

INTRODUCTION

A White Republic?

Whites and Whiteness in France

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Abstract: France is an overwhelmingly majority-White nation. Yet the French majority is reluctant to identify as White, and French social science has tended to eschew Whiteness as an object of inquiry. Inspired by critical race theory and critical Whiteness studies, this interdisciplinary special issue offers a new look at White identities in France. It does so not to recenter Whiteness by giving it prominence, but to expose and critique White dominance. This introduction examines the global and local dimensions of Whiteness, before identifying three salient dimensions of its French version: the ideology of the race-blind universalist republic; the past and present practice of French colonialism, slavery, and rule across overseas territories; and the racialization of people of Muslim or North African backgrounds as non-White.

Keywords: critical race theory, Islamophobia, France, overseas, racialization, republican universalism, Whiteness, White supremacy

In June of 2018, in a cramped and hot room of the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) in Paris, we launched a day-long workshop titled “The White Condition: Reflection on a French Majority” (*La Condition blanche: Réflexion sur une majorité française*).¹ That morning, we were thrilled to see that dozens of people, many of whom appeared to be students and junior scholars, were in attendance. We were surprised by the large turnout because we had deliberately refrained from advertising the event beyond a narrow circle of friends and colleagues for fear of stirring up controversy. Though critical race theory and critical Whiteness studies have made forays into French academia, they remain marginal forms of inquiry in a country in which many, including a significant por-



tion of social scientists, deny the validity of thinking about race and racial identity. In recent years, antiracist race and gender scholars have been accused of racism, and some of their events have been canceled as a result.² We were also nervous because on the day before the workshop we had found out that we were the target of a disparaging post on a prominent alt-right, racist, and anti-LGBTQ+ website boasting that it is the most widely read by “young proud Whites” (*jeunes blancs décomplexés*). Entitled “Paris: The Jewish Terrorists Cohen and Mazouz of the EHESS Theorize Racial War against Whites,” the post featured our headshots adorned with yellow star badges and the German word for Jew written in Hebrew style. Among other inflammatory statements, the piece claimed that we “over-racialized non-Indigenous people while accusing Whites of being responsible” for this racialization, and that we intended to “erase White humanity from history.”

On one level, the attack was upsetting and terrifying. On another level, it was a boon, as it made obvious the relevance and urgency of thinking about race in the French context and, particularly, of interrogating White supremacy—the sociopolitical and economic system of domination based on racial categories that benefits those defined and perceived as White. The current rise of White identity politics and White nationalism in France and elsewhere make it pressing to critically examine the ways in which Whiteness underlies French culture, law, politics, and society. Simultaneously, the growing resonance of the Black Lives Matter movement in France is fueling a transnational counter-mobilization with scholars and activists seeking to move the conversation around racial justice forward.

France is a majority-White nation. According to a 2016 Ipsos phone survey led and financed by the Défenseur des droits (France’s equality and antidiscrimination agency) based on a sample of 5,117 residents, 70.7 percent of the respondents reported that they considered themselves as exclusively White and 75.2 percent reported that they were perceived by others as exclusively White.³ Yet, outside of certain settings, such as France’s overseas regions, the French majority is reluctant to identify as White. French social science itself has tended to eschew Whiteness as an object of inquiry, except in specific contexts such as that of the descendants of French slave-owning colonists in the Caribbean, where *blanc* (“White”) has long been an accepted category in language and culture.⁴ Studies depicting racism as the action of deviant and isolated individuals have been applauded by the academic orthodoxy. By contrast, scholarship framing race and racialization as a system of subordination grounded in White supremacy is regularly blamed for (re-)producing the racialization of social relations.⁵

Against this backdrop, it is all the more difficult to examine Whiteness. Yet, as the derogatory post about our workshop at EHESS made clear,

Whiteness has been reclaimed as a positive racial identity by far-right racist groups whose explicit political agenda is to maintain and further White supremacy. In fact, contemporary identitarianism “is a distinctly French innovation” inspired by French intellectual leaders such as Alain de Benoist and Renaud Camus.⁶ Camus’s idea of “great replacement” (*grand remplacement*), whereby native White Europeans are under a threat of extinction due to reverse colonization by Black and Brown immigrants, is highly influential among far-right groups.⁷ White supremacists have no qualms identifying as White and advocating for increased White power, while some self-identified antiracists continue to deny the relevance of racial categories and of Whiteness in particular.

The French majority’s disinclination to identify as White, and the continued sway of the race-blind ideology of republican universalism, according to which the abstract individual is representative of citizens and the nation, are constitutive of the French version of Whiteness.⁸ If Whiteness is a category of identity that is most useful when its existence is denied, then it is a powerful means of racial control and a powerful way to protect racial advantage.⁹ As Charles Mills has pointed out, the failure to examine White supremacy holds it in place.¹⁰ White supremacy is rendered invisible while other political systems—socialism, capitalism, fascism—are identified and studied. For instance, though French legal institutions have actively created and perpetuated racial hierarchies and oppressions,¹¹ in the past decade, in the name of antiracism and race-blind republicanism, a significant portion of representatives voted to erase the word “race” from all legislation as well as from the Constitution on the grounds that allowing its use perpetuates the notion that race is a biological reality.¹² This initiative was prompted in part by Guadeloupean Victorin Lurel, a socialist deputy from 2002 to 2012, who served as the Minister of Overseas France from 2012 to 2014,¹³ attesting to the complexities of the continued commitment to French republicanism as an ideology that can be seen as alternatively eradicating or reinforcing White dominance.¹⁴

Grounded in Black intellectual traditions, critical Whiteness studies is often said to have emerged in the 1980s in the United States and United Kingdom to designate membership in the racial majority and denounce the social, cultural, and political hegemony to which those who do not belong to this group are confronted with.¹⁵ The central question addressed in this special issue of *French Politics, Culture & Society* is whether and how this concept of Whiteness, developed in an Anglo-American context, can be transposed to the French setting. In 2003, historian Tyler Stovall wrote: “France provides a fascinating and instructive context in which to test Whiteness theory.”¹⁶ Of course, like the rest of race, Whiteness is a fiction, a social construction, which varies based on time and place.¹⁷ At the same

time, we follow Charles Mills, Dorothy Roberts, and other critical race theorists¹⁸ who endorse the notion that race is at heart an evolving political concept created to legitimize subordination, protecting the advantages of some groups at the expense of others. In fact, we believe that the French case study is particularly apt at showing that the notions of race and skin tone, often conflated in public debates, should be decoupled and that race should be conceptualized in relation to other identity traits. As several of the contributions in this volume demonstrate, race is primarily a sociopolitical construct that often has but a loose relationship to phenotype, even though colorism continues to shape social hierarchies.¹⁹

