

Racism in France:
The *Civilizing Mission* of Whiteness

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*To my lovely and precious wife, Tenise
and to my beautiful children, Helen, Aaliyah and Elijah.*

Race and racism in France remain difficult topics to address in France. The language used to refer to discrimination does not really allow for any in-depth discussion about race. While it is widely accepted that race should not be understood biologically, the social realities of race are all but absent from any national discussions in France. I contend that this is in part due to whiteness. France has shied away from its racist and colonial past. Through a series of open-ended surveys followed by interviews, it was revealed that race is indeed part of the everyday understandings of how white French individuals construct their realities. The language used to explain who is French, how to integrate, and what is racism about contributes to the reproduction of a historicist racial state whereby whites maintain their hegemony. Racism continues to be understood as an individual problem and very few respondents were able to talk about the institutional effects of French social institutions on people of color. I argue in this research project that whiteness, a set of privileges awarded to whites consciously or unconsciously, contributes to an *unnamed hegemonic oppression* that is reproduced at the micro- and macro-levels and is expressed by whites through the lack of racial awareness. This *unnamed* but very real *hegemonic oppression* is also represented by the double-consciousness developed by people of color. Their social and racial experiences are seldom acknowledged because the French discourse about race remains centered on its social nonexistence. Many of the participants in this research showed their Eurocentric and white bias through use of language expressing that being part of a racial group was not linked to their position in French society but rather just as physical attributes carrying no social meanings. They also used many different terms which had no racial meanings on the surface but which in the socio-historical and legal context of French society meant that being French was equated with white, and foreigners, immigrants, visible minorities

with people of color. Whiteness, embodied in the racial state, remains the norm by which people of color have historically been civilized by, and today's France is no exception.

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Chapter One

Introduction

This assumption that all hues of God whiteness alone is inherently and obviously better than brownness and tan leads to curious acts; even the sweeter souls of the dominant world as they discourse with me on weather, weal, and woe are continually playing above their actual words an obligato of tune and tone, saying: “My poor, un-white thing! Weep not nor rage. I know, too well, that the curse of God lies heavy on you. Why? That is not for me to say, but be brave! Do your work in your lowly sphere, praying the good Lord that into heaven above, where all is love, you may, one day, be born – white!”

I do not laugh. I am quite straight-faced as I ask soberly: “But what on earth is whiteness that one should so desire it?” Then, always somehow, some way, silently but clearly, I am given to understand that whiteness is the ownership of the earth forever and even, Amen! (W.E.B. Du Bois, 1920, p. 30)

Personal experience

About fifteen years ago, I became close friend with a young French black woman whose identity will remain hidden, but whose friendship has had a long lasting effect on the development and the emergence of my current racial consciousness. She was born in Martinique, French West Indies, and had lived in the French metropolitan territory almost all her life. One day, I became extremely intrigued at one of her statements. This was the first time I was confronted, unknowingly at the time, with my whiteness (term that I would later learn in my American experience). She stated that she had never seen any person like her on TV. While she probably does not remember this particular conversation, I was shocked, puzzled, surprised by her comment. What did she mean? How come I never realized this obvious fact? At the time, there was no person of color (term used in France to refer to non-white persons) or very few of them on television despite a noticeable number of persons in France from the French West Indies, from former North and West African colonies, and from Vietnam. There are no official

population figures about those groups because according to French law it has been illegal to gather information on the race and/or ethnicity of a person (Simon, 1998, 2003; Debet, 2007). Ironically, the French census indirectly categorizes persons as either French or foreigners based on the birthplace of their parents and grandparents (Simon, 1998, 2003).

As I listened to her more attentively as she talked about what it means to be black in France, as well as being a French citizen, I was oblivious to the fact that I was white – I could tell I had a lighter skin complexion than her but being told that I was white did not mean anything to me – and I did not understand what the social construct of race was really about. Realizing the limited range of my knowledge in this regards, I would argue that most French people do not see themselves in racial terms while they continually racialize others unknowingly. When I talk about the process of “racializing” in France, I mean that French people might describe others based on their skin color, e.g. being *noir* (black) and the assumed behaviors and social relationships that might emerge out of those signifiers, or based on their possible cultural behaviors, e.g. *les arabes* (Arabs). When one person is thought to be a member of those racial/ethnic groups (usually also based on physical features) it is assumed that they might all share the same characteristics, such as religion (being Arab is often equated as being Muslim, and therefore as being too culturally different from what it means to be French), physical abilities, intelligence, or even sexual behaviors¹ (Jobert, 2006). By generalizing that everybody in one particular socially constructed group (even though culture might be used instead of race) shares similar characteristics, the French are racializing the members of those groups. French people continue to covertly describe them in a way that contributes to their perceived “natural”

¹ A French TV show host, Pascal Sevran, recently published a book in which he describes in part some of the problems that African countries face in relation to starvation. In a radio interview on December 6, 2006 he insinuated that black men’s sexual drive leads to death and starvation. He stated, “And what? That’s the truth! Africa starves all its children born there without their parents having the means to feed them. I am not the only one to say it. You would have to sterilize half of the planet.” (*Var Matin*, December 6, 2006)

or cultural inferiority. This is what Bonilla-Silva (2003) would refer to as cultural racism. He argues that cultural racism is a frame that has replaced biological racism to explain the position of minorities in society. The use of cultural arguments over biological arguments contribute to the salience of colorblind racism; a racism that does not show its name but contributes to the ascription of cultural values to certain groups of color.

I can recall not too long ago a comment being made by a member of my family when talking about the French National soccer team. One evening, when asked if he was going to watch the soccer game, he replied that he would not because “the French National soccer team does not represent me!” What a shock it was for me to hear that! At the time, the team was composed of excellent players but what set them apart was the fact that nine of them were black and another one of them was the child of Algerian immigrants, and the last one was white. It is without saying that they are, of course, all French citizens. Who qualifies as a French citizen? How are people of color perceived on French soil? How is French citizenship acquired? All those questions and many others are at the heart of race relations in France. In order to better understand the dynamics of race relations/racial oppression in France, I believe that one can learn from the U.S. in regards to ideas, concepts and theories. While those concepts, ideas and theories cannot always be applied literally to the French case, it is nonetheless an important step one can start from. Whiteness (also known as white privilege or white supremacy) remains, I believe, an untold story in France; untold does not mean nonexistent, it only means that it has yet to be thoroughly examined. The current language used in France to address issues of race, racism and discrimination is for the most part inadequate, thus indirectly contributing to the reproduction of racial ethnic inequality. When a problem such as racial ethnic inequality exists

and the language (or lack thereof) used to talk about it does not address or pinpoint at the core issues, then this problem remains and lead to the reproduction of a white supremacist system.

Whiteness and its construction in the U.S.

I also remember my first couple of visits in the United States in 1994 and 1995 when I was staying with an African-American family. Some of their friends would see me and state: “who is this white guy?” I did not know I was white. I remained oblivious for a period of time. While I was trying to decipher my identity issues around race, the social meanings remained foreign to me. My friends would reply, “Oh Tony! He is not white, he is French!” That puzzled me even more. Here I was in the U.S a very racialized country, still being called French, while I looked like every other white person around, as if French meant being special! (This is how I perceived it at that period of time). I could tell I had white skin but I could not grasp the intricacies behind it because I was coming from a place where being white socially does not even exist. “French” meant that I was foreign – thus, not like the other white people, but this social meaning did enter my mind at the time.

Over the last 10-15 years, whiteness has become one of the most researched concepts in Sociology, Ethnic Studies, Legal Studies and Women’s Studies. However, one should not forget the contributions of W.E.B. Du Bois who in *the Souls of Black Folk* (1999) introduced the concept of double-consciousness as well as the problem of the color line. Du Bois’s double consciousness is critical in understanding whiteness because it gets to the heart of how people of color feel about a society where they are the minorities, about the appropriate behaviors, beliefs and values that mainstream white society holds and that people of color should respect in order to be valued and respected, and also about how the laws, policies and legislation contribute to the

constant and continuing subordination of people of color. This was well summarized in Du Bois' popular quote that "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line" (1999, p. 17). Since whites are in control of society politically, economically and socially, they represent the reference group by which other groups will be measured against in order to judge their integration and willing active participation in society. It also means that people cannot truly be themselves, as they have to meet certain expectations or be rejected.

Whiteness, over time, became a necessary factor and element of participation, equality and privilege in American society. The laws guaranteed property rights (Harris, 1993), citizenship rights (Haney-López, 1996), working privileges (Roediger, 1999; Nakano Glenn, 2002) and access to wealth in the long term (Oliver & Shapiro, 1997) to those who could claim or be identified as whites.

Roediger (1999) brought forward some of the arguments made by W.E.B. Du Bois (1973) in *Black Reconstruction* where he analyzes the construction of whiteness as part of capitalism, where white workers understood their economic positions in this society by defining themselves as "non-slaves" or "not blacks." By doing so, white workers took into account their whiteness and invested themselves in maintaining what would allow them not to fall lower in the socio-economic status. In a sense, they were given an incentive to take advantage of their racial identity, which in a sense means that they lost track of the class interests they shared with workers of color. This would be explained later on by Bonacich (1972, 1976) split-labor theory in which she argues that the capitalists used race as a means to split the working class, which eventually prevented alliances that might improve the socio-economic positions of both white and workers of color.

Roediger (1999) argues that the term “worker” has often been associated with “white worker” in the nineteenth century, which eventually will be contrasted by the emergence of being “Mexican” as an official category in the 1930 census (Nobles, 2000), which according to the 1930 Census enumerators’ instructions stated that all Mexican laborers are of racial mix. Persons were designated not only as Mexican for being born in and/or from Mexico who were neither black, white, Indian, Japanese or Chinese, but also through their occupation as laborers. Being Mexican was automatically associated with being a worker. Haney-López (1996) argues that race, in general, and whiteness, in particular, were legal constructions. Not only does society create race and whiteness but also the law enforces and rewards those who are whites. By 1930, Nobles (2000) argued that science, the law and the census came to share the same perspective that the one-drop rule would be the best way to “scientifically” determine people’s whiteness, and a way to maintain the political, economic and social subordination of non-whites. The category “mulatto” was dropped from the census as an implicit consequence of using the one-drop rule to enforce whiteness.

Haney-López (1996) makes a critical distinction between transparency and whiteness (or white privilege). “Transparency” represents the invisibility of those who are whites. They are not called whites. They have historically been called Americans and the Supreme Court has regulated such definitions. What this term means is that the race of whites remains invisible while the race of non-whites is continually a subject of debate. As a result privilege occurs when those who are unnoticed are the ones by which everybody else is measured. This group becomes the yardstick, the measurement device, and the norm (Dyer, 2002; Halton, 2002). Haney-López (1996) explains that the construction of whiteness in the law was a two-step process; first, the courts set up the boundaries as to who was *not* white. Second,

the courts became engaged in assessing the character of those who were non-whites to eventually get to the conclusion that “whiteness exists not only as the opposite of non-whiteness, but as the *superior* opposite.” (p. 28). Whites do not have to feel privileged because they do not have to think about it; they do not have to think about what it means to be the carrier of whiteness (Haney-Lopez, 1996; McIntosh, 2002).

The superiority associated with whiteness was reinforced by the status immigrants were attempting to obtain in order to fully participate in this new society: “whiteness”. The Supreme Court ruled on many occasions to decipher who could be considered white or not without defining what whiteness was and therefore who could receive some of the political, economic and social goods of American society (Haney-López, 1996).

The Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, ratified in 1868, guaranteed citizenship to all people born in the U.S. regardless of race, class and gender. The Naturalization Act of 1870 extended naturalization to people of African descent (Nobles, 2000). Many policies and legislation ensued to limit naturalization to certain groups, e.g. such as immigrants from Japan and India among many others. However, when immigrants filed suit to seek citizenship, most of the cases that went to the Supreme Court but one (re Cruz, 23 F.Supp. 774, 1938), were argued on the grounds that those immigrants were white, and deserved the right to be called American (Haney-López, 1996). The Supreme Court would therefore define whiteness by deciding who could be white based on different elements: common knowledge, scientific evidence, congressional intent, and legal precedent (Haney-López, 1996). Common knowledge referred to the popular meanings people had about race in their daily lives; scientific evidence was backed up by the so-called science of the time, which originated from European scholars such as Linnaeus, Buffon, De Gobineau (1967 [1853-1855]). Scientific evidence had the

advantage to be perceived as objective because of its reliance on science. Congressional intent represented policies passed by Congress in regards to race. Legal precedent meant to rely on previous court cases in which race had already being discussed. A combination of those four elements led to the development of whiteness as a blurry, nebulous yet very powerful tool to create social, political and economic hierarchies.

The courts have not only limited access to whiteness to those who saw the benefits attached to it but they also constructed whiteness through citizenship (Haney-López, 1996; Nakano-Glenn, 2002), access to property (or lack thereof) (Harris, 1993), education, power and wealth (Oliver & Shapiro, 1997; Conley, 1999). The Federal Housing Authority (FHA) excluded people of color when considering future homeowners as suburbia America was emerging. Whiteness was not only constructed through citizenship but it was also subsidized (Oliver & Shapiro, 1997; Conley, 1999). Irish, Italians and other European groups who faced discrimination earlier in the century became white through the 1945 GI Bill. This bill helped white GIs buy houses in the developing suburbs while GIs of color were denied those same rights. The Federal government provided federal funds and developed policies to ensure white GIs would gain access to the middle class. On the other hand, GIs of color were forced to remain in the inner cities. Gordon would later call being part of white middle-class America the ideal path to assimilation. They were able to assimilate into white-middle class America. Immigrants were encouraged to assimilate in “the middle-class cultural patterns ... of white, Anglo-Saxon” (Gordon, 1964, p. 72). Being white middle-class Anglo-Saxon has historically been referred to as the universal accepted culture or racial group. This quote from Gordon is critical because it not only brings race to the forefront when discussing assimilation, but also social class status, reinforced through the FHA decisions in 1945, and later on with redlining and blockbusting in

the real estate market industry. While Park (1913, 1950) was making a pure cultural argument about assimilation (also referred to as the ethnicity paradigm), Gordon provided more information about the true role of race in assimilation theories.

