the troubled past between North Africa and France, the students’ reluctance to completely villainize the French arrested my attention. In my mind they had plenty of cause to do so. As I continued my research, however, I saw how history again offered an explanation, not only of present tensions, but of why the students seemed to offer praise and condemnation of their temporary home in the same breath. The first clue came from reading late twentieth century analyses of the colonial experience and liberation struggles, notably the works of Frantz Fanon and Albert Memmi.

“France is so fancier.”—Abdullah33

One of my main questions when approaching this paper was if the French government historically treated its immigrants terribly and if these students experience so much prejudice and baggage from the colonial period, why do they choose France for studies? Their countries may not offer the level of degree they think is necessary for success, but there are other places, so why France? As outlined above, they feel as though France will be easier because they already know the language, are familiar with elements of the culture, and most likely know someone, all advantages unlikely to be found elsewhere in Europe. Some of their responses suggest, however,

32 David Prochaska, “The Return of the Repressed: War, Trauma and Memory in Algeria and Beyond,” in Algeria and France 1800-2000: Identity, Memory, Nostalgia,” edited by Patricia M. E. Lorcin, (Syracuse, Syracuse University, 2006), 270
33 Skype interview with the author, September 12, 2015
that something beyond those practicalities motivates these students. In analyzing their responses, I was curious how well these students may fit into Albert Memmi and Frantz Fanon’s framework for analyzing “the colonized.” Are they still, as a twentieth-century rewrite puts it, wearing white masks over their brown skin? Do these categories (colonizer and colonized) carry any relevance at all sixty years and two generations after independence?

I owe this line of questioning to my relationships with Abdullah and Ahmed, one of whom displayed an need to assert his people’s “goodness” and the other who sincerely loved his country but found it more beneficial to blend in. Fanon stated that colonization created an inferiority complex in colonized peoples who for decades had ideas drummed into them about white/European culture being superior. During that time, most fine art and education they encountered came from the colonizers. They preached a social gospel of “let us help you because we know better,” which only served to prop up empires. In a French context this became known as the *mission civilisatrice* (civilizing mission). Even today, assumptions can be held about the inhabitants of former colonies. Nora related how a teacher blatantly called her out on the first day of a class: “a professor said to me ‘has your country started to develop itself a bit?’ It made me feel uncomfortable in front of the other students.” With Fanon’s original idea of insecurity came a hatred of the self, fueled by rejection by this “superior” culture, coupled with a desire to become a part of it. The liberation movements added a dimension of new-found pride in a national culture and a rejection of the Other. For example, after independence, Algeria eventually phased out public French education and now even many universities use only Arabic. National pride and a sense of insecurity are by no means mutually exclusive, however, and plenty of

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35 Nora, questionnaire, November 19, 2015
examples exist of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria both rejecting and seeking to “catch-up” to France. Continuing on the theme of language, Morocco, where the “Arabization” of education began in the 1960’s, recently decided to switch back to French instruction in math, sciences, and technology.\textsuperscript{36} For some, this was a practical move to advance important topics more globally taught in French and English; for others, it represents a step backwards in the fight to promote the national culture and language.\textsuperscript{37}

With the students I interviewed, I noticed certain contradictions in their comments and different ways of describing France which may exemplify the struggle faced by citizens of developing countries who come into contact with Europe or the United States. They spoke of France with a mixture of condemnation and admiration which seemed like more than a young person’s comparison of two cultures. The first thing that stood out in nearly all the questionnaires and conversations was complaints about a lack of compassion, warmth and generosity on the part of the French which was paired with a desire to maintain their own cultural values. Words used to describe France included “interesting,” “modern,” “innovating,” and an “open” and “rich” culture. The group repeatedly expressed admiration of France’s administrative organization, economy, technology, government, education and place in the world. Even the most committed to their roots realize that at the very least the world does not see them the same as it sees France. Mohamed put his position plainly: “I see myself as the special envoy sent on a special mission to acquire knowledge and return home to apply it and pass it on to future generations.”\textsuperscript{38} He also stated that, “I would certainly say that in France the quality of teaching is superior, and personally I am very lucky and indebted to France for the quality of education she gives me.”


\textsuperscript{37} Ibid

\textsuperscript{38} Mohammed, questionnaire, February 7, 2016
This is the same young man who said that France is indebted to the colonies for helping her fight wars. So which is it?

Mona and Ahmed both commented on the corruption and inequality in their own governments which they find absent in France. Mona also said she learned “rational thought” from France. There is an idea here that much can be learned from France or Europe that cannot be learned at home and it is important to move forward with that knowledge. The force of the students’ censure of certain French attitudes and cultural points suggests that each one made a judgement call: pride and love of home and frustration with France do not outweigh the perceived benefits of a French education and exposure to European culture. Aisha effectively summed up a sentiment I perceived in much of the group: “Now I no longer like my country...I have a good ability to adapt...I am not looking to integrate and adapt 100 percent to this culture so I always hold onto my values and principles and do not hesitate to show my culture.” She feels this way in spite of the fact that some French person told her “dégage!” (Get out!). Ahmed also intends to stay in France but still insists "You can never separate me from Algeria."

In The Wretched of the Earth Fanon calls on the formerly colonized to stop envying or fearing the colonizer and become a new man. I do not know if he has read Fanon, but Abdullah captured some of that spirit in our discussions of colonization and racism. He also seemed to feel a need to prove himself and his culture to the West, be that to me and other Americans or to France and Europe. I noticed that anytime we watched television and something came on the news about Islam and terrorism, Abdullah became upset and often changed the channel or left the room. It bothered him to see his culture and religion represented incorrectly, whether that be as jihad-obsessed terrorists, or oppressive to women, or simply not following the Quran. He

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39 Mona, questionnaire, October 20, 2015
40 Aisha, questionnaire, October 25, 2015
41 Ahmed, skype interview with the author, November 3, 2015
seemed to feel it his responsibility as an Algerian in France to represent his country well, to prove that all Algerians do not “font le bordel.” Among the other Muslim North Africans with whom we spent time he let me know which ones truly could be called Muslim and which ones he felt did not represent Islam well (for him, race, religion, and exclusion by the French are inextricably linked). He also made a point in his interview that his parents have never spoken badly about France and suggested that in reality, the French are barbaric for sowing seeds of prejudice in their children. “When I was young, my mother always told me you must never hit, it’s out of the question that you hit women…Here the mother tells her child, Arabs are terrorists, Muslims are terrorists…Who is agreeable here? People who say the good to their children [sic] or those who say nonsense?” In our interviews, he became most passionate and agitated when talking about colonization or when relating how different French friends misunderstand and misrepresent his culture. These stories rolled out, one after another, told with much hand gesturing and stumbling over words, mixing French and English. He insisted that Algerians are good, generous, giving, and warm (unlike the French) but that the French will never know it because they generalize.