Our primary objective with this special issue is to expose and critique White supremacy in France and French scholarship rather than to recenter Whiteness by giving it prominence.²⁰ In that sense, we subscribe to American philosopher George Yancy's injunction that Whiteness studies should begin with the Black critiques of Whiteness as domination²¹—to which we would add the perspectives on Whiteness of all those who are categorized as non-White. In France, as elsewhere, the direction of the gaze must change from a site monopolized by Whites used to seeing themselves as the center to the counter-gaze of those who identify or are identified as non-White. In that respect, our own backgrounds matter and should be made explicit. Mathilde is a White French-American dual citizen who was raised in several majority-White European countries by middle-class parents who enjoyed significant cultural and social capital. Her belonging to the nation was periodically challenged on account of her Jewish last name, be it by being assumed to be a foreigner or, particularly in the educational context, by being presumed ignorant of dominant (Christian) cultural narratives and norms. On occasion, she has been targeted with anti-Semitic threats or slurs, most recently in connection with her article on the Whiteness of French food included in this journal's issue. Nonetheless, she has moved through the world with a White experience, benefiting from multiple forms of advantages due to her White identity. She is not attempting to recenter herself, claim some form of White exceptionalism, or equate her negative experiences with the experiences of people who do not identify and are not identified as White.²² Sarah is a French-Tunisian dual citizen. She grew up between Tunisia and Europe in a Francophile and secular middle-class family with a Muslim background. Back in Tunisia at age seven, after her early childhood was spent in France and Belgium, she progressively discovered how racialization was playing out, as her fair complexion became an issue—at times praised, and at times used to otherize her. Either way, being light-skinned reinforced her social privilege. Once she moved back to France for college, her Parisian accent, academic credentials, and the combination of her first

and last names—which can be read as either Jewish or Muslim—created confusion. Yet, she was racially ascribed an Arab/Muslim or Maghrebi identity, often facing racism when she mentioned that she was from Tunisia. Some people were astonished to find out that she was Tunisian given her phenotype (“You are still a little European, aren’t you?”—“*Tu es tout de même un peu européenne, non?*”), while others engaged in retrospective racial ascription (“Actually, you do have a type”—“*C’est vrai que tu es typée toi en fait*”). She also encountered racial ascription and everyday racism when applying for French citizenship.²³

This introduction proceeds in four parts. First, it reviews the existing literature and addresses terminological questions around naming Whiteness. Second, it reflects on the global and local dimensions of Whiteness, asking whether French Whiteness exhibits specific characteristics. Third, it zooms in on three particularly salient dimensions of Whiteness in France: the ideology of the race-blind republic; the practice of colonialism, slavery, and rule across overseas territories; and the racialization of people of Muslim confession or North African backgrounds as non-White. Finally, it concludes by calling for further research and presenting the articles published in this special issue.

The Literature

This special issue critically engages with the emerging literature on the formation of White identity in France in light of critical Whiteness studies as it has developed in the Americas, the United Kingdom, and other European countries. Reflections on Whiteness in the humanities and social sciences are neither particularly new nor circumscribed to the Anglo-American context. Frederick Douglass’s 1845 memoir, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, brings to light the toxicity of Whiteness not only to Blacks, but also to Whites themselves, emphasizing the “effect of slavery on the White man.”²⁴ W. E. B. Du Bois concludes his 1899 *The Philadelphia Negro* with a discussion of how Whites perceive and construct Blacks. In later work, Du Bois famously identifies a “public and psychological wage” that Whites have on account of their race.²⁵ Some of the more recent intellectual origins of critical Whiteness studies can be traced back to the French context. In 1952, Frantz Fanon’s *Peau noire, masques blancs* theorized Whiteness as an uninterrogated norm grounding the French colonial hierarchy, famously asserting that “the White is enclosed in his Whiteness.” Four decades later, Toni Morrison prefaced *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* with a reflection on French writer Marie Cardinal’s novel *The Words to Say It*. Morrison uses Cardinal’s

negative symbolic figurations of Blackness to illustrate the pervasive literary tropes that assume the Whiteness of the reader and its unracialized, normative status.²⁶

In the past couple of decades, a rich literature has developed on race and Whiteness in Europe that views these notions from a social constructionist, phenomenological, or existential perspective. National case studies about what it means to be White in a given European country have multiplied.²⁷ Three central themes emerge from this scholarship. First, a number of scholars contend that “eugenics and anti-Semitism have played [a central role] in the construction of Whiteness as it is understood in Europe.”²⁸ Second, as David Theo Goldberg has argued, race and racism tend to be framed either as exceptional, that is, as pertaining to the far right, or as phenomena of the past, as in the Holocaust.²⁹ Finally, as Mathias Möschel puts it, “continental Europe [is said to be] characterised by racial skepticism,”³⁰ the dominant view being that races do not exist and therefore should not be used as categories of political or legal discourse or action.³¹ Each of these points could be critically examined on its own, but for the purpose of this introduction, suffice it to say that the historical construction of Whiteness predates twentieth-century anti-Semitism, having emerged during the modern colonial era and its concomitant creation of Blackness as a tool to subjugate colonized people and justify their violent exploitation.³² Relatedly, the myth of a cultural, racial, and religious homogeneity is central to European nationalism, suggesting that race and racism are pervasive in minds, discourses, and governance.

Since Fanon’s seminal work, a number of social scientists have reflected on Whiteness in France. Starting in the 1970s, sociologist Colette Guillaumin called for the examination of the nonracialized dominant group, rather than continuing with the fixation on racialized minority groups.³³ After the mid-2000s, a growing number of scholars offered accounts of French citizenship as a form of Whiteness, rejecting the dominant race-blind universalist ideology of the republic. This turn could have been due to a variety of factors, including well-known social movements such as the so-called “race riots” of 2005, during which minority youth protested racism, exclusion, and a lack of opportunities, but it could also have been due to the broader recognition of the “racial question,” in particular the “Black condition,” among activists,³⁴ scholars, and civil society following a number of legal and political controversies.³⁵ Particularly salient were the debates on colonialism and slavery that prompted and accompanied the passage of a couple of memory laws. In 1999 French-Guianese socialist deputy Christiane Taubira introduced a statute recognizing slavery as a “crime against humanity,” which was enacted in 2001.³⁶ The law built upon the Afro-Caribbean mobilization around the 150th anniversary of

the abolition of slavery in overseas territories in 1998 that had celebrated abolition but had not focused on the crime, the victims, their suffering, and the question of reparations.³⁷ In early 2005 came a backlash with the passage of a statute requiring school curricula to “recognize the positive role of French presence overseas, especially in North Africa.”³⁸ The provision caused such an uproar that it was soon abrogated.³⁹ That same year, two leading minority-led organizations advocating equal representation were created. In January, a few months before the 2005 “race riots” began, *Les Indigènes de la République* (The Natives of the Republic), a decolonial group that centered on the claims of “the descendants of slaves and African deportees, daughters and sons of the colonized and of immigrants” emerged.⁴⁰ Just days after the protests ended and while the state of emergency was still ongoing, the CRAN (*Conseil représentatif des associations noires de France*), a federation of Black associations that solidified a new form of Black group activism, was created.⁴¹ During this decade of growing minority activism, antidiscrimination law gained significant momentum with the enactment of the European Union’s Race Equality Directive of 2000 and its transposition into French law in successive waves: the culmination of the latter was in 2008 with new causes of action for direct and indirect discrimination.⁴²

As French minorities became more vocal about systemic racism and discrimination, asserting their demands to fulfill universal republican ideals, and contributing to an effort to reshape racial and ethnic categories,⁴³ a White consciousness developed among the majority, be it to condemn the supposed anti-White racism or to denounce White privilege.⁴⁴ On the scholarly side, in 2006, Pap Ndiaye wrote about the racialization of French identity as White, noting that “[b]eing French is being White.”⁴⁵ The same year, Tony Jugé and Michael Perez critiqued the French politics of integration and assimilation, arguing that citizenship was defined by the opposition between Whiteness and otherness.⁴⁶ Horia Kebabza proposed that we rethink the universalist republican ideal as White, all the while conceptualizing Whiteness as a global power relation resting on capitalism.⁴⁷ A few years later, Bastien Bosa voiced his concerns about importing Whiteness, “a racial concept, especially considering that it does not exist in the common sense in France,” in that it would contribute to reifying and naturalizing race, further racializing the world.⁴⁸ By contrast, journalist, writer, and activist Rokhaya Diallo deplored that Whiteness remained unquestioned in French culture and society, highlighting that the “Black question” and “visible minorities” anchored race talk rather than the “White question” and the “invisible majority.”⁴⁹