Other research studies have focused more on the level of racial identity (Perry, 2002; Gallagher, 1994) among whites to determine their understandings about what being white might confer in U.S. society (Feagin & Vera, 1995; Gallagher, 2003a, 2003b; Fernandez, 1981). They might understand that they are white as they look at themselves and see their lighter skin complexion, but it is more difficult to decipher if the social status associated with being white represents a meaningful known form of privilege or advantage. Sometimes when one listens to people talk about his/her whiteness, the meanings behind the words do not lead to any critical evaluations. Consider Pat Buchanan's statement in 1992 during his bid for the Republican nomination to the Presidency:

I think God made all the people good, but if we had to take a million of immigrants in, say, Zulus, next year, or Englishmen and put them in Virginia, what group would be easier to assimilate and would cause less problems for the people of Virginia? There is nothing wrong with sitting down and arguing that issue, that we are a European country (cited in Haney-López, 1996, p. 18)

This statement not only reveals what America represents for some politicians, but more importantly it fails to recognize that Immigration and Naturalization laws have been at the center of the construction of whiteness and of the normalcy by which America, as a country, and Americans as citizens of this country are equated with being Europeans (or more subtly whites). As a result, the racial identity that whites might have developed remains very superficial and is usually set in opposition to others' racial identity. Whites position themselves as normal,

while those who claim to be something other than just Americans are considered abnormal, dissenters, people who do not share American values and people who refuse to assimilate. The theories of assimilation (Park, 1913; Gordon, 1964; Myrdal, 2002; Portes & Zhou, 1993) revolve on the premises that assimilation to the dominant group is the most appropriate, logical, normal and going-up-the-social-economic-ladder path that minority groups and immigrants need to follow. The dominant group has not always been defined in cultural terms. Depending on the historical period, racial attributes have been used as a proxy to define, maintain and expect minority groups and immigrants to follow the white cultural example.

Another important point about whiteness/white privilege/white supremacy is that it allows for a discussion that does not necessarily imply that individual actions can be perceived as prejudiced. It also implies that white individuals who want to prevent such occurrences of prejudices are also the beneficiaries of this system. I consider myself not just a non-racist individual but I strive to be the most anti-racist person I can be by denouncing overt acts of racism but most importantly trying to denounce the unearned privileges. Whether I do something to improve the situation or not, or whether I am not aware of what is being offered to me in terms of privileges – such as walking in a store without being monitored or going to a job interview without a suit for instance – or not, I am the recipient of such privileges. The power of whiteness is that whites do not have to do anything to reap the benefits; it is also unearned (McIntosh, 2002) which is contrary to American values of hard work, which eventually creates the illusion of the American Dream. The focus is therefore put on the institutions, on the structure of our society. In other words, the way our society is organized economically, socially and politically is in accordance to what Mills (1997) would call a *Racial Contract*, which primarily benefits whites, even without their knowledge. Whiteness offers unconscious benefits to white people.

Studying white privilege means focusing on the underlying assumptions that freedom is not available to everybody, that equality of opportunity cannot exist without equality of condition, and that using merit as a criterion for success represents a fallacy since merit is contextualized. Race represents a critical matter in the contextualization of merit. Freedom, equality of opportunity and merit are indicators of achievements that cannot be detached from the racialized society that the U.S. represents. Continuing to ignore this simple fact leads us to maintain a system of unearned privileges (i.e. for whites overwhelmingly), which contributes to white supremacy. In other words, by remaining oblivious to whiteness, systematic racism (Feagin, 2000) remains untouched and the consequences of systematic racism remain oppressive and without any solutions. Goldberg (2001) argues for the presence of a *Racial State*; it differs slightly from Mills' *Racial Contract* (1997). Goldberg's Racial State opposes Mills' Racial Contract for a couple reasons: Goldberg sees the formation of a state, and European states in particular, as inherently racial or formed on the concept of race. He disagrees with Mills' assumption that European states emerged as a result of a social contract without any rationalization around race. For Goldberg, race was an integral part of the formation of the modern state but Mills' assumption seems to hide the formation of Europe's racial identity. Second, Goldberg contests the idea that individuals only became political subjects when they all came together with the development of a social contract. The social contract, in a sense, was the result of individuals coming together to create a state. They, as a result, became political subjects. Goldberg argues that racial configuration already operated in social interactions and formations, and therefore contributed to the complex relationships operating in the civil society. Therefore, the racial contract is not the result of mere individuals coming together but rather as "a complex product of this [racial discourse] discursive diffusion, reified by modern state

formation.” (p. 38). He argues that racial expression was used after the fact to rationalize and decide political and economic goals. However, racial thinking or discourse framed exploitation along racial lines leading to the formation of racial states, as race was already part of social interactions where Europeans were perceived as superior. The racial state argument presents some important theoretical arguments when one wants to evaluate and understand current issues of racism in the French model.

Whiteness and its historical construction in France

While I would come to understand the white – French dynamic in the U.S. later on, the French case itself remained to me somewhat of an enigma. When Du Bois (1973) talked about whiteness and showed that blacks and other people of color were held to a different set of standards, he was not studying whiteness or blackness in isolation from one another but rather in relation to each other (Daniels, 2000). This important reference will guide me in my exploration of whiteness in France: how blackness is explored, talked about, referred to implicitly or explicitly, while whiteness might be hidden even though it is very much present in the discussions. It is therefore critical to identify historical events that reveal the construction of blackness and whiteness in France. Ndiaye (2006) argues that whiteness in France has been constitutive to the formation of a French collective national identity in particular ways but not essentially so different from the U.S. and Great Britain. Can one speak of a color line in France the same way Du Bois (1999) talked about it in the U.S.? Some historical examples point out differences and similarities between these two cases. Whiteness has been constructed in a similar fashion but with at times different language and different policies.

During the colonial period, being *métis* meant being the product of a relationship between European men and indigenous women. While Europeans does not explicitly say white, the term “European” is not used as a cultural representation but rather as a racial symbol for white and as a proxy for the cultural endowments that whites might have had. On the other hand, being indigenous meant being non-white. Having a French father would guarantee the child French citizenship as long as the father would recognize his child. While some *métis* in the colonies became a buffer class between the Europeans and the indigenous people, it was not the case everywhere (Aldrich, 1996). Some suffered greatly after the French left as they were a remainder of the French presence in the colonies. Ndiaye (2006) argues that contrary to the U.S. model, there were not enough blacks in France to make the white working class define itself in racial terms in opposition to blacks. However, the color line was not defined in a pure black/white dichotomy but rather as a direct consequence of race mixing. A social fear emerged out of the possibility that the *métissage* (or race mixing) already occurring in the colonies would spread to France. As a result the French authorities intervened. As Stovall (2003) points out, in 1916 the French authorities in the Senegal created segregated hospitals to prevent black men from interacting with white women. Those types of relationships would be unacceptable on the French territory. The fear of black men and their “sexual drive” was illustrated by a comment made by a French entertainer in December 2006 when he claimed that poverty in Africa was the result of the black man’s genital parts.

However, one has to go much further back in French history to witness the emergence of whiteness. Some evidence suggests that it happened at the same time or before it was officially used in the U.S. to distinguish between citizens and non-citizens.

It has been assumed that race in France was never a significant factor in social relationships and interactions. It is also assumed that there have never been any slaves within the French metropolitan borders; it is assumed that France was only involved in the slave trade from the port of Bordeaux and Nantes, and that the West Indies was one of the few places where the French were actively involved in slavery. That is in part what I heard since my French education in high school barely touched on that part of history. I was never informed of the small presence of slaves on the French territory (as opposed to the U.S.). Their numbers were very small. As a consequence, there was never any real need to develop racial classification (even though it did happen briefly in Paris as mentioned later) except for the *métis*, which represented the only risk to the French territory. So the experience of race is largely historical creating a gap between colonial France and modern France for understanding the actual racial complexity of French society.

So if it is the case that race never really mattered in France (from a historical perspective) then can one speak of “whites” the same way being white in the U.S. has been socially constructed?

Some French laws actually corroborate the idea that whiteness was instrumental in defining a slave from a free man. A version of the one-drop rule was implemented to measure one’s blackness and indirectly one’s whiteness. As a result of the ordinance of 1762, there were around 159 blacks registered in Paris (Peabody, 1996). While a total of 159 seems like a very small number, many were not counted. What is more interesting is the measurement device used by French officials to decipher one’s blackness. The following labels were used to refer to blacks in France at that period of time: *nègres* (negroes), mulattoes, quadroons, savages, Indians, creoles and meztizos. Some of those terms were used differently depending on the level of

blackness or black ancestry among parents and grandparents. In the U.S. it would be called the one-drop rule. Some other methods were used to trace black blood several generations back. While those labels were official labels, they were rarely used in everyday life. They were imported from the colonial legal system in particular when heirs were claiming their estate, and had to list their slaves, especially French officials who had to return from the colonies. However, most of the legislation in metropolitan France was using the term *gens de couleurs* (people of color) to refer to any combination of European (= white) and African (= black) ancestry.

Those labels were not signifiers of their legal status as citizens or not since most blacks at the time could gain their freedoms in many different ways. Some were actually registered as free blacks (Peabody, 1996). One of the most critical forms of manumissions was through baptism and converting to Catholicism. Therefore, this became one of the main reasons why slaves traveled to France: to become catholic and free.

By 1777, new legislations (such as the *déclaration pour la police des noirs*) were enacted to prevent blacks, mulattoes and other people of color from entering metropolitan France. It was entirely based on skin color. It was in part due to the fact that the French parliament refused to use the word “slave” and was therefore constrained to end up using racial language to protect the borders of France (Peabody, 1996). Peabody (1996) argues that the French tried to structure the relationship between blacks and whites in a similar way they were trying to structure the relationships between slavery and freedom. Whiteness was already part of the thought-process of the time. Being white conferred privileges and advantages that were not solely based on the colonizer-slave relationship but were eventually based on a racial relationship. Blacks had to live up to different standards in order to be considered human, free and ultimately citizens. Lipsitz (1998) argues that this particular process was centered in the U.S and arguably in France too,

around that fact that blackness became synonymous with slavery and whiteness with freedom, and eventually contributed to pit people of color against one another, and in the French case between Indians and blacks as who should really be called a slave or a negro.

The *Declaration pour la Police des Noirs* (1776-1777) was different from the Edit of 1716 and the Declaration of 1738 in the sense that all the legal actions that resulted from this law were based solely on skin color, and not on the slave status. The word “*noir*” (black) started to replace the word “*nègre*” (negro), which allowed the politicians of the time to get away from the difficult legal status that was conveyed in the word “*nègre*” as possibly meaning either free blacks or slaves. The term negro conveyed different meanings because it was at times associated with being African and at other times with skin complexion. Therefore, the use of the term “black” allowed one to stay away from the historical ambiguity of the term “negro”. The ambiguity was revealed, for instance, in the case of Francisque, a slave who went to court to change “employers” because he felt maltreated by his original one. The main question asked by his lawyers was about his status as a “negro”. If he was a “negro”, was he subject to the laws of 1716 and 1738, which required employers (more like slave masters) to register their slaves (indirectly also by categorizing them through skin colors), and therefore liable for the well being of their employees. Francisque was born in India and traveled to France with his employer before going to court.

At the same period of time in Paris, about 8% of registered blacks were from India, while the other ones were from the West Indies. In 1757, Francisque and his brother went to court to be able to work for another employer in part because of the alleged maltreatment they were receiving. The courts ruled in their favor after some of the arguments made by their lawyers such

as “as everybody knows, Indian blacks, completely unlike the negroes of Africa, are ordinarily good domestics; consequently they had no difficulty finding a new position” (Peabody, 1996, p. 58). This brings a very important point in the definition of Man in the development of Enlightenment classification. Being considered a Man meant being a European male, while those who were from a strong state system like China or India, and those who were from Africa and Indigenous America could not fully be considered Man and therefore deserving of all rights (Trouillot, 1995). As Indian blacks, the laws of 1716 and 1738 did not apply to Francisque because it only applied to “negro slaves.” The question of the time was to determine whether negroes were negroes because of their skin color or because they were from Africa. What is critical here is not so much the case itself but the way the lawyers argued their case and how they constructed blackness. Francisque’s legal representatives (themselves white) constructed slave status by opposing the civilization of the Indians against the barbarian nature of Africans. However, instead of just focusing on the barbarity of the Africans, they wanted to demonstrate (as a two-step process) that Indians had the same intellectual civilized behavior as Europeans. By doing so, they equated blackness with savagery, stupidity and evilness and whiteness (indirectly) with intelligence and advanced civilized capacities.

People of color were slowly referred to less and less by their slave status but more and more by their racial background. The 1777 *Declaration pour la Police des Noirs* was in reality put into effect to further prevent any new arrivals, continuing registration of blacks and also the marriage between whites and blacks, mulattoes and other people of color. When signed into law, this legislation did not differentiate between blacks having gained their freedom, those who had some wealth as well as different skin tones.

French Colonies

By 1685, legislation was enacted to regulate the relationships between slaves and their masters. The legislation was known as the *Code Noir* (or black code). Slaves were became thought of as blacks. This is an important factor to consider because later in France, some slaves will challenge their status as slaves on the basis that they were not black. In order to gain their freedom some slaves used French laws that required masters to take care of them but, despite the fact that the *Code Noir*, issued by King Louis XIV in 1685, had provisions that protected slaves, although many planters and managers in the colonies used torture to discipline their workers (Dubois & Garrigues, 2006). It is important to recognize that many groups such as the *Nantais* (people from Nantes) were opposed to the freedom principle discussed in Paris. As Pruitt (2007) states,

unlike their Parisian counterparts, the *Nantais* accepted and defended the legality of black slavery both in the colonies and in France itself. In Nantes, at least, there was a place for unfreedom (p. 174)

In the colonies, in general, and in the Caribbean, in particular, some local free people of color were treated as full citizens as early as 1600s, but they started to be more and more discriminated against because of their African ancestry. After the French revolution, they began to press for equal rights. However, at the same time poor whites, referred to by slaves as *petits blancs* (little whites), started to have more grievances especially as their dreams to become wealthy were growing. Despite having great resentment for the royal regime and wealthy whites, they demanded more opportunities especially as they compared themselves to more wealthy mixed-race families who they perceived as less than because of their African ancestry (Dubois & Garrigues, 2006). They felt that those wealthy people of color were unfairly privileged.