Abdullah used to tease Ahmed by calling him “the Parisian,” because he moved there shortly after I arrived and had the strongest mastery of French out of the three of us. Ahmed does not see the need to advertise that he is Muslim if it will create problems and he does not let the difficulties of living in France bother him. If he could go anywhere, he would choose America, but he justifies staying by noting that while racism and difficulties exist in France, he does not care because in America they do not like Arabs either and he just has to find the best job.

Abdullah on the other hand, made his feelings very clear:

42 “screw things up,” Abdullah, skype interview with the author, September 12, 2015
43 Abdullah, skype interview with the author, October 24, 2015
Sincerely, I will live anywhere, but not France. No. It’s out of the question. I’m just waiting to finish my thesis and then right after, I’ll go home, I’ll go to Syria, I’ll go anywhere, shit! I’ll go to an English speaking country you know? It’s more different, friendlier. That’s it. I’m not going to stay here. I’m not going to stay here.\textsuperscript{44}

At this point in our conversation he was impassioned by discussing how France has treated his people but at other times he said he would stay in France for a good job, even though he dreams of Dubai or England. This is one more indication of the complexity and contradictory nature of these students’ relationship with France. For them, the luxury of personal comfort or preference takes second place to more practical considerations like economic and educational opportunity. Some of them take that in stride; others rail against the way the twists and turns of history and politics brought them to this point. No matter how they choose to respond, they do insist that there is a link between North Africa and France which brings them there. As seen above, a few understand the historical roots of that link while others just know they can speak French so France is the place to go. For these students at least, it would seem that they have made peace with history (insofar as they know it) and have much more to say about how the French treat them now. What they may not realize is that the attitudes which frustrate them so much today can be traced back to the beginnings of France’s colonial empire.

“The French think] that we are nomads, that we ride camels, that we are disadvantaged and that they are better than us.” —Mohamed\textsuperscript{45} “They have an idea that European culture is superior to other cultures. I’ve heard people say several times that Arab-Muslim culture is bizarre, horrible, that Arabs are savages.” —Mona.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{44} Abdullah, skype interview with the author, October 24, 2015
\textsuperscript{45} Questionnaire, February 7, 2016
\textsuperscript{46} Email to the author, December 18, 2015
One remnant from the period of colonialism and imperialism is a lingering idea that French and European culture and values are universally the best. Coupled with decades of xenophobic propaganda depicting Muslim Arabs as decidedly unable to be French and therefore by default inferior and uncivilized, French universalism continues to leave its mark on North African students, whether or not they actually immigrate. While the majority of French citizens today probably do not ascribe to the same racial prejudice as their ancestors, most of the students I interviewed feel as though the French see them and their culture as lesser, some more strongly than others. I received a range of opinions from calling the situation in France “total discrimination,” to saying that France is not a racist country, but that the French think they are better than foreigners, “especially Maghrebis.” Despite the majority saying that religion represents the greatest difference between the two cultures, only four gave religion or islamophobia as the main reason they think many French discriminate towards North Africans. Most of those who answered that question (3 did not) argued more forcibly that the French simply think they are better than North Africans, are prejudiced, and do not take the time to know people. Mona said that they have an idea that “European” is “superior to other cultures” and that North African culture, language, and tastes are sometimes denigrated. Abdullah actually insisted during his interview that the French “see Algeria as people who are eating people, yeah we are like monsters…they think that we don’t have like, fancier lives, like big cars and we have no books and no literature, no I’m talking seriously…they look at us first of all like a barbarian…” When I objected that no one thinks they eat people, he insisted: “Yeah of course…this is the way they think Hannah. I’m not just kidding.”

47 Mohamed, questionnaire, February 7, 2016
48 Tamir, supplement to questionnaire, December 7, 2015
49 Abdullah, skype interview with the author, September 12, 2015
Several interviewees sought to explain and forgive the rudeness and insensitivity they have experienced, but not one student claimed that North Africans are completely accepted by French people. As stated above, several of them attribute the lack of acceptance to France’s historical relationship with North Africa and even if many French people welcome these students, they cannot erase decades of misunderstanding, oppression, and mistrust that weigh on relations between the two societies. Historically, it is indisputable that popular French opinion viewed Arabs as inferior, violent, and less civilized, although the justification has shifted from biological determinism to questions of culture. French writing on Algeria in the 1800’s presented “the Arab” as “lazy, soft, slow, always indoors, a dreamer… thieving, false” and “above all, frightening.”\textsuperscript{50} Attempting to “civilize” him was futile. By the time the first large contingent of North Africans on French soil came during World War I, the Third Republic idea of a \textit{mission civilisatrice} towards their colonial “children” was in full swing, and bringing them “home” to France was seen not only as necessary, but as a means of educating the uncivilized native.\textsuperscript{51} In his book on colonial soldiers during the First World War, Richard Fogarty describes how the rhetoric of equality in France did allow for more upward mobility and opportunity than in other European armies. A few students referred to this idea of French equality as something they expected to find when they came but found the opposite. Others like Raina and Abdullah said they expected more racism than they found. Alongside his acknowledgement that some French officers tried to treat North African soldiers as equals, Fogarty gives many examples of officers and officials affirming the paternalistic and condescending nature of their treatment of colonial soldiers. They refer to them as “big children” who love “above all to fight”\textsuperscript{52} and believe them incapable of learning

\textsuperscript{50} Pierre Dorman, “L’arabe entre mythe et réalité, » \textit{Un siècle des passions algériennes : une histoire de l’Algérie coloniale (1830-1940)}, (Paris: Fayard, 2009), 390
\textsuperscript{51} Fogarty, 2, 26-27, 298
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid, 56
specialized tasks or proper French, even though the *mission civilisatrice* originally assumed the assimilability of colonial natives. Today, of course, there is no manifest program to “civilize” North African students in France. Nonetheless, the students feel that their culture is viewed as inferior to that of France. They may not be aware that for years a systematic program *did* exist in France to evaluate various immigrant cultures and decide which groups could meet certain standards for “civilization” and which were beyond “help.”