It was not until 2013 that French critical White studies proper came to the forefront with the publication of two groundbreaking books: *De quelle*

couleur sont les Blancs?, an edited volume by Sylvie Laurent and Thierry Leclère, and *Dans le blanc des yeux*, a monograph by Maxime Cervulle.⁵⁰ Laurent and Leclère's book comprises contributions from and interviews with diverse authors in terms of disciplines, methodologies, and approaches to race, from established scholars in the humanities and the social sciences to public figures and activists, including those who subscribe to race-blind universalism and those who embrace critical race theory. Laurent and Leclère position their project as a critique of racial inequality and privilege, and make the following declaration: "'Being White' in contemporary France is to belong to the majority group. It is to not have to define oneself. It is to not have to respond to the question 'Where do you come from?' Finally, it is most often not knowing that one possesses privileges."⁵¹ *Dans le blanc des yeux* has a narrower focus, concentrating on the representation of Whiteness in the French media. Cervulle frames his intervention as a critique of Whiteness as racial dominance, reversing the usual perspective on "diversity" by interrogating White identity instead of non-White identities. Since 2013, a handful of other studies on Whiteness in France have been published, in particular Jean Beaman's investigation of North Africans racialized as non-White, Chong Bretillon's research on White rappers, Angéline Escafré-Dublet's analysis of the Whiteness of cultural policy, and Yumiko Tahata's examination of the racialization of French identity in legislative debates.⁵²

Building upon these emerging French Whiteness studies, this special issue addresses the formation of White identities, ideologies, and cultural practices that buttress White supremacy. Our aim is to make connections between the history of French imperialism and present-day inequalities and oppressions by emphasizing the power relations inherent in a racial hierarchy in which Whiteness is hegemonic. Terminology is important, especially in a country in which race tends to be unnamed or euphemized, the French preferring to speak of culture, ethnicity, and origin instead of race, even if these categories act "in a racializing way,"⁵³ essentializing the supposed otherness of groups defined as different and inferior. For instance, many continue to use the English word "Black" instead of the French *Noir* to designate Afro-descendants.⁵⁴ The phrase *Français de souche* (literally, "of French stump or root") is a common way to name Whites.

The expression *minorités visibles* ("visible minorities") designates non-Whites, suggesting that, conversely, Whiteness is invisible. In the media, the term *racisé(e)* ("racialized") is a popular way to designate non-Whites, raising the question of whether Whites themselves are thought to escape race. This usage of the participle *racisé(e)* was coined by antiracist social scientists such as Colette Guillaumin to designate the production of race by the dominant group so as to subordinate nondominant groups. The

contemporary French language thus has two verbs (and associated participles, adjectives, and nouns) to denote racial formation: *racialiser* and *raciser*. The first (*racialiser*) refers to any social process that produces racial hierarchies, including groups that benefit and groups that are harmed—thus Whites as just as *racialisés* as other racial groups. The second (*raciser*) specifically names the inferiorization of one group by another according to a racial logic—thus Whites are by definition not *racisés*. The distinction between these two notions is often lost in the media and general public uses of the term *racisé(e)*.

We titled our 2018 workshop “The White Condition: Reflection on a French Majority” as a tribute to Pap Ndiaye’s groundbreaking 2008 book, *La Condition noire: Essai sur une minorité française* (*The Black Condition: Essay on a French Minority*), the first to analyze Blacks as a French minority. Ndiaye explained that by “condition” he meant a social situation which is neither that of a class, state, caste, or community, but rather one of a minority whose members have in common the experience of being regarded as Black. Relatedly, we used the expression “White condition” to emphasize the social conditions that enable Whiteness to be the dominant racial identity—the French majority having in common the experience of being regarded as White and benefiting from a host of advantages deriving from this identity, even if there are gradations of Whiteness, as some people or groups are considered Whiter than others based on factors such as class, immigration status, and religion. We appreciate that the word “condition” evokes a practice of domination, reminiscent of its etymology as a hierarchical mode of being, a rank, or state with respect to ordered society. In this special issue, however, we use “Whiteness” (*blanchité*) instead of “White condition,” as Whiteness is the consecrated term among critical race scholars and Whiteness theorists.⁵⁵ Whiteness highlights that we bring a critical race perspective to the study of race in France, rejecting analyses that downplay the existence of White domination.

Global and Local Whiteness

A global or comparative approach to critical race theory requires that we ask whether race in general and Whiteness in particular have equivalent meanings across different sociohistorical contexts. There are arguments to be made on both sides. On the one hand, race knows no borders, as a concept used throughout the world to structure social and political relations. Sociologist Melissa Weiner thus calls for a global approach to critical race theory that examines “the power of a dominant racial group to shape racial identities, knowledges, ideologies, and thus, life chances and expe-

riences of an oppressed racial group through coercion, violence and ideology.”⁵⁶ Throughout the history of the modern world, groups that have come to be known as “White” have tended to dominate much of the rest of the world through imperial policies and racist paradigms. Accordingly, Michelle Christian’s Global Critical Race and Racism (GCRR) framework maintains that “deep and malleable global Whiteness” has been upheld through macro-, meso-, and micro-practices that link modern geographies to contemporary global racial hierarchy.⁵⁷ In this view, Whiteness is global and the lived experiences of Whites as opposed to non-Whites in majority-White countries are comparable. Even without generalizing on the global level, there is a case to be made in favor of thinking about Whiteness beyond the narrow frame of the nation-state, which is itself a political ideal in part founded on race. In his essay “Black Is a Country,” Kehinde Andrews calls for a transnational approach to race, given that racism knows no borders when race studies tend to be circumscribed by countries. He calls “methodological nationalism” the tendency to frame examinations of race around the nation-state, arguing that the lived experience of Blacks in England is more similar to that of Blacks in the United States than it is to that of Asians in England.⁵⁸ The question can be raised whether the argument applies to other majority-White countries such as France and to other racialized minority groups such as French Arabs/Muslims and Roma.

On the other hand, the status of race as an idea across time and space has proven to be fluctuating and ephemeral. There is no one single, comprehensive, or unified grand theory of race. More damningly, thinking about Whiteness globally may perpetuate Americentric and Eurocentric models of race and the paradigm of White supremacy. We do not have an unquestioned faith in “traveling theory” for mapping racial formation in France and elsewhere. As Edward Said famously argued, the risk of moving ideas and theories from one place to another, particularly when they migrate to the Western European context, is that they might “shed [their] insurrectionary force” and become “tamed and domesticated somewhat.”⁵⁹ Interestingly, Said chose France as his central example of a destination country for traveling theory. He scrutinized the adaptation of Hungarian philosopher György Lukacs’s radical and insurrectionary critique of capitalism by French scholar Lucien Goldmann in his research on Blaise Pascal and Jean Racine and the notion of reification.⁶⁰ Similarly, do we run the risk of impoverishing and dulling critical race theory and critical Whiteness studies by applying them to the French context? Or conversely, will we miss or flatten the specificities of French Whiteness by using a critical Whiteness theory lens? One of the goals of the emerging field of comparative sociology of race and ethnicity (CSRE) is to decenter race studies

away from concepts derived from the American experience. Kazuko Suzuki, for instance, challenges the assumption that “race and its intertwined concept of ethnicity are primarily or originally U.S.- or Western-grounded phenomena,” urging “for more studies of race and ethnicity that are not limited by this dominance of U.S.-based perspectives or by those that privilege Western contexts such as Europe.”⁶¹ From that perspective, studies of racialization should focus on the processes by which a state or group racializes itself and others.

We do not see these two approaches as mutually exclusive. As Leith Mullings has written, “racial systems are simultaneously national and international projects.”⁶² White supremacy is global, but it also manifests itself uniquely in various national and subnational contexts. Racial categories are not static, but subject to multiple adjustments and negotiations tied to place and time, justifying the inquiry into whether there are French forms of Whiteness, but also into whether there are French versions of Asianness, Arabness or Muslimness, Blackness, Jewishness, Romaness, and other minority identities. Hence, we ask these questions: How does one become White in France? Does Whiteness as a form of power manifest itself though means that are comparable or similar to those found in other majority-White countries? Can we think about Whiteness in France without connecting it to global White supremacy? To begin to answer these questions, the next section identifies some of the most striking dimensions of Whiteness in the French context.