Whiteness became the principal, predominant, central common bond between poor and wealthy whites even though they probably had more common interests in terms of their true social position with those families of color. This is similar to the same way Du Bois (1998) explained in *Black Reconstruction* that white workers had more interests in maintaining the slave system in place than uniting with slaves/people of color. White workers had psychological wages (Roediger, 1999) in perpetuating this oppressive structure. White workers had interests in perpetuating this oppressive structure because they were faced a dependency on wage labor inherent in a capitalist structure. Therefore, they used their whiteness to differentiate their wage labor from bondage labor. Their dependency on wage labor forced them to construct black labor as the “other” and locate themselves as legitimate labor force under the capitalist work ethic ideology. White workers occupied the ranks of “free white labor” and therefore should not be mistaken for slaves (Roediger, 1999).

By 1790 a Colonial Committee was formed to study the political representation of free people of color. However, this committee never mentioned race in its report entitled “Instructions of March 28.” Two important consequences emerged. Planters in the colonies felt like their cause was recognized because race was not addressed and therefore that people of color could not participate in elections. Since race was not mentioned in the report, planters equated race with people of color. Planters were not thought of as being part of a racial group. They were just normal. Planters believed that they could therefore do what they could as they wish. However, on the other hand, people of color felt like the report was actually inclusive since they were not openly talked about, and therefore they would be able to participate in elections (Dubois & Garrigues, 2006). Interestingly, the most disenchanted were the poor whites who demanded strict enforcement of laws discriminating against people of color. By 1791, the

National Assembly granted full citizenship to free “men of color whose mothers and fathers had both been free and who owned sufficient property” (Dubois & Garrigues, 2006, p. 22). White colonials in France and in the colonies became infuriated. However, it became hard for free people of color to get their newly acquired rights enforced. Dubois & Garrigues (2006) argue that the Haitian revolution became a turning point for France to define itself with a white identity in opposition to the Haitian self-proclaimed black identity nationhood.

In the nineteenth century, politicians debated the morality of colonialism (Aldrich, 1996). Despite those debates, a number of laws, such as the *codes de l'indigénat*, were passed as early as 1834 in Algeria followed by similar regulations later on in Cochinchina, New Caledonia, Senegal and Tahiti to control the behaviors and activities of indigenous people.

Hartkopf Schloss (2007) describes the formation and policing of a white racial identity during the 1831 slave uprising in Martinique, and also in metropolitan France. One's whiteness was dependent on one's gender. White masculinity and white femininity could not be threatened by enslaved Africans and mulatto population. The increasing number of people of color on the island was perceived as a threat to white elite. There was also heightened fear that white women were vulnerable to free men of color and that they needed protection from both slaves and “semicivilized men of color” (Hartkopf Schloss, 1997, p. 226).

Current French Definition of Whiteness

It is important to recognize that those laws are not in place anymore but that the collective memory and the social imagination of who belongs and who does not is reproduced through the language used to describe each of those groups. For instance, Fassin (2006b) recounts a story in 1996 highlighting unknowingly (because he never used the actual concept of

whiteness to describe the details of this story) how whiteness is part of our everyday French language and how we construct race without even mentioning it. A teenager was murdered that year and the leader of the National Front (Jean-Marie Le Pen) quickly commented in the news how it was a racist crime committed by a Moroccan individual against a French person. The only hint he had to come up with such a description of the alleged murdered was his name and what he looked like. This young man was of a slightly darker complexion than what a “French” person is supposed to look like. In reality, the alleged murderer and the victim were both French citizens.

The words being used to describe “true” French citizens illustrate the insidious presence of race. Racial differences, through arbitrarily constructed physical differences, become the social marker of normality and abnormality. Being white means being a “normal” French person while being of a darker skin complexion means having race as a marker for an “abnormal” presence on French soil. Other terms are currently being used to refer to “genuine” French individuals (we will come back later about the perceived natural differences along culture) such as *français de souche* (French with French roots), *français de France* (French from France). In reality, those statements are no more than statements about one’s whiteness and perceived necessary attributes necessary to be called French; those statements reveal that a French person is commonly thought of as being white (Fassin, D., 2006a; Fassin, E., 2006b). The French government (Bébéar, 2004) as well as some 1500 corporations (Bébéar & Sabeg, 2004) have now accepted the term “visible minorities” (as of March 1, 2007) in order to talk about diversity, but other words such “second generation”, or people *issu de l’immigration* (who are the product of immigration) are used to uncover the lack of authenticity of one’s frenchness (or whiteness). It is critical to understand the construction of the term “visible minorities” in the context of white

privilege. Since race (as a social signifier) currently has very little legitimacy and ground for debate in France, politicians – understanding that racial discrimination is a now social fact (in part as a result of the pressure coming from anti-racist organizations) – have developed a strategy to enumerate victims of racial discrimination by creating (following the Canadian example) the term “visible minorities.” This term has the legal and political advantage not to make any mention or references to race (and therefore to circumvent the currently illegal practice of collecting data along race, religion, and ethnicity that could be used against the members of society identifying as such). However, this term has been used in Canada to specifically refer to “people other than indigenous people, who are not part of the white race, or do not have white skin” (Bébéar, 2004).

A 2004 report conducted on behalf of the French Prime Minister, Jean-Pierre Raffarin, to address the diversity and discrimination in the work place, the term “visible minorities” started being used to refer to what the authors call “fellow-countrymen of foreign origins.” The author, Claude Bébéar, argues that this term was chosen in order to comply with the 1978 law that prohibits the collection of data such race or national origins. Terms such as white, black or any terms, which would identify somebody by his/her “race” or “origins,” would have been illegal. In that sense, using “race” (as a social marker) could not be considered as a way to measure discrimination.

To avoid such references to race, this 2004 report (Rapport Bébéar) came up with the term “visible minorities” which remains a highly racialized term that has the benefits (at least to French officials) to not bring race to the forefront of the discussion while maintaining its existence (with no name). Whiteness is present but not acknowledged. What is even more interesting in this report is the way in which words are used interchangeably to talk about visible

minorities. They are either referred to as fellow-countrymen of foreign origin or as immigrants, *maghrébins*, blacks and Asians who are of French nationals. If race was truly not an issue or something that would not need to be addressed then the members of those groups would all be called French nationals. In another part of this report, the unemployment rates of college graduates are compared along the following categories: citizen of French stock, foreigners from the European Union, naturalized French and foreigners from outside the European Union (Bébéar, 2004). The question is not so much that there are meaningless in themselves but rather the way they are constructed. How far back should one go in somebody's ancestry to be considered French of non-foreign origins? What about can there be a conflation between foreigners from and outside the European Union with naturalized French? In a sense, the way France deals with the question remains problematic because it seems that there is no ending to it. The only thing that one can really point out is that some are whites or of European origins while others are not. Whiteness is once again present and represents the non-possibility for those who do have access to it to be considered French (in the non-legal sense of the word). Those words, which like any other words have important social meanings, represent the complex but socially real and salient presence of race, racial categories as well as whiteness as social markers in the French imagination and more importantly in the policies relating to immigration, assimilation, access to jobs and housing.

Having presented some socio-historical evidence about the construction and presence of whiteness in France, the next step is to inquire about the possibility that whiteness continues to be a salient characteristic of French society. Is whiteness constructed the same way as in the past?

Research question

Contrary to what some might think, I am not trying to portray the French as racist. I want to use this research to highlight the problems behind some of the so-called discrimination laws by showing that the way French society talks about race is inconsistent with the current advertised solution to discrimination. The so-called solution might actually be part of the problem. There seems to be a real disconnect or disjuncture between the call to end discrimination, the language used to enforce it, and the policies. The goal of this dissertation project is to try to apply one particular American-centric contention (i.e. whiteness) onto the French case. The purpose of this dissertation is therefore to research and understand how the construction of whiteness affects contemporary issues of race and racial discrimination in France. This particular issue of whiteness is linked with race especially in relation to other contemporary events such as colonialism, current policies around citizenship, immigration and law enforcement (Jugé & Perez, 2006). The central questions for this dissertation is: *How is whiteness made invisible in France? How does whiteness contribute to the social construction of race (or lack thereof)?* More specific guiding questions related to this theme are: How is race talked about in France and how does it affect racial inequality? How do French people understand race and its social relevance in French social institutions? How is the racial language (or lack thereof) used to reproduce whiteness in France? How does France reconcile its call for integration (with universal values) with its social construction of the “other?”

This dissertation is organized as follows: Chapter Two will review the socio-historical literature on issues of race and whiteness in France. Whiteness represents the center of this research. The applicability of this concept in a different environment has historically been

shown. The construction of blackness was founded on the assumptions that whites were the normal group and the yardstick by which slaves, people of color would be measured against. Blackness and whiteness are therefore disassociated (Dyer, 2002; Hooks, 2002). It is therefore critical to assess the historical meaning of race in France, and how past policies, ideas and behaviors have shaped the contemporary meaning of race. The language used to address discriminatory practices in the law as well as the language (in politics and in the media) revolving around issues of immigration will be looked at in order to determine the frame used to ignore or reproduce racial hierarchy in France. In a sense, it is also important to look at the impacts of culture, integration and racial imagery in French society, and some of the consequences these factors might have on people of color.

Chapter Three addresses some of the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of this research. I will address how race has been explained theoretically and how American-centricism can be applied to the French context. Omi and Winant's Racial Formation Theory (1986) represents an important starting point to explain how race has been constructed, destroyed, changed for political, economic and social reasons. Race is not only the product of group dynamics through the formation of identities and laws but also through individual use in dealings with social relations. This theory has been theorized further in *the World is a Ghetto* by Winant (2002). The author focused on the European case and France was addressed very succinctly. However, there is a lot to take from internal colonialism perspective especially when the majority of the people of color in France are from former French colonies. The link between colonialism and internal colonialism is made even more clear here when on analyzes the political, economic and social position of immigrants from former colonies in France. However, one of the arguments present in Blauner's theory of Internal Colonialism (Almaguer, 1971, 1975;

Blauner, 1969, 1972) cannot completely be applied in the sense that there is very little racial and/or ethnic nationalism in France; however, it might be developing as a result of difficult integration in French society. The theory of the Racial State developed by Goldberg (2001) also helps us decipher how race have permeated French political life. The racial state becomes the agent of change by which racial formation is facilitated. Laws, policies and the definition of proper social behaviors around race and racism facilitate the imposition of racial hegemony; while it remains subtle in France, it is nonetheless existent. Once the theoretical part is complete, I will move towards the methodology used to compile the data necessary for this empirical research. Some of the advantages as well as potential drawbacks will be addressed.

The following section will consist of the data. The respondents' answers will be analyzed in detail. However, because of the nature of the research method, the responses will help us infer certain tendencies about how the French deal with race and how whiteness might be an integral part of their thought-process. It would also be unfair, based solely on this research, to argue that the French are racist. However, it can tell us a lot about how some individuals talk about race (or its nonexistence) and racial discrimination (or its lack thereof), as well as the possible solutions. Solutions might also reveal more about the state of minds of those respondents because it will go at the heart of what they think the problem might be. When people are asked to answer questions on a topic as sensitive as race (especially in the French context), people might feel reluctant, offended or surprised, and their answers might be vague. However, when the respondents somewhat detach themselves from any responsibility by providing solutions away from their personal actions, it might reveal some of the internal (not yet revealed) feelings about those issues of race and racial discrimination.

Chapter Four will address the results on my survey and the interviews conducted after the survey. Some general trends will be examined around the meaning of what it means to be French, about respondents' interpretation of race, about the role of culture in how respondents analyze social problems in France, whether racism is perceived as an individual or institutional problem, about the perception of who really face the most problems racially speaking, as well as the meaning of integration and who should integrate, and finally the link there might exist with colonialism

The last sections will be a discussion of the results followed by a conclusion that will include some recommendations for future research in this matter.

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Chapter Two

Background on Race in France

France and its racial/racist past

More than just talking about race or racism, the purpose of this dissertation is to understand how France refers to and/or socially constructs race, racism, racial discrimination, equality, and the solutions implemented to buffer society from racism. Those solutions can also provide information about how the problems are being understood by French society.

Some of the answers might be found in the image France portrays of itself to the rest of the world as an open-minded, racist-free society (while this might have changed with the rise of the extreme right) who welcomed black American soldiers, artists and singers right after World War I, and also as the defender of Human Rights. The *République Française* (French Republic) is perceived to be the guardian of *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité* (Liberty, Equality, Fraternity) for all its citizens, and any forms of racism, discrimination or oppression would be sanctioned by *l'État* (the State). *L'état* becomes therefore the institution that would maintain equal access to resources, and would ensure that all forms of discrimination would be outlawed and punished. This assumes that *l'état* is always neutral and does not reproduce any negative, discriminatory, or racist behaviors, feelings, attitudes as policies are being enacted and enforced.

However, can one then talk about FranSSe (to refer to its Neo-Nazi past with the collaboration of the Vichy government) symbolically to refer to the real racial problems that have plagued French society for centuries the same way Bonilla-Silva talks about AmeriKKKa to refer to the racist foundations of the U.S.? This way of spelling “FranSSe” was actually used by a French rap artist to denounce the neo-colonial politics of the French government, and also to

demonstrate how a segment of the French population feels alienated and discriminated against (AFP, 2006). It is without saying that this resulted in controversies, and the actual problem(s) illustrated or voiced by those artists remained unexplored or not discussed. Those lyrics actually led to a French *député* (the equivalent of the U.S. representatives in Congress) to write a law that would prevent any perceived attack on French social institutions and to what he called anti-white racism (Assemblée Nationale, No 2957, 2006).