Fogarty examines the beginnings of civilizing the colonized at home through the hierarchy that existed between different groups of colonized soldiers. For example, it was the consensus that West Africans were good for manual labor, North Africans were fierce warriors, but needed to be controlled, and Indochinese and Malagasy men were gentle and intelligent. Such racial hierarchies existed for labor and reproductive potential as well, and Arabs consistently fell to the bottom of the list. Alongside the soldiers, the war brought 130,000 North Africans as labor migrants who created conflict and violent unrest in big cities like Paris where their concentrated presence caused concern among governing officials.  

Government studies continued to find colonial workers inferior, and the end of the war marked the moment when France’s policy towards the colonies changed from assimilation to association. While up to World War I, official French policy stated that Arabs could eventually become French (assimilate), encountering them up close and personal now changed the policy to promoting co-existence as the only option (association).  

While the two approaches continued to overlap, it had been legally decided that colonial subjects could never become fully French because of “inherent biological differences.” As the number of colonial migrants increased to meet labor and

53 Rosenberg, 114  
54 Fogarty, 288  
55 For more on assimilation versus association see Tom Shephard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and Remaking of France*, (Ithaca: Cornell University, 2006); Richard Fogarty, *Race and War in France*; and Elisa Camiscioli, *Reproducing French Race*
population demands after the war, French politicians, policemen, and others would scramble to maintain control and begin to negotiate in earnest what exactly it meant to be French.

The systemic racial profiling of North African migrants only gained importance after the war, and it is the legacy of these policies that creates so much tension for students and second-generation immigrants in France today. During the interwar years, concern about depopulation prompted the state to encourage foreign immigration and continue creating hierarchies of the “best” immigrants to integrate into French society. Populationist discourse in Europe linked demographic strength and productivity to national prominence, so French pronatalists, work and racial scientists, abolitionists, and politicians set about defining the best way to improve the quality and quantity of France’s population. This meant submitting colonial subjects and immigrants to racialized hierarchies that “scientifically” identified white, European immigrants as better laborers and more fit to reproduce future French citizens. They did everything they could to send North Africans home right after the war, declaring them too “ethnographically distinct.”

Government sponsored studies found Italians, Spanish, and Poles to be most desirable because they were other “white” races. Their family values and religion also most closely resembled those of the French. In contrast, colonial subjects from North Africa were deemed an unskilled, temporary workforce incapable of assimilating. In her book *Reproducing French Race*, Elisa Camiscioli illustrates how French Republicanism’s contradictory values of particularism and universalism set the tone for these policies. During the nineteenth and twentieth century, these two ideas developed alongside imperialism and colonialism partially as a justification. French imperialists praised French language, art, government, and values as the best in the world but also lauded them as potentially best for the world. According to the pronatalists, work scientists, hygienists, and racial scientists who discussed immigrant assimilation, French values

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56 Rosenberg, 109
should work for everyone, but they also set France apart and could not be risked by the integration of “degenerate” groups. Actual immigration policies of the period never established bans or quotas but the desire to create “good” French citizens led to a “biocultural definition of belonging,” which privileged white Europeans. The need for laborers proved stronger than colonial prejudice, though, and by 1928 at least 60,000 Algerians lived in Paris alone. Initially received with curiosity, they soon replaced Italians as the primary victims of police violence. Unlike Camiscioli, Paul A. Rosenberg argues that this had more to do with their colonial status and religious culture than the color of their skin. While “blackness” came at the bottom of all European racial hierarchies, its meaning was not always clear: some French traditionally saw Algerian Kabyles as “white,” while they perceived Italians as “black” when they first arrived. Whatever color group various North Africans found themselves in, their numbers soon made Parisians nervous. Evidently neither assimilation nor association sounded as nice when the “savages” lived down the street, even though at this time Algeria was still considered France, and Algerians, Arab or European, considered French subjects if not citizens. While decolonization and a new set of international expectations and values brought changes to the official policies and rhetoric concerning North Africans and immigrants, hundred-year-old stereotypes and prejudices were not easily erased. In some ways, the process of decolonization solidified certain ideas about the place of North Africans in the world in relation to France. French values supposedly worked for everyone; if the former colonies did not want them, then they must be simply too different, too degenerate to ever become French and therefore less civilized.

57 Camiscioli, 21
58 Ibid, 73
59 Rosenberg, 131
60 Ibid, 117 Rosenberg does interchangeably use “Algerian” and “Kabyle” when talking about perceptions of whiteness. Arabs were never considered white.
Even 60 years later, those students who do not plan or desire to become French may be caught in the cross-fire of the remnants of colonial thought. France today does not recognize race on the census and the government takes pains to show that race is not an issue. In 2015 President Hollande even named a Moroccan-born woman, Audrey Azoulay, the Minister of Culture.\(^1\) However, it is evident from the students’ comments that many in France do see race and it is an issue; it is simply one the government today chooses to ignore. Tamir believes that France is not a racist country but he “confirms with force” that prejudice exists. “[The French] say ‘it’s not for us the French to accept your culture and your customs but it’s on you to assimilate.’”\(^2\) This comment insinuates that anyone hoping to make a life in France should accept French ways and even calls on the old by-word “assimilate.” But why say it to a student? Why should he completely adapt to French ways when he only came for education and experience? Comments like this one reveal how blurry the lines are between French-North Africans, North African immigrants and North African students. Especially when one considers that many students do end up staying, even if they did not plan to do so at first. Their presence in France is so visible and comes with so many strings attached, that an Arab student potentially experiences France less like a world traveler and more like “un sale arabe,” even though he has barely arrived and may never set foot in a banlieue or take a French person’s job.\(^3\) For some of the students, the stereotyping becomes even narrower and more personal. The treatment of Algerians, Tunisians and Moroccans may not differ, but the way the students perceive rude comments and dirty looks does show some variation which reflects each nation’s individual relationship with France.