Salient Dimensions of French Whiteness

Republican Universalism as Whiteness

The concept of Whiteness is perceived as a threat to the French Republic as understood by (predominantly White) French elites, that is, as a community of citizens stripped of any identity markers along the axes of race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and gender identity and expression, among others.⁶³ This abstraction from social attributes purportedly allows individuals to emancipate themselves from group memberships, be they chosen, inherited, or assigned, in a way that furthers national cohesion. There are no Arabs, Asians, Blacks, Roma, or Whites in France. Everyone is expected to be an unhyphenated citizen. The official “philosophy of integration” has focused on keeping racial, ethnic, and religious differences in the private sphere.⁶⁴ Race is absent from official discourse as a category of analysis, and the census does not collect racial and ethnic data.⁶⁵ Even for research, advocacy, and litigation purposes, the gathering of ethnic and racial data is highly restricted.⁶⁶ The ban on the collection

of so-called “ethnic data” (*statistiques ethniques*) is an essential component of French Whiteness, as it prevents the government and civil society from using their knowledge of racial inequalities and oppression toward redistributive ends. In their 2014 study, the CRAN and *République et Diversité* documented the municipal “apartheid” that prevails, revealing that all the mayors of the fifty largest French cities were White and only 9 percent of deputy mayors were non-White.⁶⁷ Even policies explicitly directed at promoting diversity are imbued with the Whiteness as a universalist frame. For instance, Laure Bereni and Camille Noûs’s investigation of diversity managers in the private sector reveals the tendency to hire Whites to run diversity programs so as to perform nonracism and deny the racial dimension of their diversity deficit.⁶⁸

Frenchness is often conflated with Whiteness. As Sarah Mazouz showed in her book *La République et ses autres*, the other is always the odd one, the distinctive one, when Whites continue to be the reference, the immutable, the norm that does not need to interrogate its own oddness and distinctiveness. Pierre Tevanian thus writes: “To be White is to be brought up in the idea that you are not dominant, that you are just like everybody else, that you live in a generally egalitarian society, that your success is solely the result of your talents and personal efforts.”⁶⁹ In theory, the very idea of Whiteness as a distinct racial identity stands in contradiction with the French republican model. But this model itself is racialized and could be analyzed as “a kind of Whiteness,”⁷⁰ as Tyler Stovall suggests, and as a strategy to maintain White supremacy. In his 1950 *Discourse on Colonialism*, Aimé Césaire connects France’s universalist aspiration to the fear of dilution of Whiteness through interracial unions and to the biological foundation of the nation.⁷¹ Far from preempting or eradicating racism, race-blind universalism is a convenient weapon for the dominant group to obfuscate its racial advantages. At heart, this ideology assumes that values primarily held by Whites are normal and widely shared. It may be precisely because republican universalism and race-blindness have an anti-egalitarian potential that they have been instrumentalized to preserve the status quo.

Slavery, Colonization, and Neo-Colonies Overseas

The construction of Whiteness has been informed by France’s history of slavery and colonialism, which were justified by racial hierarchies. As Françoise Vergès has emphasized, slavery was the matrix of colonization, a laboratory to experiment with racialized regimes of oppression.⁷² Crystal Fleming reinforces this point with her analysis of the French expressions

for the slave trade—*traite des noirs* and *traite négrière*. She dubs “asymmetric racialization” the unequal recognition that racializes the victims of slavery without mentioning or racializing the authors of the crime, making Whiteness an unmarked category.⁷³ If the theory of White superiority was long established in French thought,⁷⁴ at the end of the eighteenth century it became a central mantra of political and social life with the spread of colonization and its *mission civilisatrice* narrative. The supposed racial superiority of the nation was advanced to legitimize what was presented as a humanitarian duty to subjugate other peoples. As early as the French Revolution, Vergès points out, the status of French citizenship became associated with Whiteness, as citizens were typically White while subjects tended to be Asian, Black, and Brown.⁷⁵ Citizenship remained race-based until the so-called “decolonization period” and further, as the notion of who is granted the status of being White has been periodically renegotiated. In his examination of colonial labor during the interwar period, Stovall argues that the distinction between White citizens and non-White colonial subjects solidified French identity as White identity.⁷⁶ Throughout the twentieth century, immigration laws and policies were crucial in shaping Whiteness, as the strategy of *immigration convoitée* (“favored immigration”) encouraged the settling of immigrants perceived as White, such as Belgians, Italians, Poles, and Spaniards, at the expense of Algerians.⁷⁷

The bifurcation between the mainland and the colonies whereby subjects were frequently referred to in racial terms whereas citizens, assumed to be White and male, were presented as raceless, persisted into the post-colonial state.⁷⁸ The mainland is characterized by a predominantly White society. By contrast, overseas regions are marked by racially diverse populations in which Whites are in the minority.⁷⁹ If many Whites are uncomfortable thinking of themselves as White on the mainland, a common experience for those who move overseas is to suddenly come to see Whiteness as relevant when they find themselves in the statistical minority.⁸⁰ The law condones this racial exceptionalism overseas, as the collection of racial and ethnic data is authorized in some overseas territories such as New Caledonia by derogation to the rules in force on the mainland and the overseas *départements* and regions.⁸¹ In other words, if the mainland knows no races, the government accepts racial distinctions as relevant in territories that are otherized.

The supposed dualism between mainland and overseas may explain in part the success and longevity of the universalist republican dogma. The mainland has long been portrayed as a land of equality, liberty, and fraternity that exteriorized its dark side in the colonies. The false idea remains widespread that slavery and state racism never existed in the mainland, being relegated to overseas regions.⁸² The view was that what

occurred in the colonies stayed in the colonies.⁸³ Often cited are the facts that enslaved people were supposed to gain freedom when they touched ground on the mainland and that the difference in status imposed on French Muslims in Algeria did not hold once they settled on the mainland.⁸⁴ Yet, the idea that mainland France and its colonies are separate spaces with separate histories is increasingly resisted in scholarship. An essential dimension of French history took place and continues to unfold overseas. The neglect of race relations on the mainland is a formative part of French political identity as a republic in which imperialism is understood as taking place elsewhere when internal colonialism—understood as racial subordination within the nation-state rooted in the legacies of conquest and colonialism—is alive and well. Thinking of colonialism as something that takes place elsewhere also goes hand in hand with thinking about it as something of the past—a chapter that was closed for good with the undoing of the world’s empires during the so-called “decolonization period,” rather than an ongoing system that is perpetuated in the here and now.