Despite the real racial problems that exist in France, France has not followed the same racial and racist trajectory as the United States. While the history of France has been deeply involved in slavery and colonialism, most French individuals who might engage, knowingly or unknowingly, in racist behaviors, do so without understanding the social and historical meanings behind their actions. This is similar to some of the arguments made by Bonilla-Silva about white Americans when he talks about racism without racists (2003). However, this seemingly excusable ignorance continues to haunt people of color in France. French citizens as well as their political representatives are reproducing language, thoughts, legal actions that were used during the colonial period. The language has obviously changed but the meanings behind those words seem to continually perpetuate as well as consciously and unconsciously produce images of the “other”, the one that is not really worth being called French.

The main difference between France and the U.S. really has to do with the openly discriminatory policies that permeated American society while France never had such policies on its metropolitan territory, except during the Vichy government in 1943 under German occupation. In that sense, instead of talking about racism without racists like Bonilla-Silva, one should probably talk about France as a place where you have *racism without race* (Chebel d’Appollonia, 1998).

In that spirit of *racism without race*, this dissertation will not be an attempt to make a link between contemporary France and its historical past but rather to show that this link is reproduced continually through a set of symbols, laws, and the perceived open-mindedness of French social institutions. In actuality, French social institutions continue to make things worse by continually denying the salient presence of race as a socio-historical construct. France has a long history of colonialism. Culture, as well as race, was used as a justification for the treatment of those who were perceived as inferior (Chebel d'Appollonia, 1998). From the onset of the French revolution in 1789 with the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, members of French colonies and slaves were not included in the proclamation of equality for all (Aldrich, 1996). Some of the French colonial assumptions revolve around the superiority of the French civilization compared to the non-European cultures. It was understood that Europeans were superior culturally and biologically; that modern science, the revolution, the capitalist economic structure of European countries as well as white skin gave them the right to raise the inferior peoples – Indochinese, black Africans, and Maghrébins – to a higher level of civilization that came to be known as the *mission civilisatrice* or the civilizing mission. Aldrich (1996) argues that it became a “moral mandate for expansion” (p. 92).

The use of the colonies for economic expansion, development of new markets and use of labor was coupled with the right of Europeans (understood as culturally superior but also as having white skin) to conquer inferior populations. As a result of this cultural and economic expansion, debates arose around the way France would deal with the *inferior* peoples. The debate mostly revolved around the choices France was made between carrying out a strict assimilation or *francisation* (Frenchification) of the indigenous peoples or using the indigenous structures to establish their economic and cultural goals. The rights superior races had over

inferior races were rarely questioned and almost became a natural consequence of colonialism (Bancel & Blanchard, 2005). This current attempt at “frenchifying” those who are not “naturally” French provides important elements about who qualifies under such a system, and those who want to impose such requirements in order to fully reap the benefits of being born in a country.

In the mid 1880s, Prime Minister Jules Ferry was quoted as saying that it was the duty of the superior races to bring civilization, medicine, education and morals and this was part of the humanitarian side of colonialism. His argument was centered on the fact that France could not stand for equality while Africans were receiving severe punishments and were living cruel lives as a result of their inferior cultures and the iron cage of their civilization. It was therefore the duty of France to intervene and to bring them civilization. This call for colonialism to “civilize” inferior races operated around what Bancel and Blanchard (2005) called an “epistemological rupture” (p.37) where colonialism is a natural consequence of the formation of the *République*. The colonizing *République* creates a distinction between whites and the extra-European populations as a form of discrimination in order to apply the universal principles of the *République*. While a lot of political debates emerged in the late 1800s, Aldrich (1996) argues that the French population was more concerned about unemployment and wages and remained fairly unaware of what was taking place in the colonies, yet the colonies were a remedy to these ills.

From the 1880s to the 1920s, France’s colonial policy started using, among other tactics, a more overt racial policy. The goal was to exaggerate the cultural differences across groups in order to control them economically, politically and socially. While it became easier to control opposing ethnic groups, France eventually wanted to remove the differences that existed between the colonies and the *métropole*. While it was expected of all colonized people who were granted

civil rights to behave as a French person, the rights associated with citizenship did not apply to most of the indigenous masses even though they had to fulfill their duties as French citizen. France was trying to establish little Frances while turning “Africans, Asians and islanders into French men and women of a different colour” (Aldrich, 1996, p.110). Racial inequality became a fundamental factor in the imposition of the republican model, yet it was cast as an inequality of citizenship. Civilization was the main requirement. The racial essentialization of populations, which was at the origin of the civilizing mission, eventually disappeared from political speeches and arguments from political proponents of on-going colonialism because the goal became obvious: to civilize the racially inferior peoples (Bancel & Blanchard, 2005).

This civilizing effort was eventually met with skepticism, opposition and disgust. The novelist Anatole France stated in 1906 that “Whites do not communicate with blacks or yellow people except to enserf or massacre them. The people whom we know as barbarians only know us through our own crimes” (cited in Aldrich, 1996, p. 112). This quote provides some critical aspect of how race played a major part in French colonial thought. While culture remained the way to bring indigenous people up, race was understood as being the main reason for their inferiority.

The 1930s were marked by a slow decline in openly racist ideas but was instead replaced by a more subtle, nonetheless racially charged, form of condescending paternalism (Aldrich, 1996; Reynaud Paligot, 2006). Reynaud Paligot (2006) points out the paternalistic colonial train of thought that was centered on the idea that the duty of the mother nation was to educate its colonies the same way a mother raises her child, and to ensure her development to adulthood. It was thought that helping the colonies on their way to civilization was as difficult as raising a child.

During that same period, colonialism came to be understood as a more humane and modernizing endeavor and the indigenous peoples became to be known for having qualities that could benefit the French empire. Despite some political opposition, some 25,000 Algerians known as *évolués* (which could be translated as educated and sophisticated like the French; a group of people who had been ‘Frenchified’) were granted French citizenship. While having citizenship was critical for one’s position in the colonies, being white retained some sort of assurance for one’s status of dominance, especially if you were a *petit blanc* (or poor white) (Aldrich, 1996).

France and its racial and cultural superiority

The justification for French and European superiority was rooted in emerging scientific racism. Earlier texts suggest that Europeans began using the Bible as a justification for their innate superiority (Mohawk, 1992). Eventually, the contact with other cultures made them believe that certain practices, not encountered in Europe, were the product of unnatural behaviors that hinted at the inferiority of certain groups, e.g. Muslims were associated with strange sexual traditions and practicing castration. Those behaviors were supposedly widespread outside Europe and were used as an example to demonstrate the natural civilized characteristic of the Europeans (Aldrich, 1996).

One of the leading researchers in the matter of race in France was Arthur de Gobineau (1967) who published in the 1850s his *Essay on the Inequality of Races*. The technological advances of the Europeans prompted “scholars” like De Gobineau to start rationalizing Europeans’ perceived biological superiority. Those ideas became widely adopted and eventually provided more incentives to expand French imperialism and the civilizing mission. De Gobineau

(1967) stated, “any true civilization comes from the white race. This is what history teaches us” (p. 187). This idea was publicized and reproduced in numerous books and articles earlier in the twentieth century and it was argued that the needs to expand as well as the vocation of the colonizer were naturally manifested in the colonial policies of the *Third République* (Reynaud Paligot, 2006).

Gobineau’s book, *Essay on the Inequality of Races*, among others, provided some of the opinions and feelings people eventually used when talking about blacks and Africans. For example, Blacks were thought to be sexually powerful, which contributed to their animalistic traits, but the color of their skins was a representation of darkness and evil in the thinking of white Europeans. In 1922, Lévy-Bruhl, a philosopher, published a best-seller describing the differences between the way the civilized and the primitives think, and he eventually ended up reproducing popular ideas that the primitives were not capable of abstract thinking and conceptualization. He also argued, following missionaries’ ideas, that the way primitive children learn is similar to the way civilized children learn, but that it eventually slows down and stops (Reynaud Paligot, 2006). The Minister of the Colonies between 1920 and 1924 and from 1932 to 1933, Albert Sarraut, observed that the cultural characteristics of what makes a black person (lazy, indolent, and distrustful) are hereditary. As a consequence, the civilizing mission becomes a necessity that the good-willing superior French would undertake (Girardet, 1972). Jules Ferry thought those inferior races were still at the stage of childhood. Therefore, it was the duty of the superior race to bring to the inferior civilizations intellectual, economic and moral development that they would not have encountered without the tutoring of the superior race (Girardet, 1972; Reynaud Paligot, 2006). As a result the implication was evident that inferior races were thought not to be able to develop themselves by themselves to a level of civility already attained by the

superior civilizations. Ferry, who was Minister of Public Instruction (a.k.a. education) from 1879 to 1880, thought that inferior peoples had the capacity to assimilate and to progress in the social hierarchy. He therefore believed that they could progress to the level of the civilized without nonetheless asserting that it would lead to equality among human races (Reynaud Paligot, 2006).

More recently, one can have a sense of how colonized peoples were treated and perceived in Fanon's books *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963). The critical insider perception of the treatment of colonized peoples gives us a more comprehensive sense of the alienation and dehumanization felt by those populations, but also a sense of the entitlement and affirmed superiority expressed by the colonizers.

How is race talked about in France and how does that effect racial inequality?

Universality is a central aspect of what France stands for. Differences are not welcome because they represent a threat to the type of equality the *République* wants to represent (Kastoryano, 2002). Eventually this universality is supposed to be neutral. However as Bancel and Blanchard (2005) argue, this universality is represented historically by political figures. The neutral universal man as found in political circles, the media, and intellectual and economic thinktanks is a "white man from the middle and upper social classes" (p.34).

One can also consider the evolution of racist thought in the French political arena. Let's just compare the following three quotes to examine how race, racism and racial thought represent important factors used to explain certain political decisions in each conjecture.

First, the King's representative to the Admiralty, Comte Guillaume Poncet de La Grave, argued in 1762, that having blacks in France would disfigure the French nation:

The introduction of too great a quantity of negroes in France – whether in the quality of slaves, or in any other respect – is a dangerous consequence. We will soon see the French nation disfigured if a similar abuse is tolerated. Moreover, the negroes are, in general, dangerous men. Almost none of those to whom you have rendered freedom have refrained from abusing it, ... [they] have been carried to excesses dangerous for society (Peabody, 1996, p.74).

Poncet de la Grave was one of the main instigators of the *Déclaration pour la Police des Noirs* in 1776. Statistics gathered out of the registries of the time show that this perception was a lot more personal than an actual reality since there was, in 1762, a very small proportion of blacks in comparison to the total population of Paris (Peabody, 1996).

Second, President General De Gaulle, who was known for his courage during World War II and was also recognized as a powerful head of state who stood up against the power of the U.S after the war, was quoted as stating:

We are, before considering anything else, a white racial European people with a Greek and Latin cultural background and of Christian beliefs (...) Try to integrate oil and vinegar. Shake the bottle. After a while, they will separate once again. Arabs are Arabs. French are French. You think that the French nation can absorb ten million of Muslims, who tomorrow, might become twenty million et the day after tomorrow forty million? If we were to go forward with the integration process, if all the Arabs and *Berbères* from Algeria were considered French, how would you prevent them from coming and settling down in the French metropolitan area, where the standard of living is so much higher? My village would not be called Colombey-the-two-churches (Colombey-les-Deux-Eglises),

but Colombey-the-two-Mosques (Colombey-les-Deux-Mosquées)! (quoted in Stora, 1999).

Tournoux (1967) argued that President De Gaulle was not too thrilled of the idea that by the end of the French empire with the passage of the 1946 constitution, millions of people of color would be given local autonomy and access to the French parliament for representation. They constituted in a sort new French citizens, future voters and possible future elected officials as part of the newly formed French union, and not as part of the French empire. He was quoted saying that he did see “how 45 million French people could absorb 10 million of infidels” [Muslims] (Tournoux, 1967, p. 307). He could not foresee millions of Arabs becoming the equal of whites. Some of those feelings were due to the increasing birth rate among Arabs and the idea that with integration, France would not be France anymore.

During another interview De Gaulle went one step further in showing his disgust for Blacks and for what they represented in his eyes:

You know, that is enough now to talk about your *nègres*. You are getting me mad, we only see them. You have me welcome them, you have me invite them from breakfast. I am surrounded by *nègres* here... And then, it does not even matter! Leave me alone with your *nègres*: I don't want to see any of them over the next two months, is that understood? Not a meeting over the next two months. It is really not because of time constraints, but despite that it is fairly boring, it gives a really bad image outside [France]. You see some *nègres* everyday at *l'Élysée* (official Presidential house). And then I can assure you that it does not even matter (Interviews with Jacques Foccart, November 8, 1968; quoted in Foccart, 1997)

Third, one of the most recent quotes from President Chirac, when he was still Mayor of Paris in 2002, revealed some of the most blatantly prejudiced feelings he had for people of color:

What is the most urgent: to save the identity of French people or to accept all those, using political arguments, who would like to come and get on welfare, and to use our hospitals and our universities? Our problem is not the foreigners, it is more the overdose of foreigners. Maybe it is true that the foreigners are more numerous than before the war, but they are different, and it makes a difference. It is certain that having Spaniards, Polish, and Portuguese working on our soil, create fewer problems than having Muslims and blacks. How do you expect a French worker and his wife, both working and, making 2150 dollars a month, and who see as his next door neighbor, a family composed of a father, his three or four wives, and about twenty of his kids, making 7150 dollars from welfare, without of course, working . . . and if you add the noise and the smell; well this French worker becomes crazy. And it is not racist to say that.

Those quotes not only show the historical basis for racist thought in political life, but they also reveal who the foreigners, the others are – the ones that bring France down. It is not those who do not behave as good French citizens, or those who have committed treason against the French nation but rather France’s racial subjects who are not perceived to be “naturally” inclined to benefit France. They could be citizens, legal residents, but they are not because their racial identity presents a problem. The racial characteristics remain heavily rooted in the anti-immigrant mindset.

Immigration has been a major source of conflict in France over the last twenty-five years. France has seen the rise of the extreme right and the repositioning of the moderate left party (the

socialist party) and the right political party (the different parties that emerged out of the post World War II Gaullist party) around critical issues of immigration, citizenship, culture, communities vs. French nationalism, labor, the European Union but very seldom around the issues of race and racism *per se*. While the aforementioned issues are important to research, French scholars, sociologists, as well as other authors have shied away from questioning race as a social construct.