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\(^1\) « L’Algérie furieuse après la nomination d’Audrey Azoulay comme ministre de la Culture, » (RT France, 12 février, 2016), https://francais.rt.com/france/15627-algerie-nomination-audrey-azoulay
\(^2\) Tamir, supplement to questionnaire, December 7, 2015
\(^3\) Nora, questionnaire, November 19, 2015
“Tunisian people and Moroccan people, they don’t look at them the same way they look at Algerian people.” –Abdullah.64

None of the other students spoke about differences in French views of Algerians as explicitly as Abdullah, but there I did hear a difference in the way they spoke about feelings of exclusion. When the Moroccan and Tunisian students spoke about racist, French attitudes, they focused on religious practices, Islamophobia, history, and prejudice towards Arabs in general. The Algerians talked about religion and felt that the French saw their culture as inferior, but they also made references to origin and nationality, which the others did not.65 Aisha said that the French do not judge people according to their abilities but “take origin as important criterion.”66 Ahmed, whose features are not stereotypically “Arab,” cited times of seeing people’s manners towards him become less friendly and colder, not when they hear his Arabic-sounding name but when they find out he is Algerian.67 Tamir also referenced “telling them I am Algerian” as the cause of grimaces.68 Abdullah has felt that people attribute characteristics to him based on his appearance and background. For example, he shared how a friend took him to see a movie, not knowing what his favorite genre was. He turned to Abdullah and said, “oh you will really like it; it’s an action movie with Kalashnikovs and everything.” Abdullah was taken aback and said that no, he did not care for that type of film but preferred historical movies. The French boy said, “no, no, I said action because I see you’re muscular and big and everything.” Abdullah considered his

64 Abdullah, questionnaire, September 12, 2015
65 It should be noted again that most of the students in this study are Algerian; therefore I have more information on their ideas and experiences.
66 Aisha, questionnaire, October 25, 2015
67 Ahmed, skype interview with the author, November 4, 2015
68 Tamir, questionnaire, October 19, 2015
reasoning to be “n’importe quoi” (nonsense) and heavily implied that he believes his ethnicity
played a role in the friend’s choice of film for him.69

Abdullah’s assertion is not completely wrong when he makes a distinction between
Algeria and Morocco or Tunisia in French thinking. Legally, even, there is a distinction. The
Franco-Algerian Bilateral agreement of 1968 continues to regulate how Algerians immigrate,
come to study, and receive visas, even though it has been amended several times to match the
controls on other foreigners. Culturally and politically too, several differences exist between
France’s relationship with each country, which may affect public perceptions of incoming
immigrants, visitors, and students. Morocco and Tunisia carry less historical baggage (while
significant, their colonial periods are much shorter than Algeria’s), and from the outside, they are
more open and less mysterious than their neighbor, which only sends 2% of its students abroad70
and has not opened its doors to tourism in the same way. Abdullah bemoaned Algeria’s lack of
developed tourism because it does not allow the French to “see how [they] really are.” According
to him Algerians think themselves too rich to need tourism, “not like Tunisia.”71 Raina, who is
from Tunisia, thinks that “cultivated” French tourists enjoy discovering Tunisia’s “artisanal
traditions,” monuments, and art influenced by their “varied heritage, obtained from multiple
historic civilizations.”72 I do not want to say that grand disparities exist in French treatment of
Moroccans, Algerians, and Tunisians—indeed, visually, most people probably could not tell the
different North Africans apart and a Moroccan was one of the most vocal about not being wanted
in France. However, knowledge of history and evidence from the present make it foolish to think

69 Abdullah, skype interview with the author, October 24, 2015
70 Campus France, 5
71 Abdullah, skype interview with the author, September 12, 2015
72 Raina, questionnaire, October 9, 2015
that in the average French mind there is no distinction made once they learn a student or immigrant comes from Algeria.

All of the students except Raina acknowledged feelings or experiences of exclusion during their stay in France, but arguably it is the French relationship with Algeria that colors its relationships with all North Africans. French society may have no deep-rooted issues with Moroccans or Tunisians, but they look like Algerians, come from the same place, eat the same food, speak the same language (as far as the French probably know), and practice the same religion. As outlined above in excerpts from *Un siècle des passions algériennes*, French colonists held many racist and degrading views of Algerian Arabs and Berbers. While those views undoubtedly grew to include other Maghrebis, in French media and politics they applied first and foremost to Algerians, because most person-to-person interaction between France and North Africa took place in Algeria. Later, as migrants began to flood the metropole, the vast majority came from Algeria because its status as three *departments* made border-crossing easy. Often in reading French and American literature about twentieth century immigration, the term “Algerian” or “Arab” alone is used, and the other two countries are left out of the discussion because their numbers and significance in French thinking were simply not as great. Therefore, the term “Algerian” continued to be connected with discussions about immigration, threats to French identity and culture and protecting the *français de souche* (native French) from the Other.

Algeria stands out for the violence, length, and emotional impact of its decolonization and the “intensely emotional and complex relationship” it continues to engage in with France.\^73 Abdullah asserted that Algerians’ refusal to accept French rule “really upset them” because they wanted Algeria more than the other two countries. Later he continued:

They look at us first of all like a barbarian, because…like Tunisia and Morocco, they were ok with France ok? And we were not. This is what really upset them…because they wanted Algeria to be French. But they want Tunisia too and Morocco too but not as much as they want Algeria….And because we rebelled against France to get our freedom they changed the way they thought of us. Imagine people in the 50s and 60s and stuff, telling their sons and daughters, this is how we feel is Algeria [sic], they hate us, they killed us and stuff. They see us like this because they thought that in a period of time [sic] Algeria is France. It’s correct they spent like 150 years or whatever in Algeria; yeah you can say that it’s yours but it’s not yours as a matter of fact. You colonized it. You colonized people, you terrorized people…you did a lot of things. It’s not your place and that’s why people rebelled against and they look at us and say why you, you’re not good people because you didn’t want to stay with us. Yeah! We don’t want you to stay in our land ok?\(^\text{74}\)

Abdullah’s comments are less valuable for their historical accuracy (for one thing, France was in Algeria 132 years, not 150) than they are for what they say about perceptions of history and relations between all four countries. Of course, Tunisians and Moroccans were not “ok” with French rule, and both countries experienced unique liberation struggles with their share of violence and repression. France did, however, relinquish them relatively easily, not because they felt particularly threatened by the various uprisings, but in order to focus all their energies on keeping the largest and most important colony, where an insurrection began in November 1954. The large community of European settlers, or pieds noirs, exercised their influence on the French government to maintain control of Algeria as well. The two smaller nations achieved independence in 1956, six years before Algeria, allowing them to rebuild relations with France

\(^\text{74}\) Abdullah, skype interview with the author, September 12, 2015
more quickly, while a prolonged and bloody war in Algeria caused thousands of deaths on both sides. Suicide bombers, torture, whole cities divided in civil war between native Algerians and pieds noirs—all of this sets Algerian independence apart and continues to weigh on memory and conscience on both sides. Algerian historian Benjamin Stora describes the war as “l’oubli” (forgetting) of France and “la gangrène” (fester sore) of Algeria, leaving little room to question the effects it had on the two populations.75