Whiteness and Islamophobia

People from a wide variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds are treated as belonging to a collective unit, differentiable from the larger society, under the composite identity of Arab/Muslim or Maghrebi. As a result of the massive migration of North African groups to France throughout the second half of the twentieth century, coupled with the aftermath of 9/11, the racialization of these populations must be considered as one of the central contemporary issues of racial formation in France. There is a precedent for treating a religious group as a racial group—Jews—and to regard its members as White or non-White depending on the circumstances.⁸⁵ But these days, French Arabs/Muslims are the most numerous minority group in France. In 2017, a Pew report estimated that as of 2016 France counts 5.7 million Muslims, representing 8.8 percent of the population.⁸⁶ The enormous attention paid to the headscarf and burqa ban controversies signals the importance of this composite racial-religious identity as a counterpoint, or anti-identity, against which Whiteness is constructed. Horia Kebabza noted in 2006 that “the question of the headscarf functions in certain situations as a system for assigning, closer to the idea of race than a spiritual conception.”⁸⁷

The public and legal debates operate under the paradigm of color-blindness, secularism, and universalism, yet the systematic targeting of Islamic practices, from the headscarf to halal food, betrays its xenopho-

bic and racist underpinnings. Universalist attempts to deracialize Islamophobia, denying that Muslims are part of a racial or ethnic category and are victims of racism as Muslims, abound. Islam is framed as a category of choice, rather than an ascription, removing those who are identified as Muslims from the status of victims. Yet, no other group is reduced to its presumed religious identity even if several may have stronger ties to their religious traditions than many French of Muslim backgrounds.⁸⁸ Arguably, this phenomenon is not distinctively French, but more broadly European, and perhaps even global, as it manifests itself in other majority-White nations that comprise substantial Muslim, North African, and/or Middle Eastern communities. In Europe, “it was the process of European integration and the search for a common European identity, supposedly grounded on characteristically European values, that first made evident the common Muslim non-European identity of the diverse immigrant groups residing in various European countries.”⁸⁹

In France, the Arab/Muslim presence has long been unwelcome and the target of blame and violence. It has reemerged under the form of a national identity crisis and the supposed clash of civilizations in the post-Cold War era. In their comparative work on the trajectory of Islam in France and the United States, Juliette Galonnier and Solène Brun argue that Islam is rendered a subaltern identity, construed as external to the majority group, or even to the nation itself.⁹⁰ However, while in the United States Islam is not central to the definition of Whiteness, it is increasingly so in France, where Whiteness has been recast in contrast to Muslimness.⁹¹ In her study of race talk among French legislators, Yumiko Tahata notes that in the 1981–1993 decade the main line of division was between the French majority, implied to be White, and the “Others,” cast as immigrants, foreigners, and most often “Maghrebis,” a term then used far more often than “Muslims.”⁹² In the following decades, however, the divide became increasingly framed as religious—Christians versus Muslims—the imagined homogenous community of Muslims becoming the radical alterity.⁹³

Conclusion

This special issue is part of a broader reflection on the conditions of possibility of a critical global race theory, to use Melissa Weiner’s expression—that is, of a transnational theory that examines the racialization mechanisms used to create hierarchies and concentrate power in the hands of certain groups. In spite of national differences, five centuries of colonialism have contributed to a racialized world order in which the economic

supremacy of dominant nations is connected to a racial hierarchy most often resting on White supremacy. Fanon wrote in 1952: "Wherever he goes, a Negro remains a Negro."⁹⁴ Similarly, could it be said that wherever they go Whites remain Whites, even though the precise contours of their Whiteness evolve? Or, is Whiteness fundamentally altered by its sociohistorical context and notably determined by whether it emerges in a majority-White setting or in an environment in which Whites are statistically a minority? In terms of scholarship, our hope is to inspire empirical accounts of Whiteness and White identities in France along the lines of what France Winddance Twine and Charles Gallagher have called "Third Wave Whiteness," that is, explorations of "how Whites produce, translate, and negotiate Whiteness in their everyday private and public lives."⁹⁵ Some of this research has been accomplished in the United States and in the United Kingdom, but is still largely missing in France. We would love to see work that gives texture to historical analyses of Whiteness, seeking to uncover what it means to its members and to others. Quantitative data would be immensely helpful, but given the ongoing controversies over the collection of racial and ethnic data, it is unlikely to be collected in the foreseeable future. In the meantime, qualitative data could inform critical histories of Whiteness, ethnographies of Whiteness, geographies of Whiteness, the social psychology of Whiteness, and the investigation of Whiteness in gender relations, sex, the justice system, housing, healthcare, education, the environment, food, culture, sports, and other contexts.

The articles in this special issue are but a first step in this direction, exploring how White domination is maintained in France even as the republic is opening up to more robust antidiscrimination laws and policies. Six original contributions are included, providing novel theoretical and empirical analyses of Whiteness in France. Among some of the unaddressed questions we hope to tackle in future work are the management of Whiteness in relation to specific French minorities such as French Asians and Roma as well as the issue of how gender, sexuality, disability, class, immigration status, and other interconnected identity traits shape White identities. We also look forward to further research on the ambivalent status of Whiteness in former French colonies that explores how the colonial criteria of Whiteness have been preserved yet transformed, how people resist White dominance all the while valorizing it, and, more fundamentally, how the colonial experience, past and present, has required that those racialized as non-White continuously position themselves in relation to Whiteness.

In her article, Mathilde Cohen identifies a form of French food Whiteness, that is, the use of food and eating practices seen as traditionally

French to reify and reinforce Whiteness as a dominant racial identity. The supposed neutral and unmarked quality of Whiteness is particularly tangible in the context of food in a country where eating is a fundamental and highly codified dimension of everyday life. French foodways have long been a central site of racial and ethnic identity formation especially through slavery, colonization, immigration, and their attendant laws. The article develops four case studies of how food law elevates a fiction of homogenous French food as superior and normative at the expense of alternative ways of eating and their eaters: intellectual property law, the regulation of school lunches, citizenship law, and cultural heritage law.

Sarah Fila-Bakabadio's study focuses on the body. Based on a transatlantic epistemology of Black corporality grounded in Black studies and critical race theory, she interrogates Whiteness through the lens of Blackness. Using the study of the Black Atlantic as her starting point, Fila-Bakabadio argues that Whiteness is formed in part through the Black gaze and that observing Whiteness through Black experiences facilitates the recognition of the arbitrariness of racial categorizations. This decolonial perspective does not merely reverse the dominant visual rhetoric or flip the script, it also uncovers the mechanisms of co-construction of Blackness and Whiteness.

Juliette Galonnier's contribution uncovers the processes of racialization of Muslims and people of North African ancestry based on the study of the conversion of French Whites to Islam, exploring how White converts to Islam grapple with their own Whiteness as a dominant identity in the French context and within the Muslim community itself. The article analyzes specific situations in which Whiteness is rendered visible, examining the moral dilemmas entailed for Whites when they are explicitly categorized as such by non-White coreligionists.

Ary Gordien's article focuses on the complexities and ambivalences of White identification in contemporary Guadeloupe. He uses the case of invisible mixed-raced people and other "White mulattos" to expose the dynamic, relative, and situational definition of Whiteness. Through participant observation and individual interviews, Gordien reveals that his interviewees' political activism and beliefs significantly affect how they identify racially, even if their self-identifications can be at odds with the way in which they are perceived by peers and their milieu more generally.

Sarah Mazouz tackles the French version of color-blind universalism, or "abstract" universalism, grounded in the extensive fieldwork she conducted in the prefecture and city hall of a town in the outskirts of Paris. She argues that in this environment race blindness constitutes a form of White blindness to racialization. She also identifies the phenomenon of the "racialized republican," whereby non-White French profess their

adherence to color-blind universalism as a token of their allegiance to the dominant republican ideology.

Finally, Mathias Möschel examines the legal construction of supposed anti-White racism in France. Already recognized by Fanon, the theme of anti-White racism has reappeared in French political debates, with Whites, especially poor Whites, depicted as a majority under siege. Möschel debunks this narrative through a careful analysis of the social context, academic debates, and litigation that gave rise to it. He shows that if anti-White racism made its first appearance in court through the cause lawyering of far-right organizations, it has been coopted by mainstream anti-racist organizations, opening the door to its likely recognition as a legitimate legal wrong.

Notes

*Editor's note: *FPCS* has made the editorial decision to capitalize the racial designations of Black and White. In keeping with the growing move by editorial boards across the world to capitalize Black, this issue shows the importance of the study of Whiteness Studies. The capitalizations hopefully help reflect the centrality of race in global as well as French politics, culture and society.