However, some authors such as Kelman (2005a, 2005b) have tried to bring up the issue of race but it rarely makes it to the national debate. He argues that the French tend to address Blacks in France as if they were still all rooted to the motherland, Africa, and that they should all know about their African ancestry. His argument revolves around the idea that the French have in a sense essentialized French Blacks as just being Africans. Instead of being treated as French citizens, the French continually address them as Africans, because of their skin color. There are not hyphenated identity in France as it exists in the U.S; one is not known as black-French or African-French, just African. Kelman argues that France is a multiracial society but it does not mean that blacks and whites should fall into the traps of constant identity politics, which would lead to not seeing men. Kelman's arguments depart from black Americans whom he disagrees with when it comes to constantly looking at the past to help us understand today and tomorrow. While he firmly rejects colonialism and the institution of slavery, he argues that those events should only be studied to prevent their reoccurrences and that they should not be used to always make blacks the victims and whites the oppressors. However, he realizes that race (as a social construct), being black, does not currently equal fair treatment and complete equality. In a sense, while he claims that a black person should be treated as a French citizen (not as a former African) he also maintains that race continues to represent a significant factor in our society.

Similarly Sagot-Duvaurox (2004) goes to the heart of the problems encountered by young black men and women who, despite being born in France, are still referred to as children of immigrants. His analysis of how black youth are still expected to know they are Africans first and foremost creates ambivalence in the way they identify themselves. While France can cite an ancient history that the U.S. cannot claim, it contributes to the idea that there has been a clear continuity in French history while all U.S. citizens were at point immigrants. This continuity of French history needs to be debunked in order to allow those young black men and women to be considered fully French. One of Sagot-Duvaurox's main arguments is that the language used everyday by French people continues to create and reproduce a sense of superiority rooted knowingly or unknowingly in the historical relationship between France and its former colonies. Consequently, Black youth have a difficult time dealing with it. While blackness remains visible and meaningful in the French mind, *la blancheur* (whiteness) remains invisible and meaningless, or so we think. Blackness is racialized and associated with crimes and lack of morals. Black people continually have to prove their frenchness because politicians and many in the general population have not accepted them as French. It comes from the idea that because their parents were born somewhere else and might be passing on important cultural values to them it prevents these same young people from being considered French. In reality, they are struggling to balance their real frenchhood and their parental cultural values. It is assumed that they might not be able to understand what it means to be French.

One of the major contentions in France is that since race is not biological, it should not even be addressed as a social construct for fear of creating more tensions and reinvigorating race as a biological construct. Rightly so, France refuses to see race as something fixed or as an essential concept; however, it also sees race as purely ideological construct that the French state

combats everyday through a set of legislation. Using Omi & Winant's points in *Racial Formation* (1994), race is neither an essence nor is it a reified concept with no real meaning.

The concept of racism in France has often been associated with discrimination based on the biological notion of race, particularly in the law. It has also been extensively studied regarding anti-Semitism, religious issues, and cultural differences but very rarely on the basis of race as the perception and assumptions associated with certain human bodies (socially not biologically). Taguieff (1995) points that while anti-discrimination laws address race, the language used around this concept remains very unclear and vague in its use, e.g. biological construct or social construct. Chebel d'Appollonia (1998) also questions the meaning of race being used from 1948 in the Declaration of Human Rights to the most recent anti-racist pieces of legislation in France. How can France claim that race does not exist but still mentions it in its anti-discrimination laws? Contrary to Taguieff (1995) who is not sure on the definition of race in the law, whether race is meant in a social or biological sense, Chebel d'Appollonia (1998) argues that it is a way of reproducing race from a biological standpoint. Chebel d'Appollonia (1998) argues that belonging or not belonging to a race should not be a factor of discrimination, but no clear definition is given of the word race.

On one hand, while race is mentioned as something that should not be taken into account; this is based on what I call a reactive mechanism that relies on the assumption that race does not exist biologically but in the case that somebody would discriminate against another individual based on this old obsolete idea the laws would sanction that behavior. On the other hand, when new legislations are thought of in order to deal with race or to present a proactive mechanism, race (as a social construct based on the experiences of people of color in our society) is not considered an adequate factor to integrate in the legal language, which could explain the timidity

by the institutions to engage in a French style affirmative action (*la discrimination positive*). This irony is also represented in this project of law introduced in November 2004 to remove the word “race” from the French constitution as the biological meaning of such was irrational, and that the constitution was actually legitimizing its use by naming it (Assemblée Nationale, No 1918, 2004). Ironically, the term *visible minority*, used after a Canadian definition (see introduction), has been adopted by the French government to refer to those who are not considered whites. It seems like a bad attempt to show that race (as a social construct) matters without admitting to it?

However, Perret (2004) analyzes the 1881 law of non-discrimination with the freedom of information in the French press. Her understanding of the law as well as her analysis of more current cases reveals that written documents can be considered racist when the author insists on the ethnicity of a person or a group to devalue his/her honor or to provoke. It is therefore possible to talk about black, African and Maghrebian communities as invaders incompatible with the Christian and French culture as a form of racist discourse engendering hate. Individuals can be found guilty of either racial defamation, racial insult or racial provocation. However, a key point is that the group being targeted has to be identifiable. Perret (2004) insists on the fact that those groups have to be determined enough that it is possible to talk about them as an objective entity. While this law provides tools to combat racially insensitive remarks in the press, it is not applied consistently because of difficult procedural litigation. Moreover, when an infraction has been condemned, enforcement of the law and applications of sanctions remain rare.

While European anti-discrimination policy in the 21st century has made references

to race, France has refused to integrate this concept into its own anti-discrimination policies (Guiraudon, 2004). France is continually rejecting, circumventing and distancing itself from such a social concept (Calvès, 2002). Therefore, the struggle for racial equality (while it is not thought of in those terms), or more commonly understood as non-discriminatory ideals, revolves around the French republican idea of equality through sameness, or through the access and duties associated with French citizenship.

Mbembe (2005) argues that France's incapacity to deal with race revolves around the old (still being defended) idea that France is an exception, and that the universal idea of the *République* will welcome everybody and will solve every problem associated with discrimination. However, this notion seems to be overstated since France has never tried to engage in a postcolonial debate, and therefore still considers others, and people of color, as the wretched of the earth. Sagot-Duvaurox (2004) talks about his marriage to a black woman from Mali and the way people would talk about their son. While it would seem almost natural to people around him and would not pose any threat to them if he was to claim that his son is black, the same could not be said for his wife if she was to claim that her son was white. Sagot-Duvaurox (2004) argues that people might claim there is nothing wrong with being black, so why isn't she claiming his blackness? While there might not be intentional malignity in this statement, it is nonetheless problematic in the sense that for her to claim her son's whiteness would be an attempt to become equal, and of course, everybody knows that it is not possible. This in a sense represents an informal one drop-rule in France. Fanon (1967) would reiterate that point by arguing that the colonizer wants the colonized to progress to the level of the colonizer, the colonizer, however, would not allow this to happen.

While Weil (2005) agrees that most individuals of color are victim of discrimination, he does not see “*la discrimination positive*” (affirmative action in French) as a solution for France. However, others have argued for the compilation of statistics on what is called in France “visible minorities.” Kelman (2005b) argues in favor of *la discrimination positive* that could only be achieved by adopting methods for collecting the data. Simon & Stave-Debaugue (2004) focus on the incoherence of the anti-discrimination laws in France. The references to ethnicity and race are rejected in favor of well-established and less embarrassing characteristics, which make the analysis of social discrimination more complicated. Using “race” as an objective indicator of discrimination would therefore imply that it already exists, and since it is not believed to be the case, then using statistics to objectively demonstrate the existence of discriminations would only make things worse.

Terms such as “immigrants” or “foreigners” are currently used to depict visible minorities and other groups who face social problems and /or whose integration is perceived as problematic. While the official definition of “foreigner” is any person living in France who does not have French citizenship, and the official definition of “immigrant” is any person who live in France who born foreigner in a foreign country (Haut Conseil à l’Intégration, 1992; Insee, 1999), those terms are vague and usually misused. The terms “immigrants” and “foreigners” might be used to talk about children of immigrants, who themselves were born in France and who have never experienced issues of migration (Simon et al, 2004).

How is the racial language (or lack thereof) used to reproduce whiteness in contemporary France?

Maurin (2004), in an interesting study of the French ghettos, talks about the segregation of the French and the foreigners, without clarifying what he means by foreigners. Some references to some ethnic and religious identities are mentioned but the problem really seems more cultural than racial. A main part of the problem in the way discrimination is talked about has to do with the lack of understanding of the words and phrases being used everyday. This is the case in particular when a French person claims to not see that his/her friend is black *anymore* as a way of proving his/her colorblindness. However, claiming not to see somebody as black does not mean it was not the case before one met that person, and that it might still be the case with other black people that a person does not know personally. It is almost like stating that before we were friends, I saw the black person (and all the stereotypical images that comes with it) in you but now you are not black. This type of question would be perceived as absurd if a black person were to say to his/her friend that he/she does not see you as a white person anymore.

In his socio-historical study of French citizenship, Weil (2004) addresses laws and political decisions that were based on racist ideologies. However, in doing so, he mixes ethnicity, race and religion. While it provides very critical information about the development of what it means to be French, his analysis about the use of race to determine access to citizenship and the other goods in society remains superficial in this regard. Weil (2005) goes on to claim his opposition to any statistical analysis, which would be linked to race, origins or other social factors. This argument stems from the legacy of the Vichy government in 1943 who compiled statistics about Jews in order to control their population. Therefore, it is considered an aberration to gather statistics on people, which could be considered like a lightning rode to the formation of communities, which is said to be contrary to the French tradition (Lévy, 2005). Collecting ethnic

data would go against French Republican values of universality. That type of data would reinforce the formation of communities and would diminish the possibility of integration since certain ethnic identities would remain anchored in French social institutions. Since there is no language to address race and racial discrimination, addressing racial privileges that whites still enjoy daily remain a foreign idea in the collective mind. However, it does not mean that racial discrimination does not exist nor does it mean that whites do not reap the benefits of their whiteness.

Another very convincing way to convey an image about the *others* is by only referring to them with epithets while never naming them openly. This is particularly true when politicians talk about immigration and the impact it is said to have on French social institutions, economy and security issues. Last March for example, a few weeks before the 1st round of the 2007 Presidential Elections, a few individuals were stopped by the police in the subway for not carrying the appropriate transportation tickets on them. After an altercation with the police, other people started rebelling against law enforcement officers. As a result, a few youth were detained and charged with fairly minor crimes, which could have nonetheless carried out a few months in jail.

This particular incident is critical in the way politicians and the media picked up on this incident and how those youth were depicted. As soon as the event was reported, the Minister of Interior announced that the main suspect in this altercation with the police was a young man from the Congo, who was described as having come to France 10 years ago illegally and at that time had 22 crimes on his record (Cornevin, 2007). Thirteen other persons were arrested in relation to this incident but there was no mention of where they were from and how their criminal record became public (Daccord, 2007). It is also important to put this event in

perspective. This young black man became the symbol of the problem of immigration, of immigrants who enter the country illegally and who do not respect French laws. Most newspapers described him as a man from the Congo who had entered France 10 years ago illegally, and who was depicted as a violent offender with a profound hate for law enforcement authorities (Cornevin, 2007). His blackness, his immigration status, his foreign nationality were linked to crimes, and how France has to protect its borders, enforce its laws in a stricter manner and ensure the integration of those do not know what it means to behave as a French person. However, the next day his attorney revealed that he had come 10 years ago as a result of family reunification and he was in process of picking his legal papers the following week. It was also revealed that he had only 7 minor infractions on his record. After this event, issues of national identity, immigration and insecurity became central themes during the last three weeks of the Presidential campaign (Domenach, 2007).

Culture and race

Silverman (1992) argues that the “idea of a common and trans-historical culture defining the French nation has been a powerful means of racializing the “French people” (p. 8). While Silverman’s point provides important historical arguments to understand the current situation, race, as a social construct, remains, nonetheless, a foreign concept for French people. However, it becomes difficult to explain racialization without the use of racial language, and this is why culture has become one of the most critical arguments used in the debates revolving around integration, immigration and citizenship. Can *they* integrate? How should *they* integrate? While it seems clear that immigrants are expected to integrate in French society and its universal values, the universal values are rarely discussed? After all, if you are really French, you should know!

Culture represents the socially transmitted set of ideas, traditions, customs, and language passed on from generation to generation. Like in any other culture, there are dominant ideas and traditions as well as regional differences within the same territory. It would be difficult to argue that there are not any cultural differences at all in France from Paris to Marseille to Toulouse (such as the accent people have in those regions), to the more rural areas where life is centered around agriculture. Despite those obvious undeniable differences, no one would contest the fact people living in all those areas are French. Language is also a source of unification across those regions. While the French have been extremely active in maintaining French as the main language of the land (Toubon Law in 1992) because of the fear that its use is being threatened by the English language in many French social institutions. This Law also put an end to the teachings of Regional languages such as *le Breton*, *le Corse*, *le Tahitien*, *le Catalan* and *l'Occitan* in schools, which were authorized in 1951 with the Deixonne Law. While French is now the only official language of the land, it is possible to think some people might continue to speak those regional languages or dialects in their homes. They are nonetheless still considered French citizens.

The next important question about culture is centered on those who are not legally French and who could gain French citizenship by integrating into French society. Since French citizenship is not awarded automatically based on soil rights, those who are in France as non-French citizens would need to identify with the French culture, speak the language and understand their duties and responsibilities as future French citizens. Sagot-Duvauroux (2004) argues that young men and women that are referred to as children of immigrants have a lot of difficulty identifying with their parents' culture and language because they are born, raised and socialized in France. While they did not choose to be born in France, Frenchness fell on them the

same way it fell on children of French citizens. They are seen as a foreign body that cannot assimilate to French culture. They would eventually have to prove themselves to be worthy of French citizenship. What happens to French citizens who do not understand the culture or do not speak the language? Is their citizenship repealed? By requiring those young men and women to integrate, are we assuming that there is a clash of civilization (Hajjat, 2005)?