Abdullah forcefully and proudly berates the French for thinking that Algeria belonged to them while at the same time citing Algeria’s rejection of French rule as the reason France does not welcome Algerians, and by extension, Arab-Muslims. None of the other students made such a direct link between a specific event in history and their feelings of alienation by the French, but it is a significant connection. Algerian independence represented an official turning point in French thinking about Algerians and Arabs. Todd Shepard traces the linguistic shift in legal documents in his book, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and Remaking of France*. Until halfway through the French Algerian war, Algeria was not considered a colony but an extension of France, and, officially, Arabs could still assimilate to French culture if they tried, or at least live peacefully alongside it. However, the years of war took their toll and even those who supported independence did so at times because they believed that the terms “French” and “Algerian” contained fundamental differences that could never be reconciled. With Algerian independence, the official line changed to say that Algerian (Arab, Muslim) will never be, can

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never be, French. As with colonization and pre-independence immigration, discussions of decolonization and subsequent waves of migrants focus almost exclusively on Algeria. In conducting research for this paper, I found it extremely difficult to find studies or articles that dealt with the Moroccan or Tunisian experience in depth. The length, depth of involvement, and violence of France’s presence in Algeria compared to the other two interacts with the overwhelming use “Algerian” in discourses about Arabs in France to give the word a more negative connotation than “Moroccan” or “Tunisian,” even though the French may treat them all the same because of cultural and ethnic similarities. At the very least, these factors have had an impact on Abdullah and the other Algerian students who hold their Algerian identity both with pride and uneasiness as they sense that it sets them apart (even though only Abdullah expressed it explicitly).

The way the French government responded to, dealt with and talked about decolonization—especially in Algeria—set the stage for how it treated immigrants (and students) from North Africa later. The Algerian case is so important because of the way the French saw Algeria and because the first waves of migrants were overwhelmingly Algerian. Independence solidified what some French had been saying all along: why try to pretend that Algerians were French and talk about assimilation or even integration? If inability to assimilate was part of the reason that France let go of Algeria (and its neighbors), it should come as no surprise that the French government and people have difficulty accepting North African immigrants and their children and grandchildren’s claim to French-ness. Integration and assimilation made up and continue to make up the rhetoric, but clearly there has always been an underlying belief that it is simply not possible—the differences between the two cultures are too great. The history of

colonialism, independence, and immigration provide the context to help a present-day student understand why these perceived insurmountable differences exist so strongly today. Besides the historical baggage and cultural differences, my students cited one aspect of North African culture in particular as the most difficult difference to adjust to in France. Religion, Islam in particular, has recently elicited plenty of media attention. However, its importance in French thinking also has deeply historical connections related to the same principles of universalism and particularism which characterized so many French assessments of their former colonies.

“The religion is the hardest thing to adjust to” --Maram.\(^{77}\)

Religion came up in most of the students’ responses in different ways as many of them expressed the difficulty they felt practicing Islam in an avowedly “secular” society. During the time I spent with Abdullah, Raina, and Ahmed, they rarely hesitated to excuse themselves to pray the required five daily prayers, and Abdullah had no problem taking out his prayer rug and praying even if a few of us were in the room. While I cannot speak for all of the respondents, none of the North African Muslims with whom I spent significant time (Abdullah, Raina, Ahmed, Mohamed, Mona, and others not included in this study) drank alcohol or ate any meat that did not have a halal label. Of course, I also knew several Muslims in France who did not adhere to religious customs with such fervor, but if even half of the 5 million Muslims in France observe Islamic rules in the strictest sense, it must draw attention to them because of how minutely it affects their lives and how much the restrictions contrast with everyday French life. For example, when a group of American students came for the summer, the only Muslim in the group faced opposition from the French professor leading the program when he wanted to fast during Ramadan. The professor told the young man’s leader to talk him out of it because it would be too difficult to fast and fully participate in activities, even though thousands of Muslims hold down

\(^{77}\) Maram, questionnaire, October 27, 2015
full time jobs and families and fast every year. This situation did not involve a North African student, but it illustrates the issues that may arise when religious practices collide with the public sphere in France. Tamir noted that the French are “annoyed” by Islam and that they believe it is not compatible with the republic and the idea of laïcité (secularism). This idea, like the idea that Maghrebis are not able to be French, and prejudice against Algerians, can be traced back to the colonial era and gained strength during decolonization, as religion became an important dividing line between the two cultures.

Despite a majority mentioning that religion caused a divide between them and the French, no one but Mona gave a specific example of how religion caused them problems. Her story is significant nonetheless, not because it is the only example, but because of what it represents:

They turned me away from a school because of my veil; even before the law of 2004…they have said that I am repressed, extremist, because I wear the veil. They’ve said that I am just a submissive woman; however I am a convinced feminist. People only believe what they hear in the media.

On the surface, this may seem to be no more than a misunderstanding of another’s culture. According to Joan Wallach Scott, however, this young woman’s struggle to find acceptance while wearing her headscarf serves as a focal point for French fears about religion and cultural identity. Mona refers here to a ban on completely covering the face in France and on wearing the “veil” in public schools. Scott’s book on the controversy surrounding this ban explores how

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78 Tamir, questionnaire, October 19, 2015.
79 Mona, questionnaire, October 20, 2015
80 Scott qualifies the term “veil,” which connotes a completely covered face. While utilized by the media in coverage of the controversies, it does not accurately describe the headscarf worn by most women in France. Their scarf does not cover the face or remotely resemble complete body coverings such as those worn by Muslim women in the Gulf States. None of the North African girls I personally met in Le Mans completely covered her face. While that certainly is not a representative sample, none of the Muslim students I encountered seemed to think it necessary.
most French arguments for and against the veil expressed decades-old French universalism hidden in the contemporary rhetoric of feminism, national security, and laïcité because the veil symbolized threats to “French identity.” While the ban took place in 2003, and the politics and historical context of France had changed greatly since the Third Republic and colonialism, many of the same themes continued to be reiterated in different ways, in particular the idea that North Africans remain too different to be completely French (because of Islam) or the willingness of the French state to compromise the ideal of individualism in favor of national interests. Understanding the historical importance and application of certain ideas in France is essential to understanding the contradictions surrounding North African students in France today. Past relationships and prejudices explain some of this, but a historical exploration of quintessential “French” ideals informing the headscarf controversies will illustrate the repetitiveness and even ingrained nature of these contradictions.