1. This workshop was supported and funded by the Institut National d'Études Démographiques Global Race Project (funded by the Agence nationale de la recherche [ANR] and led by Patrick Simon) and by the Centre d'études et de recherches administratives politiques et sociales (CERAPS), a research center affiliated with the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS), the Université de Lille, and Sciences Po Lille.
2. "Le 'décolonialisme', une stratégie hégémonique: l'appel de 80 intellectuels," *Le Point*, 28 November 2018; Étienne Girard and Hadrien Mathoux, "L'offensive des obsédés de la race, du sexe, du genre, de l'identité," *Marianne*, 11 November 2019; Amandine Hirou, "Les obsédés de la race noyautent le CNRS," *L'express*, 24 December 2019, 55–57.
3. See Haley McAvay and Patrick Simon, "The Social Determinants of Ethnoracial Self-Classification in France" (Public lecture delivered at the IMISCOE Annual Conference, Barcelona, 2–4 July 2018); and Défenseur des droits, *Inégalités d'accès aux droits et discriminations en France: une enquête du Défenseur des droits*, 2020, Tableau 1, 143.
4. See Ary Gordien, "(Auto-)marginalisation des Blancs créoles dans les récits historiques guadeloupéens," in *Histoire en marge: les périphéries de l'histoire globale*, ed. Hélène Le Dantec-Lowry, Matthieu Renault, Marie-Jeanne Rossignol, and Pauline Vermeren (Tours: Presses universitaires François-Rabelais, 2018), 101–124; Frédéric Régent, "La fabrication des blancs dans les colonies françaises," in *De quelle couleur sont les blancs? Des "petits Blancs" des colonies au "racisme anti-Blancs"*, ed. Sylvie Laurent and Thierry Leclère (Paris: La Découverte, 2013), 65–75.

5. For instance, historian Gérard Noiriel wrote *The French Melting Pot: Immigration, Citizenship and National Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) to oppose the Front national argument according to which Sub-Saharan African and North African immigrants could not integrate into French society. More recently, he compared Édouard Drumont's anti-Semitism to Éric Zemmour's Islamophobia (*Le Venin dans la plume: Édouard Drumont, Éric Zemmour et la part sombre de la République* [Paris: La Découverte, 2019]). At the same time, Noiriel criticizes the growing salience of "minority groups" (*minorités*) in French social thought, declaring in particular that the concept of intersectionality is a "regression in relation to the foundational principles of sociology" (Gérard Noiriel, "Réflexions sur la 'gauche identitaire'," 29 October 2018, <https://noiriel.wordpress.com/2018/10/29/reflexions-sur-la-gauche-identitaire/>).
6. Thomas Chatterton Williams, "The French Origins of 'You Will Not Replace Us,'" *The New Yorker*, 27 November 2017, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/12/04/the-french-origins-of-you-will-not-replace-us>.
7. Williams, "The French Origins."
8. Jean Beaman and Amy Petts, "Towards a Global Theory of Colorblindness: Comparing Colorblind Racial Ideology in France and the United States," *Sociology Compass* 14, 4 (2020): e12774, doi:10.1111/soc4.12774.
9. Trica Keaton, "The Politics of Race-Blindness," *Du Bois Review* 7 (2010): 103–131, doi:10.1017/S1742058X10000202.
10. Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 1.
11. Some of the most infamous examples include the colonial ordinance of 1685 known as the "Black Code," which, among other things, regulated the life and death of enslaved people in French colonies and restricted the freedom of Indigenous people and free Blacks; the 16 July 1912 statute on "the circulation of nomads," which subjected Roma to second-class citizenship and dehumanizing scrutiny; and the Vichy legislation in 1940–1941 targeting those of the "Jewish race" with a number of prohibitions and exclusions. See also Hourya Bentouhami-Molino, *Race, cultures, identités: Une approche féministe et postcoloniale* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2015), 41–58.
12. The National Assembly suppressed the word "race" in a 2013 bill, which was never enacted. In 2018, it proposed to amend the Constitution to erase the word "race" from its first Article ("It [France] shall ensure the equality of all citizens before the law, without distinction of origin, race or religion"), but the proposal was not adopted. However, the campaign to expunge the word "race" from French law found a victory with Statute N° 2017-86 of 27 January 2017 concerning equality and citizenship, which revised the Penal Code to include "so-called" before "race" in its provision on hate crimes. Similarly, Decree N° 2017-1230 of 3 August 2017 on the law of defamation declares that, in the context of hate speech, the law now "substitutes to the notion of race, which is inapplicable to human beings, that of 'so-called race.'"
13. It is worth noting that Lurel identifies as someone of mixed-race background. See Victorin Lurel's racial autobiography in Chapter 1 of his *Lettre ouverte à mes compatriotes de l'Hexagone* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2012).
14. This attempt can be linked to a long lineage of minority groups seizing the promises of republican universalism to demand true equality, walking in the

- footsteps of the Black Jacobins during and after the Haitian Revolution. See C. R. James, *The Black Jacobins* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1938).
15. Richard Dyer, "White," *Screen* 29, 4 (1988): 44–65, doi:10.1093/screen/29.4.44; Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," *Peace & Freedom Magazine*, July–August 1989, 10–12; David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness* (New York: Verso, 1990); Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); bell hooks, "Representations of Whiteness in the Black Imagination," in *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 165–178; Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism, and History* (London: Verso, 1992); Cheryl I. Harris, "Whiteness as Property," *Harvard Law Review* 106 (1993): 1707–1791; Mike Hill, *Whiteness: A Critical Reader* (New York: NYU Press, 1997); Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, eds., *Critical White Studies: Looking Behind the Mirror* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997); Ian Haney López, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York: NYU Press, 1996); Theodor Allen, *The Invention of the White Race* Volume 1 and 2 (London: Verso, 1994 and 1997); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Katherine Brodtkin Sacks, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998).
 16. Tyler Stovall, "National Identity and Shifting Imperial Frontiers: Whiteness and the Exclusion of Colonial Labor after World War I," *Representations* 84, 1 (2003): 52–72, here 53, doi:10.1525/rep.2003.84.1.52.
 17. Ann Juanita Morning, *The Nature of Race: How Scientists Think and Teach about Human Difference* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).
 18. Mills, *Racial Contract*; Dorothy E. Roberts, *Fatal Invention How Science, Politics, and Big Business Re-Crete Race in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: New Press, 2011); Tanya Maria Golash-Boza, *Yo soy negro: Blackness in Peru* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2015).
 19. Pap Ndiaye, "Questions de couleur: Histoire, idéologie et pratiques du colorisme," in *De la question sociale à la question raciale: Représenter la société française*, ed. Didier Fassin and Eric Fassin (Paris: La Découverte, 2006), 45–62.
 20. Karyn D. McKinney, *Being White: Stories of Race and Racism* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Shannon Sullivan, *Revealing Whiteness: The Unconscious Habits of Racial Privilege* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006).
 21. George Yancy, *Look, A White! Philosophical Essays on Whiteness* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2012).
 22. For critiques of White exceptionalism in the US context as a strategy for Whites to attempt to escape their Whiteness when race and racial discrimination are discussed, see Camille Gear Rich, "Marginal Whiteness," *California Law Review* 98 (2010): 1497–1594; and Layla Saad, *Me and White Supremacy: Combat Racism, Change The World, and Become a Good Ancestor* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2018).
 23. Sarah Mazouz, *La République et ses autres: Politiques de l'altérité dans la France des années 2000* (Lyon: ENS Éditions, 2017), 26–29 and 126–127.
 24. Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (Boston: Anti-Slavery Office, 1845), ix.
 25. W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America: 1860–1880* (New York: Free Press, 1998), 700.

26. Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*, ix.
27. Maureen Maisha Eggers, Grada Kilomba, Peggy Piesche, and Susan Arndt, eds., *Mythen, Masken und Subjekte: Kritische Weisssensforschung in Deutschland* (Berlin: Unrast, 2005); Philomena Essed and Sandra Trienekens, "Who Wants to Feel White? Race, Dutch Culture and Contested Identities," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31, 1 (2008): 52–72, doi:10.1080/01419870701538885; Ulrike Anne Müller, "Far Away So Close: Race, Whiteness, and German Identity," *Identities* 18, 6 (2011): 620–645, doi:10.1080/1070289X.2011.672863; Kristin Loftsdóttir, "Republishing 'The Ten Little Negroes': Exploring Nationalism and 'Whiteness' in Iceland," *Ethnicities* 13, 3 (2013): 295–315, doi:10.1177/1468796812472854; Peter Hervik, "Denmark's Blond Vision and the Fractal Logics of a Nation in Danger," *Identities* 26, 5 (2019): 529–545, doi:10.1080/1070289X.2019.1587905; Patricia Purtschert, "Democratising Switzerland: Challenging Whiteness in Public Space," in *Switzerland and Migration: Historical and Current Perspectives on a Changing Landscape*, ed. Barbara Lüthi and Damir Skenderovic (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 79–98.
28. Gabrielle Griffin and Rosi Braidotti, "Whiteness and European Situatedness," in *Thinking Differently: A Reader in European Women's Studies*, ed. Gabrielle Griffin and Rosi Braidotti (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 221–236, here 226.
29. Theo D. Goldberg, *The Threat of Race: Reflections on Racial Neoliberalism* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 179–180.
30. Mathias Möschel, *Law, Lawyers and Race: Critical Race Theory from the United States to Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 96.
31. Alana Lentin, "Europe and the Silence about Race," *European Journal of Social Theory* 11, 4 (2008): 487–503, doi:10.1177/1368431008097008.
32. Nell Irvin Painter, *The History of White People* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010).
33. Colette Guillaumin, *L'Idéologie raciste: Genèse et langage actuel* (Paris: Mouton & Co., 1972); Colette Guillaumin, "Race. Racisme," *Pluriel-recherches, vocabulaire historique et critique des relations inter-ethniques* 2 (1994): 61–67.
34. Vanessa Eileen Thompson, "Black Jacobins in Contemporary France: On Identities on Politics, Decolonial Critique, and the Other Blackness," *Sociological Focus* 49, 1 (2016): 44–62, doi:10.1080/00380237.2015.1067853; Crystal Fleming, *Resurrecting Slavery: Racial Legacies and White Supremacy in France* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2017).
35. See Didier Fassin and Eric Fassin, ed., *De la question sociale à la question raciale. Représenter la société française* (Paris: La Découverte, 2006); and Pap Ndiaye, *La Condition noire: Essai sur une minorité française* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 2008).
36. Statute N° 2001-434 of 21 May 2001, known as "loi Taubira."
37. Audrey Célestine, "French Caribbean Organizations and the 'Black Question' in France," *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal* 4, 2 (2011): 131–144, doi:10.1080/17528631.2011.583451.
38. Statute N° 2005-158 of 23 February 2005, Article 4.
39. The contested provision was abrogated by Decree N° 2006-160 of 15 February 2006.
40. Les Indigènes de la République, "L'appel des Indigènes: Nous sommes les Indigènes de la République!," January 2005, <http://indigenes-republique.fr/le-p-i-r/appel-des-indigenes-de-la-republique>.

41. Célestine, "French Caribbean Organizations and the 'Black Question' in France."
42. See Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin transposed into French law by Statute N° 2008-496 of 27 May 2008.
43. Patrick Simon, Cris Beauchemin, and Christelle Hamel, eds., *Trajectoires et origines: enquête sur la diversité des populations de France* (Paris: INED, 2016), 448–450.
44. See Mathias Möschel's article in this issue.
45. Ndiaye, "Questions de couleur," 46.
46. Tony S. Jugé and Michael P. Perez, "The Modern Colonial Politics of Citizenship and Whiteness in France," *Social Identities* 12, 2 (2006): 187–212, doi:10.1080/13504630600583387.
47. Horia Kebabza, "'L'universel lave-t-il plus blanc?': 'Race', racisme et système de privilèges," *Les cahiers du CEDREF* 14 (2006): 145–172, doi:10.4000/cedref.428.
48. Bastien Bosa, "Plus blanc que blanc: Une étude critique des travaux sur la Whiteness," in *Les nouvelles frontières de la société française*, ed. Didier Fassin (Paris: La Découverte, 2010), 129–146, here 140.
49. Rokhaya Diallo, *Racisme, mode d'emploi* (Paris: Larousse, 2011), 91. A few other publications around those years focused on discrete aspects of French Whiteness, be it from a gender or a cyberspace perspective. See, for example, Félix Boggio-Ewanjé-Epée and Stella Magliani-Belkacem, *Les Féministes blanches et l'empire* (Paris: La Fabrique, 2012); and Noémi Michel and Manuela Honegger, "Thinking Whiteness in French and Swiss Cyberspaces," *Social Politics* 17, 4 (2010): 423–449, doi:10.1093/sp/jxq017.
50. Sylvie Laurent and Thierry Leclère, eds., *De quelle couleur sont les blancs? Des "petits blancs" des colonies au "racisme anti-blanc"* (Paris: La Découverte, 2013); Maixme Cervulle, *Dans le blanc des yeux: Diversité, racisme et médias* (Paris: Éditions Amsterdam, 2013).
51. Laurent and Leclère, *De quelle couleur sont les blancs?*, 8.
52. Chong J. Bretillon, "'Ma Face Vanille': White Rappers, 'Black Music', and Race in France," *International Journal of Francophone Studies* 17, 3 (2014): 421–443, doi:10.1386/ijfs.17.3-4.421_1; Jean Beaman, "Are French People White?: Towards an Understanding of Whiteness in Republican France," *Identities* 26, 5 (2019): 546–562, doi:10.1080/1070289X.2018.1543831; Angéline Escarfré-Dublet, "The Whiteness of Cultural Boundaries in France," *Identities* 26, 5 (2019): 563–578, doi:10.1080/1070289X.2019.1587906. For recent works on Whiteness in France, see also Christine Lorre-Johnston and Lise Lalonde, "Disrupting Whiteness in Contemporary France: A Radical, Multifaceted and Intersectional Approach to (De)Constructing French Identity" (PhD diss., University of Washington, 2018); and Yumiko Tahata, "Définir 'les Français', une question de race? Analyse des formes de racisation dans les débats parlementaires sur la nationalité et l'immigration (1981–2012)," *Mots: Les langages du politique* 116, 1 (2018): 39–54, doi:10.4000/mots.23050.
53. Peter Wade, "Race, Ethnicity, and Technologies of Belonging," *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 39, 4 (2014): 587–596, here 588.
54. In contrast to *noir*, which is perceived by some to be racist, the English word "Black" became popular for a while as focusing on the cultural aspect of Black identity. However, its use is often naturalizing and thus racializing, illustrating