On the other hand, my children by being born in the U.S. are U.S. citizens because of soil rights, but also French according to blood rights. They are now two and four years old, they have spent a total combined time of one month and half in France, understand what I say in French but do not speak French well, and they are French citizens. My wife could also become a French citizen if she were to prove that she can carry a simple conversation in French. As a result, our oldest daughter (my wife's biological daughter from a previous relationship) who is ten could then become a French citizen without having to prove that she speaks French or without ever going to France. We would just need to request it before she turns eighteen years old.

What is assumed here is that being French, culturally speaking, is either something inherent (blood right) for some and has to be learnt for others (for those who do not have French parents). However, those who are being asked to learn to be French have done so at the same pace as those who became French citizens as birth. Both have been raised and socialized in French schools, taught how to speak French correctly, have taken pleasure in participating in the athletic, artistic and social scenes in France. The only difference one is considered French, the other has to prove it.

It is therefore necessary to look at the historical meaning of the civilizing mission during the colonial period. The civilizing mission aimed at transforming culturally, socially, economically and politically people who were deemed inferior by the French colonizers. While

some would argue that the civilizing mission has been abandoned with the end of colonial imperialism, some would suggest some of the international NGOs still operate within the same altruist and modernizing paradigm (Brauman, 2005). One could probably analyze the operation led by a few activists in Chad who wanted to rescue around one hundred children from Darfur (Prier, 2007) as an example of 21st century civilizing mission. However, in December 2007 Chad courts found the members of this organization (*Arche de Noë*) guilty by kidnapping children who were not from Sudan. This apparently altruistic operation reproduces images of white European colonizers trying to rescue, with emotion and heartfelt sympathy, black children who were caught in the incivility of African countries. This operation was apparently solely organized by white French citizens who decided what was best for these children while they were, in reality, kidnapping them.

It can be also argued that those who are the most impacted by the idea of integration are the children of those who emigrated from France's former colonies in the 1950s-1960s for labor reasons. It is therefore not a stretch to think that those populations who were not equal during colonialism and could not gain citizenship (one could talk about the *Décret Crémieux* in 1870 in Algeria where about 370,00 Algerians Jews were awarded French citizenship automatically while Algerian Muslims relegated to the status of natives) or were perceived as continually inferior culturally despite their efforts to change (Fanon, 1967) are the descendants of those colonized populations that politicians and many French individuals refer to as visible minorities, children of immigrants and so on.

Reynaud Paligot (2006) argues that the colonial policies did not include those who were considered *indigènes* (natives pejoratively speaking) and she points out the universal law of unity and equality applied in France since the French revolution was not extended to them because of

race. Race became an integral part of colonial law. The *indigènes* of the colonies could not get automatic French citizenship by being born on French soil according to the 1889 law. Other scholars, such as the economist Leroy-Beaulieu, defined colonialism as an investment for a future [economic] supremacy (Girardet, 1972) and contested the loss of power by whites, who were considered the real French and the most intelligent, in the French Antilles where he argued that blacks were not capable to rule over whites nor could they rule themselves, and thought that it was foolish to have an inferior race rule a superior race. His son stated, in 1904, that “today’s blacks are inferior, really inferior to whites” (Reynaud Paligot, 2006, p. 260)

Culture becomes a proxy for race and racism because culture is more acceptable than race (Hajjat, 2005). A cultural hierarchy was produced. Bonilla-Silva (2003) refers to this practice as cultural racism, where different populations are racialized (it is understood that you can determine one’s culture through one’s external physical characteristics) and defined through their culture, which appears and is continually perceived as inferior without claiming biological inferiority.

Culture becomes the reason why *they* should integrate. Scholars such as Taguieff (1988) have made very powerful arguments about what the new right represents and how while this political movement does not use any racial language, they advocate for cultural differentialist ideas.

Differentialism

French scholars such as Pierre-André Taguieff (1988) refined the concept of differentialism to address the new right wing racism (a modern form of national-socialism that is a nationalistic, non-Marxist, anti-imperialist, non-egalitarian and culturally homogeneous

racism). Interestingly, this new form of racism revolves around the rejection of integration or assimilation. Integration should not be forced because groups should be able to maintain their culture. The new right wing looks at liberalism as problematic. Instead of talking about racial superiority, they are developing a differential cultural assertiveness (which claimed to be non-racist) that both Europeans and people of the Third World should relish. However, these politics of exclusionism are based on the principles that “humans by nature are bearers of culture and distinct cultures are incommensurable” (Spektorowski, 2000, p. 298) which means that equality is not desirable because there isn’t any quality that can be compared to in each of those cultures. They have replaced the discourse in inequality by the hierarchy of preferences and feelings. There is just an “objective” difference between ethnic groups (Chebel d’Appollonia, 1998). The development of the Third World (against the imperialist forces) will benefit the ethnically-closed homogeneous development of Europe. In a sense, by asserting the right to innate cultural differences, they are maintaining the impossibility of coexistence between Europeans and others. It is a Social Darwinist approach in which people are constrained by their different cultures (Spektorowski, 2000). Members of ethnic groups are free to choose their differences (Chebel d’Appollonia, 1998).

However, Taguieff, himself, has been caught falling into the racial arguments by talking of anti-white racism. He was quoted saying at a conference that “racist people are not all *‘petits blancs.’* Victims of discrimination can also be racist and anti-Semite. There are as many forms of racism as there are social groups” (quoted in Fassin, 2006b, p. 122). Those types of arguments are already used by Americans opposing affirmative action policies. Their arguments call an end to any form of discrimination (Martinot, 2003). As Martinot (2003) argues, a double-bind occurs. The dominant group does believe in restoring historical wrongs by creating new forms of

discrimination, and the minority groups who have been the historical recipients of discrimination rely and depend on the dominant group to enforce anti-discrimination policies and provide equal opportunities. However, nothing really changes because of the contradictory expectations of those groups, and it results in the status quo. In other words, the system of privilege has historically benefited, knowingly or unknowingly, and remains in place. Whiteness remains and it is made more invisible, because race is not assumed to have any social relevance.

The colorblind idea of race is revealed here arguing that race should have no place in French society, but in order to prove this point, whiteness is highlighted and the only worth mentioning when one talks of racism.

How does France reconcile its call for integration (with universal values) with its social construction of the “other?”

While the question of racism, in Europe and in France in particular, tends to be discussed in terms of individual prejudice that can be solved through understanding and interactions (Lentin, 2004), it nonetheless affects racial minorities usually referred to as either “foreigners” or “immigrants” as a whole. One should not presuppose that this racism is only due to the *Front National* (or National Front) and its very overt anti-immigrant/pro-French ideologies that are perceived as racist. While it has a lot of truth to it, the conclusion that only members of the *Front National* share those ideas and no other political party share historical responsibility in this regards would be misleading. In reality, as Lentin (2004) shows, racism and the European notion of universalism are indivisible. While Europeans and the French specifically believe that racism is an individual aberration, the key making people equal is by creating equality based on a moral

basis. However, one can only understand the universal notion of mankind when compared to the pervasive notion of racism. So in order to create the universal man, one has to create the inferior and the superior through the use of race.

Integration (assimilation)

When the French call for integration in the French nation and its values towards equality, it posits itself as the defender of human rights as defended by being French means (or being a white man). It also represents the refutation of the concept of race as science that leads to the use of culture to talk about inequalities, and the necessity for others to integrate the nation under the call of universalism. Since 1955 (Blanchard, 2005), France has been advocating the idea of integration for extra-European immigrants (can be inferred as non-whites). The idea behind integration appears as the model that extra-European immigrants have to follow in order to be part of French society. In a sense, immigrants have to show their desire to belong to the French nation and therefore take part in the duties associated with being French. However, it seems that since it was constructed in particular to integrate extra-European immigrants, this concept of integration is not just a pro-French stance that all immigrants have to follow but rather a concept that applies to members of former colonies. In that regard, non-white immigrants coming from former colonies still need to be civilized.

The concept of integration *à la* French is based on the egalitarian values of the *République*. Inequality will disappear when everybody becomes part of the nation, in the sea of sameness, no one can be left out. “Others” have to show their commitment to duties and the role associated with French citizenship. It, therefore, means that you have to understand the universal

value of Frenchness, which was historically constructed in the paternalistic enterprise of colonialism (Jugé & Perez, 2006).

The call for integration was very important in the 1950s when the struggle for a “French Algeria” started and represented a symbol of transition between the semi-colonial Algeria to the new, more humane, more just and more fraternal Algeria. The call for integration represented a synthesis of three main issues: maintaining French sovereignty, the promotion of Muslims to an equal civic status and an effort to continue economic and social progress. This idea of integration was presented as a myth to the Algerian population in contrast with the call for independence (Girardet, 1972). This myth that would have integrated the Algerian population in the French Algeria in order to bring people together for the economic and social development of the nation of France resembles the current call for integration. Integration in France represents the respect of France and the understanding that certain duties come with becoming French (Weil, 2004b).

Corcuff (2003) argues that the “integration” paradigm became centered on what he calls a “national-racial” rift where the conflict shifted from social class issues to structural relationships between the nationals and the foreigners. Moreover, the conflict became cultural (Hajjat (2005) would say racialized) and the real problem was thought to be now an immigration problem and not a so much economic problem.

The call for integration remains very problematic for those who are in France and who have been raised and socialized in France. How does one become French? French citizenship is not awarded through soil automatically but rather through blood. What does that really mean? Is Frenchness something transmitted biologically from one generation to another? At this point of my life, I have already witnessed this very truth. My two children have been awarded French citizenship right after I made the declaration of birth at the French consulate in Los Angeles.

Thanks to my citizenship, which was also verified through my parents' citizenship, I was able to allow my children to have dual citizenship. Why are my children, whom I love so deeply, awarded French citizenship while they currently speak only a few words of French, while they have only spent a couple months in France, while they do not understand what the French culture entails yet and who might in the future define themselves more as Americans than French? They were awarded this right without ever proving themselves. On the other hand, young boys and girls, young men and women born in France from parents who have immigrated in France over the last four decades for economic reasons cannot claim French citizenship right at birth. They can request it (depending on a few other legal requirements) between the ages of 16 and 21 (Weil, 2004a) but it can be denied if they have committed delinquent crimes (Sagot-Duvauroux, 2004).

The result of that naturalization process which is supposedly aimed at making sure that those children of immigrants (not French yet) understand the culture, the language, the duties associated with being French might lead to four different forms of identity (Sagot-Duvauroux, 2004): Frenchness, French citizenship, self-identity and what others see of you. Sagot-Duvauroux (2004) insightfully argues that *Frenchness* is something that you do not control, something that is the result of your everyday experiences, which develop through daily encounters with other French in schools, in the media, through language and the cultural meanings that come along with it. *Frenchness* is not something one merits but rather a state of mind that one develops as one lives his/her life; it is something that just falls on you.

How do individuals understand race and its social relevance in French social institutions?

Research conducted by French sociologist Wieviorka (1992) addresses how French citizens feel about race, racism and discrimination. Across the country, many ideas emerged about who are the others, and the problems they might be creating. One of the most interesting findings in Wiervorka's research is the lack of understanding of what race represents. The researcher, as well as the interviewees, makes little mention about race. They address racism by talking about "foreigners", "immigrants", or the "others". While there are a few references to whites and blacks, the analysis revolves mostly around the fears of the respondents, and they do not express them other than by those vague terms.

In this regard, the notions of race and racism are understood by the French in general from a personal direct lived experience. Racism is perceived as a major affront to the universal idea of mankind, and therefore those who engage in those types of actions can only be individuals who might have psychological problems (Lentin, 2004) who need to be re-educated culturally. This understanding of racism posits the idea that racism is apolitical and that the state has had no involvement in the development of racism. Individual respondents and anti-racist organizations (supported by the state) continue to make racism a personal problem. They cannot fathom the possible existence of structural discrimination. It tends to be linked to bad politicians or bad people, but racism cannot be possibly rooted in the institutions, and the political, economic and social agendas of the state. In his studies of the level of racism in French society, Wieviorka's (1992) research revolves around the fact that racism (in individuals) emerges as the result of social conditions. By understanding the feelings of the respondents, he is able to draw a portrayal of what makes French people racist. However, his research tends to suggest that racism remains an individual issue. There is no real analysis of systematic and structural discrimination.

Racism is now also understood in basic cultural terms, which would suggest that groups are only struggling to preserve and maintain their cultural authenticity but from this perspective it is also assumed that there is a real homogeneity in those groups. While Lentin (2004) finds this definition of racism as purely cultural problematic because it overlooked the true racialization and racial hierarchy in society, others like Taguieff (1988) argue that it is a new form of racism, especially post-World War II.

Balibar and Wallerstein (1991) refer to a new form of racism that emerged in France in particular with the decolonization movement, with new migration movements. They argue that similar to the U.S the new racism revolves around a racism whereby cultural differences represent the true incompatibility of people's lifestyles. This is what Taguieff (1988) calls differentialist racism. Anti-racism is argued to be a new form of racism because biological races do not exist, and therefore racism as the formation of a biological hierarchy is nonsense. However, it is perceived that people are just members of historical cultures (i.e. you cannot dissociate yourself from any cultures; you are a passive recipient), which turns "diversity" on its head. However, one of the major arguments is that to prevent racism we need to avoid abstract anti-racism (Balibar & Wallerstein, 1991).

Racism: an individual or institutional problem?

Taguieff's quote (above) goes to the heart of what is considered the most serious form of racism: individuals to individuals. When he is quoted as talking about anti-white racism that most usual victims of discrimination also perpetuate, he is mainly addressing individual actions. Scholars, politicians and the law have, for the most part, defined racism as actions perpetuated by individual actors. While people of color are the "usual" victims of racism, it is argued that anti-

white racism is just as bad. I will not argue that it does not exist at the individual level and/or that it is not bad. However, when one focuses too much on the individual actions, one omits the insidious effects of policies and institutions. Moreover, the roles of powerful individuals in charge of those political, economic and social institutions and their power to influence, shape and legitimize a social public discourse that will reproduce hegemonic ideologies remain too often unexamined and/or not historically contextualized.