The issue began in 1989 when three Muslim girls were expelled for refusing to remove their scarves at school. At that time the state ruled that each school should have its own policies to account for different situations. In 1994 the courts rejected proposed legislation to ban “ostentatious” signs of religion in school, again leaving it up to individuals to decide what caused a disturbance or seemed to be proselytizing. The media conflict died down, but the issue with headscarves did not. Years later, attention turned to the story of two school girls who refused to wear a more revealing scarf in school. As French girls who had converted to Islam, their story exacerbated fears about the cultural influence of North African Muslims and preserving national culture. This time, growing international concern about Islam created enough hype to allow President Chirac to approve a law banning the wearing of any “conspicuous” signs of religion in public schools. In theory this law applies equally to Christians, Muslims, and Jews, but in
actuality, the only truly “conspicuous sign of religion” worn regularly by any of the groups would be the Muslim headscarf or perhaps a Jewish yarmulke. Most, if not all, media attention focused on the headscarf.

As explored in an earlier section, fears about protecting “authentic” French identity have driven policies concerning North Africans and immigration for decades. “Western,” if not Christian values about family, work, and society serve as a baseline for defining that identity, even though it has often been hotly contested within France itself.81 In her book, Scott begins by asking, why so much attention on the headscarf in particular? She points out that the small number of women who actually wear a headscarf in France does not merit the intense reaction of the intellectuals, politicians, and feminists who supported the ban.82 There have been no laws regulating other signs of practicing Islam nor have people raised as much issue with French practices which subordinate women. She suggests that because the headscarf is so visible, it came to represent French views of all Muslims as backwards and radical—views which reach back to the late 1800s. Focusing on what they considered extreme oppression of women made it easier to ignore subordination in their own system and maintain their status as the “civilizer.” Scott argues that the headscarf with its religious connotations functions as a symbol of Muslims’ “inferiority” and the need to continue the mission civilisatrice.

Equating “religious” with “backwards” may single out Muslims now, but that is perhaps because now they are the most visible religious group in France. The French concept of laïcité (secularism) itself extends much further back in French history than the colonial era. During the Enlightenment and Revolutionary periods, anger at clerical domination of the absolutist monarchy as well as new philosophies privileging reason over faith led to a complete revolt

81 For more on divisions within “French” national identity and its relation to imperialism see Herman Lebovics, Bringing Empire Back Home, (Durham: Duke University, 2004)
against church influence in state affairs. According to Scott, a version of secularism developed which meant protecting the individual from religion, not protecting religion from the state. Today, this supplies lawmakers with precedent to forbid “conspicuous” religious symbols. At the same time, twin and sometimes contradictory ideologies developed that would significantly shape French political and cultural life for generations. The revolutionaries wrote their “Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen,” to protect individual liberty, but they framed it “in abstract and universal terms, suggesting that the principles it contained were valid not only in France but throughout the world.”83 This tension between individualism and universalism led the government to champion individual rights, but only if those individuals conformed to the “national” culture the leaders created. During the Third Republic (1870-1914), laws would be set in place which both confirmed individual liberty and emphasized national unity. The “Ferry laws” prioritized loyalty to the state over loyalty to any other institution, in particular the Catholic Church. Their creators wanted a public school system which banned religious education and sought to indoctrinate French children with republican ideology.84 Over time, insistence on the universalism of French Republican and secular values fueled much of the government’s activity in North Africa and later its policies towards immigrants and their children. The headscarf ban is simply a more recent expression, and spills into the lives of students who came to France for opportunity and may or may not decide to stay.

Republican individualism and universalism drove the ban, but, as Scott points out, were simultaneously contradicted by it. Proponents of the ban described the veil as an imposition of Islam because to them no woman would wear a veil voluntarily—in a French context, it simply

84 Ibid, 142
makes no sense.\textsuperscript{85} However, Scott insists again and again that many girls chose to wear the scarf as a personal, religious conviction, not a mandate from a radical Muslim family. Scott emphasizes that this ban, which was meant to create an ideal, homogenous nation (by removing that which made some girls different), actually contributed to the rift between North African Muslims and native French. For example, girls who put the scarf back on after school are constantly reminded that France legally rejects a significant part of their identity. The ban created so much tension around the idea of the “veil” that even women legally allowed to wear it, such as Mona, face discrimination or at least disapproval in other areas of life. The law, like those passed regarding immigrants in the twenties, or “Muslim Europeans” in the forties, narrowly defined the Muslim community and set it up in opposition to a superior, white, French one. This apparently unsolvable dichotomy between “French” and “Muslim” (which in France can often be synonymous with “Arab”) affects even those students who have no desire to become French. For those who do wish to pursue a life in France, it potentially causes greater problems.

The importance of religion in French policy and perceptions of North Africans is proportional to its prominence in the lives of many Maghrebis and even this importance has historical roots. Arab invaders introduced Islam to the region in the seventh century and its importance grew over time, eventually becoming a significant dividing line between colonizers and colonized. Shephard examines twentieth-century legal documents and reports concerning Algeria and its inhabitants to show how legal documents before and after 1962 shaped opinions about relations between France and Algeria. Even though until 1962 all non-Europeans living in Algeria were technically French subjects, there was a consistent distinction made between “French Europeans,” “French Muslims,” and “Jews.” A short time later, liberation and national

\textsuperscript{85} Scott, 164
movements in North Africa relied heavily on religion to legitimize their cause and unite the people. Willis states:

In all three countries, Islam became an important rallying cry for the nationalist organizations…Islam has historically always played a central role in Maghrebi politics: most notably in legitimizing political authority and activism. In this sense the importance given to Islam should not be surprising. The fact that nationalism was articulating opposition to rule by European non-Muslims further strengthened this tendency. Moreover, the fact that colonial authorities themselves increasingly used religion (rather than the more complex markers of ethnicity and language) to differentiate and discriminate the settlers from the native population—referring to the latter as ‘Muslims’—added further to this.  

All three countries used Islam to rally people to fight for independence, and all three continued to use Islam as an identifying feature of their post-independence states. The importance of religion is not lost on the students now coming to France from North Africa; rather it is highlighted by them. Whether or not they know the historical roots of the conflict, they feel that their religion is what separates them most from the French. It is important to see that the tension that caused some students to state “religion” as a one-word answer to why they think some French are racist, goes back to the colonial era, and that the continual importance of Islam in the students’ daily lives (as evidenced by their responses and by my own experiences living with them) has been shaped by the importance of Islam in their nations’ histories. These histories are marked by exploitation, racism, torture, discrimination, and now, terrorism. Even though trying to “colonize the native” is passé, lingering attitudes of cultural superiority (when coupled

86 Willis, Loc 542
with more recent fear of Islam) causes students like Mona and Ahmed to feel uncomfortable expressing their faith in France.