- how French debates on race can sometimes fetishize words without addressing the underlying oppressions they name or fail to name. For a critique of the English “Black” in French parlance, see Gaston Kelman, *Je suis noir et je n’aime pas le manioc* (Paris: Éditions Max Milo, 2004).
55. Cervulle, *Dans le blanc des yeux*; Laurent and Leclère, *De quelle couleur sont les blancs?*
 56. Melissa F. Weiner. “Towards a Global Critical Race Theory,” *Sociology Compass* 6, 4 (2012): 332–350, here 332, doi:10.1111/j.1751-9020.2012.00457.x.
 57. Michelle Christian, “A Global Critical Race and Racism Framework,” *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 5, 2 (2018): 169–185, doi:10.1177/2332649218783220.
 58. Kehinde Andrews, “Black Is a Country: Building Solidarity across Borders,” *World Policy Journal* 33, 1 (2016): 15–19, here 17, doi:10.1215/07402775-3545846.
 59. Edward Said, “Traveling Theory Reconsidered,” in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 439–452, here 437.
 60. Edward Said, “Traveling Theory,” in *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 226–247.
 61. Kazuko Suzuki, “A Critical Assessment of Comparative Sociology of Race and Ethnicity,” *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 3, 3 (2017): 287–300, here 287, doi:10.1177/2332649217708580.
 62. Leith Mullings, “Interrogating Racism: Toward an Antiracist Anthropology,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 34 (2005): 667–693, here 672, doi:10.1146/annurev.anthro.32.061002.093435.
 63. Note that a number of prominent intellectuals and politicians of color also denounce the language of race and White privilege as a threat to French republicanism. See, for example, Corinne Narassiguin, “Le privilège blanc, cette ineptie dangereuse,” *Le Monde*, 9 June 2020, https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2020/06/09/le-privilège-blanc-cette-ineptie-dangereuse_6042207_3232.html.
 64. Mazouz, *La République et ses autres*.
 65. Herrick Chapman and Laura L. Frader, eds., *Race in France* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004), 1.
 66. Article 8-1 of the 1978 statute titled “Informatique et libertés” generally prohibits the collection of sensitive data (including race and ethnicity), but also allows exceptions depending on the purpose of the collection and its methods. The Conseil national de l’information statistique (CNIS) or the Commission nationale de l’informatique et des libertés (CNIL) approve applications for exemptions on a case-by-case basis. Violations of the rules can carry up to five years of imprisonment and a €300,000 fine according to the Code pénal, Article 226-19.
 67. Jean-Laurent Cassely, “La carte des villes apartheid,” *Slate*, 20 March 2014, <http://www.slate.fr/france/84767/diversite-equipes-municipales-apartheid>.
 68. Laure Bereni and Camille Noûs, “La valeur professionnelle de l’identité: Racialisation, genre et légitimité managériale à New York et à Paris,” *Sociétés contemporaines* 117, 1 (2020): 99–126, doi:10.3917/soco.117.0099.
 69. Pierre Tevanian, “Réflexion sur le privilège blanc,” in *De quelle couleur sont les blancs?*, ed. Sylvie Laurent and Thierry Leclère (Paris: La Découverte, 2013), 23–33, here 28.
 70. Stovall, “National Identity 53.
 71. Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: NYU Press, 2000), 63.

72. Françoise Vergès, "La 'ligne de couleur': Esclavage et racisme colonial et post-colonial," in *De quelle couleur sont les blancs?*, ed. Sylvie Laurent and Thierry Leclère (Paris: La Découverte, 2013), 76–87, here 80.
73. Fleming, *Resurrecting Slavery*, 19.
74. François Bernier's *Nouvelle division de la Terre par les différentes espèces ou races d'homme qui l'habitent* (1684) is often described as the first text in which the term "race" is used in its modern sense to create hierarchies of peoples.
75. For an analysis of some of the complexities of French citizenship, which was alternately granted to and taken back from colonized peoples, see Emmanuelle Saada, *Les Enfants de la colonie. Les métis de l'Empire français entre sujétion et citoyenneté* (Paris: La Découverte, 2007); and Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787–1804* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).
76. Stovall, "National Identity," 54.
77. Elisa Camiscioli, "Race-Making and Race-Mixing in the Early Twentieth-Century Immigration Debate," in *Transnational Spaces and Identities in the Francophone World*, ed. Hafid Gafaïti, Patricia M. E. Lorcin, and David G. Troyansky (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 53–70, here 55.
78. Yvonne Knibiehler and Régine Goutalier, *La Femme au temps des colonies* (Paris: Stock, 1985); Jennifer Boittin, "'Are You Trying to Play a White Woman?' La Mère Patrie and the Female Body in French West Africa," *Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 40, 4 (2015): 841–864, doi:10.1086/680471.
79. With the exception of Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon. Dominique Mataillet, "Combien sont-ils?," *Jeune Afrique*, 2 April 2007, <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/132911/archives-thematique/combien-sont-ils/>.
80. Mathilde Cohen, "Judicial Diversity in France: The Unspoken and the Un-speakable," *Law & Social Inquiry* 43 (2018): 1542–1573, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/lsi.12331>, here 1567–1569; Mathilde Cohen, "Judicial Colonialism Today: The French Overseas Courts," *Journal of Law and Courts* 8, no. 2 (2020): 247–276.
81. In 1983, the Commission Nationale de l'informatique et des Libertés (CNIL) authorized the census to collect ethnic data in the overseas areas then known as "territoires d'outre mer" (see CNIL, Délibération N°83-12 of 18 January 1983, Délibération portant avis sur la mise en œuvre du recensement général de la population dans les Territoires d'Outre-Mer). As of the 2014 New Caledonia census, 39 percent of the residents identified as "Kanak," 27 percent as "European," 8 percent as Wallisian and Futunians, and the remainder of the population identified as "Tahitians," "Indonesians," "Ni-Vanuatu," and "Vietnamese," among others. See Insee, "Recensement de la population en Nouvelle Calédonie en 2015," Insee Première 1572, November 2015, <https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/1560282> (accessed 12 August 2019). For a historical perspective on the collection of data overseas, see Jean-Louis Rallu, "Les catégories statistiques utilisées dans les DOM-TOM depuis le début de la présence française," *Population* 53, 3 (1998): 589–608, https://www.persee.fr/doc/pop_0032-4663_1998_num_53_3_6874.
82. Sue Peabody, *There Are No Slaves in France: The Political Culture of Race and Slavery in the Ancien Régime* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).
83. Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall, *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

84. Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).
85. Silvia Falconieri and Florence Renucci, "L'Autre et la littérature juridique: Juifs et indigènes dans les manuels de droit (XIXe–XXe siècles)," in *Des traités aux manuels de droit: Une histoire de la littérature juridique comme forme du discours universitaire*, ed. Anne-Sophie Chambost (Paris: Lextenso, 2014), 253–274; Samuel Ghiles-Meilhac, "Les juifs français sont-ils (devenus) des Blancs comme les autres?," in *Juifs d'Europe: Identités plurielles et mixité*, ed. Ewa Tartakowsky and Marcelo Dimenststein (Tours: Presses universitaires François-Rabelais, 2019), 27–40.
86. Pew Research Center, *Europe's Growing Muslim Population*, 29 November 2017, 29–30, <https://www.pewforum.org/2017/11/29/europes-growing-muslim-population/>.
87. Kebabza, "L'universel lave-t-il plus blanc?," 4.
88. To some extent, French Jews share in this predicament, but they are allowed to exist as individuals and victims in a way that is often closed off to French Muslims and/or Arabs/Maghebis.
89. José Casanova, "The Politics of Nativism: Islam in Europe, Catholicism in the United States," *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 38, 4–5 (2012): 485–495, here 490, doi:10.1177/0191453711435643.
90. Solène Brun and Juliette Galonnier, "Devenir(s) minoritaire(s): La conversion des Blanches à l'islam en France et aux États-Unis comme expérience de la minoration," *Tracés: Revue de Sciences humaines* 30 (2016): 29–54, doi:10.4000/traces.6400.
91. Colonial Algeria played a role of laboratory experiment in this respect, but France is currently witnessing a recentering of Islamness in racial formation when it should be noted that, during colonial and precolonial times, a wider range of negative others were mobilized as antitheses to French identity.
92. Tahata, "Définir 'les Français'," 47
93. Tahata, "Définir 'les Français'," 48–49.
94. Frantz Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* (Paris: Seuil, 1952), 175.
95. France Winddance Twine and Charles Gallagher, "The Future of Whiteness: A Map of the 'Third Wave,'" *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31, 1 (2008): 4–24, doi:10.1080/01419870701538836; Charles Gallagher and France Winddance Twine, "From Wave to Tsunami: The Growth of Third Wave Whiteness," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40, 9 (2017): 1598–1603, doi:10.1080/01419870.2017.1308535.