While there is some serious legal problem in trying to bring justice to racist and discriminatory acts, in part due to the problem of language referring to racial discrimination, little has been written about the institutional practices that are reproduced everyday through policies and discourse. While it is obvious, not everybody is racist, knowingly or unknowingly, little attention is paid to the immigration laws, integration and safety prevention legislation as a tool of discrimination. It is often hidden behind the idea of the French exception of *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*, of the French nationality, of the conservation of the French culture.

Chapter Three

Theory & Methodology

It is necessary, therefore, in planning our movements, in guiding our future development, that at times we rise above the pressing, but smaller questions of separate schools and cars, wage-discrimination and lynch law, to survey the whole questions of race in human philosophy and to lay, on a basis of broad knowledge and careful insight, those large lines of policy and higher ideals which may form our guiding lines and boundaries in the practical difficulties of every day. (W.E.B. Du Bois, 1897, p.2)

Question of objectivity

It would be extremely problematic to strictly adopt and apply concepts developed in American universities to describe American society and use them to the French case. Some of the concepts and ideas developed in one particular society might not always have the same meanings. Therefore, a strict application of a concept developed without providing cultural context to French society would lead to anachronistic interpretation.

However, while a strict application of such concepts would be difficult it does not preclude the fact that French scholars like me have to reconcile their academic knowledge with their personal experiences. Therefore, I am in a unique position of being able to apply my skills and abilities as a scholar whose graduate education was acquired for the most part in the U.S. to interpret the social experiences in France regarding race/racism by providing new words and explanations not yet used in the French context without reifying those same concepts. In this regards, I am able to both step out and analyze important social experiences while at the same time using my social location and experience as an insider to provide new meanings. My experience around race in France was not the result of my education in the U.S; however, my

graduate education in the U.S. has provided me with some tools to be able to decipher and analyze issues revolving around race and racism in France.

Objectivity lies in the methods and the detachment that scholars should apply to the research study. However, the dominant paradigm tends to give credence only to the objective non-personal experience in order for research to be valid. In the Chicano sociology tradition, scholars are also actors that describe and talk about their experiences but remain nonetheless critical. In this research study, I represent the Insider/Outsider which means that my personal experiences should not be denigrated and the expertise that I have developed as a scholar in an American university should also help me find answers to some of the confusing experiences that I, as well as other French people, experience when dealing with issues of race/racial discrimination in France. Merton (1972) regarded the insider position alone as problematic because it might limit some of the work a researcher might accomplish while being within. Some emotional and/or political interests might prevent the researcher from being completely “objective” and also because those who might claim insider knowledge are often members of non-homogenous groups, such as women who might be stratified around race and class (Griffith, 1998). However, there is a definite complex relationship between the social location of the researcher and the individual and the collective historical experience of that researcher in that environment, which can lead to a better understanding of social events. Can a French person (as an outsider) who just landed in the U.S. understand better the problems of racial oppression in the U.S. than African-Americans, Chicana/os, Asian Americans (all insiders) even though they might be stratified differently around class, geographical areas and historical relationships with the dominant group? Despite that stratification, the insider seems to occupy a position of epistemological privilege. It also demands some type of training to understand what to study and

how to study it. In a sense, one might call this a position of expertise, detachment or an outsider. My insider knowledge of France and French people (by mastering language and meanings alone) gives me access to them. I also understand that I have to negotiate my position as an outsider because of my occupation as a sociologist and the possible pre-conceived ideas some French people might have about them. In the tradition of Chicano sociology (Mirandé, 1978: 1982), too much emphasis has been put on “objectivity.” Mirandé (1978) states, “the cult of objectivity has become a shield that hides the cultural myopia of the social scientist” (p. 302). So by the position as an insider (my Frenchness) that I occupy I would like to present a “broader and more humanizing perspective that is sensitive to the needs and concerns of socially disadvantaged groups” (Mirandé, 1978, p. 305). However, my insider presence as a white French person might also prevent me from understanding people of color. Therefore, I believe that the combination of insider (Frenchness) coupled with my outsider (scholar educated in the U.S) will allow me to bring forward issues that other French scholars might not see because the knowledge they have developed have come from the same institutions that reproduce racial hierarchy in France. Therefore, by using my insider/outsider presence, I can help decipher and identify how people of color are being treated and whether they are being subjected to racial oppression through the eyes of white French people, who might not always understand how their view of French society impacts French people of color.

Feminists of color as well as scholars of color more generally have been extremely effective at arguing against the idea of the always-objective-outsider by proposing to look more closely at the experiences of those who are under study, by listening more carefully to the voices of subjects of our research through standpoint epistemology (Harding, 1991). How does one become aware of his/her own experiences? Can one then be objective?

I am an insider in this research because of my French upbringing and my relations to the problem at hand. How did I see myself? Was I just French? Why didn't I develop a racial consciousness the same way my friend from Martinique did? This research represents the introspective analysis that I have sought for a long period of time. While I am an insider, I do believe that my analysis can be objective. I mean *objective* in the sense that it is important to understand the meanings of action and words through the subjects themselves. I am not anti-French and I am not seeking "evidence" to show that the French are racist. Rather, I want to find answers to the questions that emerged as I became closely linked to my friend from Martinique. The answers can be positive or negative so it is important to examine closely some of the reasons and explanations to my internal troubles and to my friend's own feelings of alienation, which still seem to remain unexamined. It is therefore critical to learn how my friend developed the interpretations she has about her own environment and how I missed on interpretations. The disparity in her interpretation and my view of the environments we lived in came from our social actions and experiences that have been constructed in different ways. The main question is why this divide is so wide.

Coupled with my education in the U.S, I am also an outsider to what is currently being researched and talked about in France. I am an outsider in the sense that most of my newly acquired knowledge, conceptual ideas and theoretical understandings about race relations come from American academia even though I started reading a lot more books and articles from French people of color (such as Frantz Fanon and Aimé Césaire), who have produced a wealth of ideas and experiences not readily referred to by mainstream society and academia. I have developed a scholarly expertise, which allows me to step away from my personal experiences, but at the same time, allows me to understand first hand how whiteness might be constructed in

France. Harding (1991) talked about “traitors social locations” as the places where people who have privilege, like me, can undermine this form of privilege in order to politically understand the position of those who are not as privileged, and to find a way to challenge the institutions that grant such privileges (Kurks, 2005). The ultimate goal is to eventually get to see and examine (it is more difficult to experience) the world through the eyes of subordinated groups.

I can foresee criticisms coming from social constructionist that might argue that I am constructing categories, groups, relationships that do not exist in France. I will try to answer this concern later but some of the experiences that led me to this point as a scholar can be answered by theoretical points. This does not mean that I am creating social signifiers that do not exist in the French context, but rather that I am highlighting or uncovering what is being thought, what is being used to determine people’s access to power and resources and what makes somebody French in the legal and non-legal ways.

While I hope to use personal experiences to answer important questions, it does not mean that those experiences should be generalized to all French. What it means is that my experiences as well as the data collected during this research project will help me infer important points about how race/racism and racial formation have been historically constructed in France. It is also critical for me to show that I am not treating race as a “thing,” or reifying race. Following Bonilla-Silva’s points in a response to the criticisms (Loveman, 1999) he received for his use of “race” in his theories, he argues that “race is a way of *otherizing*, of excluding” (1999, p. 903), but most importantly that race refers to a set of social relations that is always being contested (Omi & Winant, 1994).

Race is socially real even though it is not experienced the same way in each and every society; it also does not mean that every single individual who has been ascribed to a racial

group will be political, economically and socially impacted in the same manner by this ascribed status. Hanchard (1994) states that race functions “as a shuttle between socially constructed meanings and practices, between subjective and lived, material reality” (1994, p.4). In relation to my own experience, I never had any racial identity as a white person in France until I was confronted with the blackness of my close friend, Charlotte. Blackness had been ascribed to her, and it became a signifier for her position as well as her fellow black counterparts in the political, economic and social realms of French society. It also means that while I did not have any awareness or [racial] consciousness like the one she has developed over the years, it does not imply that I was not directly or indirectly ascribed whiteness as a status.

As Bonilla-Silva explains “consciousness thus cannot be taken as the factor determining whether races have a social existence.” (1997, p. 900). Some have argued that race can only exist if people are conscious of their ascribed status (Loveman, 1999), and have called for the end of race as a social factor in favor of ethnicity, where people might be more in touch with their cultural identity (Loveman, 1999; Jenkins, 1994). The debate revolves around the meanings of social groups theoretically defined by Weber (1990) as conscious and behaving as a group versus a more Marxist understanding of the class-in-itself versus class-for-itself dichotomy (Bonilla-Silva, 1999). In summary, I am not creating race where it does not exist or reifying it; rather I am highlighting how race (as an explanation for social relations) has been used knowingly or unknowingly to allocate power, privilege and wealth.

The position I occupy as a French insider coupled with my training as a sociologist allows me to provide important insight and knowledge to the field of racial oppression (the term “race relations” implies a peaceful relationships between groups). Therefore, having tried to foresee some of the future possible criticisms, I cannot think of a better project than this one to

explain the many questions I have asked myself over the years on issues of race, or lack thereof, relations in France before I became a sociologist. Was I asleep or was I conditioned to not look at racial problems in France? I hope that this research will also help me auto-reflect on my personal experiences.

If my friend from Martinique was telling me about some of the racial issues that she was faced with, one can also imagine that she was not the only one. Therefore, if that was the case, why was nothing concrete done to alleviate her and others from the pain they might have felt at times? How can she talk about racial issues while France sees it as a non-issue? Does that contribute to the organization of French society? If yes, then what are the consequences?

I know that with this research I might be criticized for using an American-centric view of race relations (Wacquant, 1997). I, however, think that while not every single theory developed by white American scholars and American theorists of color can be applied universally in every single other society, some can be applicable to the French case. I make no excuse for the experiences I have gained across the two countries, and as a sociologist that would like to remain objective, I also have to admit that objectivity lies very often in what academia defines as objectivity.

Literature review

Many French scholars and others might argue that the current problem in France might be more cultural (Taguieff, 1994) and/or economic than racial. However, Lipsitz (1998) argues that focusing on culture has distracted us from really understanding the social structure, and therefore has resulted in inadequate explanations for understanding race and racial discrimination. Consequently, the solutions remain also deficient and focused on the wrong assumptions.

Racial formation

Omi and Winant (1994) define racial formation as “the socio-historical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed” (p. 55). This process is historical, political and economic. It is also important to notice that they define race as a “concept, which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies” (p. 55). Since there is nothing biological about race, those physical characteristics used to determine which human bodies will be the recipients of privilege or oppression is arbitrarily adopted by a society according to political and economic agendas.

Winant (2001) in his application of racial formation to the global sense briefly talks about France and points out Taguieff’s (1994) research on the rise of the new right racism or differentialist ideas. He uses Taguieff’s argument as an example for the applicability of this theory to France. Part of the reason why he uses Taguieff’s research as a starting point is because this research definitely responds to the particularities of French society but I also believe that since he might not speak French himself and/or have any real first hand experiences in France, he relies, rightly so, on a legitimate scholarly source.

Talking about bodies or physical attributes to determine one’s talent would send us back years. Therefore, culture becomes the unit of analysis while race (invisible signifier in France) continues to haunt people of color’s lives in France. However, Winant (2001) contradicts himself by selecting the rise of differentialism as a perfect example of racial formation in France. The use of differentialist racism as an example is not bad in itself but rather the focus put on culture is problematic. While Omi and Winant (1994) define racial formation as a socio-historical process whereby different human bodies are affected, Taguieff (1994) makes little references to

those different human bodies since culture is the primary reason for the emergence of this new racism. It is however possible to envision the use of racial formation and Taguieff's analysis of differentialism as an example for such formation of culture is understood as a proxy for race. While Taguieff's focus on culture is critical, it is even more critical to show that those so-called inherent cultural differences that the new right wants to focus on might be used as a proxy for the differences that might come with different bodies.

Omi and Winant (1994) also differentiate between macro- and micro-level of racial formation. This is a very useful tool as these two perspectives are linked through our everyday interactions and the formation of identities, which are also sanctioned through our economic, political and cultural institutions necessary to maintain a sense of collectivity. Race is therefore an individual experience as well as a collective understanding of social relations. Our individual consciousness and identities are shaped by larger structural meanings. Race therefore becomes an organizing principle of social relations (Omi & Winant, 1994).

Racial state

Goldberg (2006) argues that race is central to the development of the nation-state. He criticizes Omi and Winant's (1994) approach to the racial state because race and the state should be understood as conceptually interdependent. Race and the state are not discrete concepts; they mold one another constantly. The modern state and the racial state cannot exist with the existence of the other. The modern state is not only based on exclusions but most importantly on the internalization of those exclusions. Goldberg (2006) explains that "exclusions become internal to the possibility of inclusions, the latter predicated upon the realization of the former" (pp. 9-10). This means that race becomes a factor in the process by which one can belong to a

society or not, an object of subordination or a citizen. Goldberg's (2006) major point in *The Racial State* is to examine how racially homogeneous societies are promoted and how racial definitions contribute to this homogeneity. Goldberg (2006) defines the racial state as "as a set of projects and practices, social conditions and institutions, states of being and affairs, rules and principles, statements and imperatives" (p. 5), which contributes to racial exclusion. In contrast, Omi and Winant (1994) believe that "race must be understood as occupying various levels of centrality in different state institutions and at different historical moments" (p. 83) and as a result the state becomes a racial state. Goldberg presents a more complex view of the state, which is more than just "an autonomous political realm" (p. 6) and more than just a reflection of the political and economic conditions of a particular society.

Goldberg (2006) is also very critical of Mills' (1997) *Racial Contract* as he argues that it is founded on questionable assumptions. One questionable assumption is that two contracts emerged out of the formation of European states; which would imply that a race-neutral state existed. This assumption, according to Goldberg, hides Europe's racial identity or makes it invisible. He also criticizes Mills for assuming that individuals really took part in the social contract that founded modern states, and that the outcome of those agreements represents the current structure. He is skeptic about the idea that people really agreed to such a racial state; it was for him more the result of the slow and complex development of the modern state. It is not the result of a social or racial contract but rather the deep-seated belief that some are incapable of providing for themselves or meet their civilized needs; therefore, the state is there to provide these necessities. It is rooted not in the contract but in the natural idea of modernity given to civilized Europeans. In that sense, the internalized belief of superiority is reinforced in the ever-changing definition of race, its visibility and/or invisibility.