Conclusion

Studying abroad can be nerve-wracking, and choosing to obtain a degree of some sort in a foreign country is an even bigger and potentially scarier step into the unknown. But for a French major traveling from the U.S. to France in Spring 2015, nerves were well concealed under the excitement of discovering a romanticized French culture and cuisine. The move is jarring, but one heads across the ocean assured of being at least civilly treated, if not welcomed with open arms. There may be significant differences between French and American culture but an American student may avoid confrontation using discretion and knowledge of the language and she shares a recent history with her French counterparts as citizens of two rich, more powerful nations in the world. Despite fears about “Americanization” (a fear that parallels anxiety about “Arab” culture today), the historical relationship between France and the U.S. has been one of reciprocal aid and cultural sharing.

Recent scholarship tends to emphasize the divergences in this relationship, focusing on the post-World War II “Americanization” of France as an uneven distribution of cultural power between the longtime allies. Stereotypically, one thinks of a culturally “superior” Frenchman looking down on American tourists and visitors while simultaneously feeling threatened by them. Whitney Walton calls into the question this standard narrative of American-French student exchanges in her book, Internationalism, National Identities and Study Abroad: “instead of Americanization and anti-Americanization as the dominant modes of Franco-American cultural relations, this history of study abroad narrates a relationship between equals, in which curiosity and fascination undergo reality checks, and lived experience transforms stereotypes into nuanced
According to her, the relationships between American students and France and French students and America was and is one of mutual sharing, learning, “reassessing one’s national identity, and creating a more cosmopolitan self.” This “cosmopolitan” exchange of ideas extended beyond the realm of student exchanges to include other spheres such as tourism. Vanessa R. Schwartz demonstrates how the French and American film industries of the fifties and sixties also reflect a mutual, cultural fascination and exchange. Current programs such as The University of Akron’s regular teacher and student exchanges with the Université du Maine testify to a continuance of that mutual fascination. On the other hand, there is little to no reciprocity between France and the Maghreb, whether in the flow of students or the exchange of cultural ideas. Because of this, students coming from the Maghreb carry the status of “foreign student” with a different weight. While Americans, Germans, Italians, Koreans, and others usually explore France for six months to a year, most likely with few problems beyond the usual culture shock, Maghrebes studying in France come half-expecting to stay and experience ample misunderstandings and even outright racism.

While not representative of all North African students in France, the stories of this group reflect a history of inequality that continues into the present. Although many of these students engaged in international student life, I found that they do not quite fit usual Western or American molds for study-abroad students or even into the broader category of international students. I define study abroad as a short-term stay (five weeks to a year) for academic credit at the home institution, while an international student is pursuing a degree on a long-stay visa or residence

88 Ibid, 3
Of the students in this study, all but one fall under the category of international student, but I knew several in France who only came for 2-3 months to conduct post-graduate research. In her book, *The Other Americans in Paris*, Nancy Green calls for a reexamination of who comprised the American contingent in Paris during the early twentieth century. Here I have tried to shed light on an unexamined group of international students: the children of the colonized studying *chez* the former colonizer. They do not identify with the second-generation immigrant fight to be recognized as fully French, nor do they have any personal memories of oppression with which to come to terms. In the case of my demographic, they hardly seem to have inherited stories from parents and grandparents about the horrors or inconveniences of colonialism. Rather than coming to experience a new language or culture, these students said they came *because* of language and culture and for better educational and occupational opportunities. The latter may be true of any student group from a developing country, but Abdullah’s “link” and the complex emotional and intellectual responses of these students to racism can only be read in light of history. Studies on international students find that feelings of isolation, culture clashes and misunderstandings are normal, and my purpose here is not to diagnose these students with some latent cultural inferiority complex brought on by a colonialism which ended sixty years ago. At the same time, many of the students did mention a “colonial past” without prompting, and they often attributed feelings of rejection to their culture or religion specifically, not to some broad French xenophobia. At the end of the day, when they leave the campus (and sometimes whilst on it) they experience France more like an unwanted immigrant than as a foreign student. No matter how unwelcomed a U.S. student feels in France, he or she will never have to come to terms with

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91 David Potts and Aleece Sisson, “Internationalizing the International: International Students who Study Abroad,” (Ann Arbor: Michigan State University, 2013), 3
http://studyabroad.isp.msu.edu/research/Potts_Sisson%202013_Internationalizing%20the%20International.pdf
the fact that this people occupied and oppressed their own in the past and still continues to represent the best opportunity for a globally competitive education.

Looking at the international student experience in a historical context allows for a greater understanding of their experience and can allow for more effective cross-cultural interactions. It also presents a wonderful opportunity for the historian or sociologist to better understand how world-shaping events such as colonialism and decolonization continue to influence this generation of students, workers and travelers. Whether it is Pakistani and Indian students in Britain, African Americans in the United States or North and West Africans in France, singling out students from a formerly colonized group who pursue higher education from their historical oppressors offers a unique vision of those oppressors and a different lens through which to view history.

Appendix A: Biographies

Abdullah is a 24 year old in his second year of Masters (called M2 in France) studying American Literature at the Université du Maine. He had been in France one year at the time of our interview and holds a Bachelor degree in Psychology and a Masters in English from Algeria. While he learned some French in elementary school, he spoke better English, because he did not seriously began studying French until he arrived in Le Mans. Nonetheless, he spoke freely and never had any problems understanding or being understood. He wants to obtain his degree and find work in the Gulf Countries or Canada before one day returning to Algeria. Our interviews were conducted over skype in French and English.

Ahmed is also from Algeria, but strongly identifies as Berber in culture and language rather than Arabic. He had recently graduated from the Université du Maine with his MBA and was living
and working in Paris when we spoke over skype. At this point he plans to stay. Because his father and brothers live in Paris, he was very familiar with France but had only been living there a little over a year. Thanks to his French education, he spoke almost like a native, but still had a slight accent.

Raina spent 10 weeks at the Université du Maine in 2015 doing research for her doctoral thesis in Biology and Biotechnology. She is 30, unmarried and obtained her Master’s in Tunisia in 2010. She spoke excellent French, since she has been studying it since age 7 as her second language. Although she filled out the questionnaire, I became close with her during her stay in France and had many conversations with her about Tunisian culture.

Mona is unique in the sample in that she has spent most of her life in France. Born in Morocco, her parents moved to France for better work opportunities when she was a baby. She is 21 years old and in her last year of License (or L3—the French equivalent of a Senior) at the Université du Maine studying engineering. She also identifies most with the Berber culture and although she grew up in France, still holds only Moroccan nationality. She is working on her English and eventually wants to complete a PhD in England. Mona also became a friend during my stay, although her schedule prevented us from spending much time together.

Mohamed is also in L3 at the Université du Maine studying mechanical engineering. He arrived in 2014 from Morocco to attain his License. He is 21 and has been studying French since primary school. He is very active on the campus and with other international students, working at reception in the cité universitaire (dorms), organizing soccer tournaments and planning soirées to encourage interaction between French and international students. Mohamed was in the larger circle of friends with whom I spent most of my time in France.
Nora has been in France since 2011 and is now working on her master’s in business at the Université du Maine. She recently married a relative from Morocco who also lives in France and plans to stay. She is 23 and has been speaking French for 16 years. I met Nora during my first week in Le Mans and she helped me during the beginning of my stay. However I did not see her often after the first few weeks because of her schedule.

Aisha is from Algeria, considers herself to be Berber and is in M1 studying finance in Paris. She has been in France for a year, but learned the language before coming. She is a friend of Ahmed who was gracious enough to fill out my questionnaire.

Maram is Algerian and is working on her doctor’s degree in business administration in Paris. She has been in France for a little more than a year and is also a friend of Ahmed. She also learned French at home and had been a tourist several times before coming to study, which she acknowledged is a very different experience. She plans to stay in French for two years.

Bahja came to France in 2014 to study entrepreneurial dynamics and strategic innovation in Paris. She learned French in Algeria and considers herself Berber. She wants to stay a long time.

Tamir has been in France for two years and plans to stay long term. He is Algerian and Berber and also grew up learning French. He is in M2 for finance and accounting and lives in St. Denis (a neighborhood in Paris where many Algerians live) with his wife.

Hisham is in M2 at the Université du Maine studying environmental toxicology. He had only been in France for three months at the time of filling out the questionnaire and said he’s been studying French the same amount of time. He identifies as both Arab and Berber and plans to stay for two years to obtain his degree.
Lais had been in France 4 months at the time of filling out the questionnaire but studied French for 14 years in Algeria. He is a master’s in architecture at the Université du Maine. Like Hisham, he identifies as Berber and plans to stay for two years in France for his degree.

Appendix B: Questionnaire

The questionnaire went through many drafts as I spoke with different students and found new ways of coming at the questions. As my formal questionnaire evolved, I asked several students supplemental questions over email if they had missed a question or if they had not responded with enough detail. This version is the final draft and represents in essence what I asked everyone, including those with whom I conducted oral interviews.

QUESTIONNAIRE | Les étudiants maghrébins au Mans

Les réponses à ce questionnaire me permettront de collecter les données nécessaires à ma rédaction finale pour ma License aux États-Unis. Si vous préfériez de rester anonyme, il ne faut pas inclure votre nom/prénom. Même si vous incluez vos identifiants, je ne vais utiliser que des prénoms dans la présentation de la recherche.

Nom, Prénom :

Spécialité:

Encerclez la bonne réponse. Si vous répondez électroniquement, s’il vous plaît, tapez vos réponses en bleu.

Quelle est votre nationalité?

Possédez-vous la double nationalité?
Votre père vient-il de quel pays?

Votre mère vient-elle de quel pays?

Vous vous identifiez LE PLUS avec quelle culture (langue, traditions, valeurs, cuisine, arts, histoire)?

Si vous vous identifiez avec la culture d’un ou plus d’autre pays, indiquez le(s)quel(s):

Est-ce que vous avez appris la langue française avant de venir en France?

Si oui, vous parlez français depuis combien de temps?

Vous habitez/habitez quelle ville pendant votre séjour en France?

Vous êtes en France depuis/vous avez resté en France pour combien de temps?

Si vous n’avez pas encore quitté la France, tu comptes à rester pour combien de temps?

Pourquoi est-ce que vous avez décidé de venir en France?

Est-ce que vous voulez rester en France? Ou peut-être habiter dans un autre pays?

_En répondant aux questions suivantes, vous pouvez écrire autant que vous voulez. J’apprécierais si vous essayerais d’être aussi honnête et franc que possible. S’il vous plaît, tapez vos réponses en bleu._

Comment est-ce que vous trouvez les français et la culture française?

Ils étaient quoi vos idées sur les français avant de venir? D’où provenaient ces idées?

Est-ce qu’elles étaient confirmées ou pas?
À vous, c’est quoi la plus grande différence entre votre culture et la culture française?

C’est quoi la différence le plus difficile à laquelle vous deviez vous ajuster?

Quand vous êtes arrivé, comment étiez-vous vous adapté à la “culture shock”?

Est-ce que vous avez pour la plupart les amis d’origine maghrébine, européenne ou autre?

Quelles étaient vos expectatations de votre vie en France? (Sur les gens, la culture, l’éducation, la situation des immigres/étudiants étrangers) Comment est-ce que ces expectatations étaient-elles réalisées?

Qu’est-ce que vous pensiez à la France avant de venir? Était-ce que ça a changé? Comment?

On parle dans la presse du racisme en France contre les Arabes/musulmans. Est-ce que vous avez jamais éprouvé des expériences de racisme en France (même si ce n’était pas contre vous)? Si oui, la-décrivez.

À votre avis, pourquoi quelques français sont-ils racistes ?

À votre avis, comment votre culture est-elle vue par les français?

Trouvez-vous que votre expérience en France a changé vos perceptions de votre pays? De vous-même?

Quelle était la réaction de votre famille et vos amis quand vous avez décidé d’aller en France pour les études ?

À votre avis, pourquoi est-ce que les jeunes de votre pays choisissent la France pour faire les études ?
C’est normal pour un étudiant étranger de se sentir différent ou sans place dans le nouveau environnement. Est-ce que vous vous êtes senti des sentiments de différence ou d’exclusion ou de mal à l’aise spécifiquement à cause de l’histoire entre ton pays et la France (par exemple, dans vos relations avec les profs ou les autres étudiants) ?

Comment trouvez-vous que vous vous situez dans l’histoire de l’immigration Nord-Africaine vers la France ? Est-ce que vous vous voyez comme immigré ou comme étudiant étrangère ?

Comment pensez-les français vous-voient ?

J’accepte qu’une partie ou la totalité de mes réponses soient utilisée dans la présentation finale de cette recherche:

Veuillez envoyer les réponses à hmu3@zips.uakron.edu

Je vous remercie de votre participation.

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