The naturalist conception of the state, as it was argued in the 17th century, has been eventually replaced by what Goldberg (2006) calls the historicist or progressivist state. The racial rule present in the progressivist state is the result of the assumed superior development of Europeans. It can be witnessed in the example of colonialism, which was at times used as a way to protect colonized women from their colonized men. France was to bring protection to women and civilization to the men. This idea has been ushered more recently in the events surrounding the veil. The French government prevented young women practicing Islam from wearing the veil in public schools because it violated the separation of church and state, but also to ensure that the veil (perceived as a symbol of oppression for women) would not represent a symbol of women's subordination. While the naturalist used biology to assert non-whites' inferiority, the historicist proclaims that whites have been able to shape their history while non-whites have a backward and/or underdeveloped agency, which necessitates the help of the superior agent or colonizer. Goldberg (2006) summarizes this thought by saying that "such agency [non-whites'] has to be promoted by developing their potential for self-determination, saving natives from (pre) historical selves, the effects of their underdeveloped or uncivilized conditions" (p. 89).

Internal colonialism

Inspired by Frantz Fanon (1963, 1967), Kwame Nkrumah (1965) and anti-colonial activists, the theory of internal colonialism refers to the state of racial oppression experienced by people of color within the society they live in. Several scholars have attempted to develop a theory that would describe such oppression. Barrera (1979) defines internal colonialism as, a structured relationship of domination and subordination which are defined along ethnic and/or racial lines when the relationship is established or maintained to

serve the interests of all or part of the dominant group...in which the dominant and subordinate populations intermingle (p. 193).

The root of the problem is the capitalist system, which requires a reserve army of labor to maintain the constant extraction of profit necessary for the ruling class to maintain its economic, political and social domination and power. The formation of a secondary labor market contributes to the state of subordination that people of color find themselves in. Others such as Johnson (1972) defined an internal colony as,

a society within a society based upon racial, linguistic and/or marked cultural differences as well as differences of social class. It is subject to political and administrative control by the dominant classes and institutions of the metropolis.

Defined in this way, internal colonies can exist on a geographical basis or on a racial or cultural basis in ethnically or culturally dual or plural societies. (p.66)

As Bohmer (1999) stated “white people are considered the norm and black people are considered different, unfamiliar and not quite equal.” In this theory, the state contributes to the reproduction of the capitalist system and at the same prevents any expression of self-determination through the co-optation of subordinated groups in social programs. In this theory integration is not the solution. The key is to create a consciousness around the level of oppression those populations are facing in the ghettos (Bohmer, 1999).

Blauner (1969, 1972) came up with four components of internal colonialism: forced involuntary entry, an attack on the cultural and social organizations of those who are colonized which is not the result of “natural” processes but a intentional destruction of those means and ways cherished by the colonized people, an oppressive relationship between the colonized people and the dominant ethnic group managing their lives, and racism as the belief that colonized

people have inferior characteristics which is reasoned to explain the necessary oppressive treatment they receive.

On the one hand, the internal colonialism theory provides critical references to the importance of race and racism in explaining the political, economic and social positions of people of color in a society. It puts race and racism at the forefront of the debate about inequality and the under-representation of people of color in the political, economic and social institutions.

On the other hand, some have pointed out the deficiencies in how the internal colony actually works. Numerous works (Barrera et al, 1972; Almaguer, 1971; Blauner, 1969, 1972) have pointed out what the internal colony actually means for a capitalist society but it does not comprehensively address the mechanisms of such a system. Can tokenism be the main explanation for the slow emergence of middle-class minorities? Bohmer (1998) also points out the lack of comprehensive analysis of the role of the state. Can the positions of people of color within a country be really similar to the relationships industrialized capitalist nations have with poor nations controlled through neo-colonialism?

Internal colonialism theory can be applied with limits to France. Most of the people of color living in France today have some types of connection with France's former colonies. Their situations as well as the ones of their children represent a life of political alienation, economic despair and oppression, and social exclusion (Maurin, 2004). However, in a different way from the U.S members of those internal colonies, the *cités* (French "ghettoes"), have not developed the same type of racial consciousness. While it is not to the same degree, a new consciousness has emerged. Members of the *cités* are torn between the culture presented by their parents for which they only understand basic ideas and also their understanding that they are French because they have been socialized in that social environment. Sagot-Duvaurox (2004) shows that as a result

of this difficult tension, they develop a new identity, a French *black* (not *noir*) identity. He argues that this *blackitude* is the outcome of a purely French problem that emerged from, in and for the French society to solve the rupture felt by the black youth with Africa and the white-dominated society. This black youth is confronted with four different factors: Frenchness, French citizenship, self-identity and identity defined by the other. This Frenchness is not something you choose, but rather something you have been socialized into, built, and culturally raised and educated with. Frenchness is something that falls on you. Citizenship, on the other hand, represents the equal political status in one society, but this has not always been the case for those who have been racialized. Belonging to a large community or nation like France was not always easy. Even today, French citizens of Guadeloupe and Martinique have to follow the cultural example presented by France, as a member of the European Union. The third factor and fourth factor are linked through the development of this *blackitude*, an identity that is at the margin of the communities the black youth is confronted with: the one that his/her parents present to him/her but that he/she has trouble completely understanding and the rejection by French society to see him/her as his/her child (Sagot-Duvauroux, 2004). This also explains the *Beur* identity developed. As Wadman (1997) states, the term *Beur* was used to “describe a generation that came into being at a junction of two national/cultural identities (French and Arab) but was not containable by either of them” (p. 85). Their existence is based on the exclusion they face from both groups. Those identities are created in the particular socio-historical context of France.

Theories of whiteness

Du Bois (1999) in his *Souls of Black Folk* discussed the notion of the color line. The color line signifies the type of experiences one will receive based on the social meanings of race in a particular place. Being African American, Du Bois (1999) developed a double consciousness

that led him to live a life of two tales. He saw himself in “a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world” (p. 3), meaning that being black in a white dominated society presents completely different experiences, interactions, feelings than one would have being among other African Americans who share similar life experiences, values and understandings about life, and about being part of an oppressed group. The flip side of his experiences represents what whites experience in that same society. As members of the dominant group, they do not have to develop that double consciousness because society is set up for them and their needs. They have the privilege not to have to think about what it means to be white (McIntosh, 2002).

Privilege, as an unearned benefit, can be understood as a form of disapprobation for those in the dominant group who refuse it (Kruks, 2005) but also an “unfair advantage, preferential situation or systematic ‘headstart’ in the pursuit of social values (whether they may be money, power, position, learning and whatnot” (Blauner, 1969, p. 22). Blauner (1969) also talks about racial privilege as not being just an economic matter but as,

a matter of status also. Jefferson Davis understood this when he said that Negro slavery raises white men to the same general level, that it dignifies and exalts every white man by the presence of a lower race” (p. 22).

However, since privilege is granted to some and not others, it nonetheless represents a special social status usually acquired at birth or through certain legal means. That ascribed social status will affect the life chances of those who were not able to have access to this special resource. Being privileged can also be explained as the power to define what knowledge is and what is true. Therefore, it is not surprising to see people of color as well as women calling for a more objective understanding of their positions in society. The outsider is usually the one

who has the privilege to define what is despite the obvious different experiences by those groups (Kruks, 2005).

White privilege in France seems to be even more difficult for the dominant group to acknowledge because as Kruks (2005) states, “the struggle against it [privilege] become cast as... an epistemological project” (p. 181). The dominant group in France would have to recognize both the importance of race as well as whiteness and the forms of domination it confers to those who benefit from it. As a result the beneficiaries of whiteness do not realize what it represents but those who cannot access this privilege understand and experiences the problems linked to a life without privilege.

Following De Beauvoir’s ideas (1955), Kruks (2005) argues that one “becomes” French and white in two different ways. It starts with ascription at birth and it is then negotiated through self-production by lived experiences. As a result, those who are born in France from non-French parents and are ascribed a status of foreigners are producing different identities. The struggle revolves around this sense of frenchhood they have developed through socialization and the refusal from the institutions to grant them the legal status of French citizen. They do not have access to the same privileges as those who are born in France from “French” parents. Should it be held against them that their parents came to work in France (labor commodities without any real political representation) and that they are being socialized in two different environments? A private one where their parents expect them to be part of their culture and a public one put forth by the French institutions where they will develop their French identities through the media, the schools and with their relationships with the state, through the police for instance.

As a result of these shortcomings, this research aims to combine the following approaches: (1) racial formation, (2) the racial state, (3) internal colonialism, and (4) theories of whiteness. My intent is to provide an analysis that reflects the cultural manifestations of racism within the unequal political, economic and social structure of French contemporary society in order to further understand how the macro and micro dimensions of racism as they unfold. The historicist approach of the racial state provides the most important backbone to this argument. While racial formation, internal colonialism and whiteness provide critical elements to understand the racial situation in France, they have to be understood within the larger historicist framework of the racial state.

Theoretical framework

This empirical project will attempt to demonstrate that the concept of whiteness can be applied and used when researching and studying race and racism in France, especially at the micro-level.

It is also critical to realize that a race is central and persistent aspect of French society. There is an assumption (Friedman, 1962; Sowell, 1984) as industrial societies develop that race and ethnicity will become irrelevant. The solutions to those racial and ethnic problems are often thought as a matter of better communication and understanding among people especially on the part of those “ignorant” people who foster and reproduce negative attitudes and stereotypes of people of color, but “systematic inequality and systematic injustice are built in the way nature of stratified societies” (Blauner, 1969, p. 22). The colonial period fueled racial hatred and as societies move away from this old global organization, one should not assume that the period has had not long-lasting consequences. The postcolonial period has not eliminated or restored the ills

of the global colonial past. In a postcolonial period, the “post” in post-colonialism represents the decolonizing nature of the colonizer but also and most importantly a new period of colonization (O’Brien, 1994), and whiteness serves and continues to serve as a tool to re-colonize the former members of colonies. However, as Blauner (1969) states,

in a racial or colonial capitalist society where the racially oppressed are a numerical minority, how can racism be overcome when the majority of the population gain from it and presumably will defend those privileges as national and objective interests? (p. 44)

Therefore the solution for the colonizer is different from a classic form of colonialism because in this case you cannot expel the colonizer.

The main idea is not to paint French whites as racist but rather to understand and explain their incapability to see race (as a social construct) as a major element of the problem of racism in France, and whiteness as a determining factor in French thoughts (micro-level), which are translated in policies (macro-level) that are not anachronistic but rather consistent with the way the state has historically and racially constructed being French.

While the racial discourse remains nonexistent in France, the universal mission of the *République* continues to deal with “others” in racial terms, while the dominant group (i.e. white) remains unnamed or invisible. The idea of common French identity (as opposed to multicultural/multiracial identities) is based on the universal notion of non-differentiation or neutrality which is nonetheless representative of the dominant group, i.e. “the neutral one is a white man from the middle or upper classes” (Bancel & Blanchard, 2005, p.40).

[INSERT GRAPH 1 HERE]

As shown in graph 1, the historicist or progressivist framework of the racial state is represented by an intricate relationship between the micro and the macro demands of civility. Those demands of civility are imposed by a historical white supremacist state that includes laws developed to protect the French nation from intruders or non-French people, to economically benefit those who fit in the fabric of French society but also with use of language which contributes to the definition of who is French, who belongs and who deserves goods and resources offered by this nation. Those laws and daily interactions implicitly reproduce racial meanings and racial ascription. Therefore despite a clear attempt not to address race, to make French society colorblind and raceless, the racial state contributes to make race a determining factor for political, economic, and civil participation in French society. It is not because race is not overtly discussed that social relationships are not racialized. These social relationships are racialized because of the historical meanings ascribed to those who are not white, and they are therefore less likely to be given equal status within this historicist racial state. They have to continually prove themselves to be fully accepted.

From a historicist state perspective, racial superiority is rooted in the historical development of people through their (or lack thereof) agency. The development of modern states reinforces the so-called superiority of whites over non-whites. So when people of color and immigrants enter a racial state they are faced with life choices dictated by that historical sense of superiority. They are therefore expected to change in order to become equal. The promise of citizenship, already attributed indirectly to Europeans in certain local elections, is possible through a metamorphosis that could lead them to become equal. However, the historical civilized mission is reinforced by their difficulty or impossibility to access whiteness, which has become

the key to equality in the political and civil society. They are reminded everyday through political, legal, economic, cultural and micro-level interactions that being non-white is a reflection of their inferiority, non-equal, subordinate, oppressive and underdeveloped status. This semi-colonized position represents their everyday lives.

According to Blauner's (1969, 1972) definition of colonized people, people of color in France occupy a position of semi-colonized. They have entered the country voluntary and freely even though they might have been pushed out for political and economic reasons, and they are colonized because they are relegated to low-skilled jobs (Meurs, Pailhé & Simon, 2005; Observatoire des Inégalités, 2006) and their culture is under attack. However, Blauner talks about the position of the Irish as a colonized people before they immigrated to the U.S they nonetheless chose freely to come to the U.S. and to Australia. I would suggest that while immigrants came to France freely and now occupy a semi-colonial position; their case is more complex because they were already colonized in their home country by the same nation that is colonizing them today. One of the goals of the civilizing mission was to present the grandeur of the French civilization and empire. Some of those immigrants therefore migrated to enjoy the benefits of being part of French society. As a result of this psychological colonization and the economic destruction of their country (Césaire, 1965) they migrated to France for better economic opportunities. However, as they migrate into France and start working, they are re-colonized because they are still holding on to what is considered backwards, underdeveloped and uncivilized by French standards. Bahbha (1990, 1994) reports that colonial legacy represents more than migration patterns. The social relocation of immigrants and their children is dictated by cultural and social norms presented as normal by French society.

Therefore, internal colonialism has to be rooted within a historicist framework of the state whereby the policies of assimilation in France frame people of color and immigrants as subjects to be civilized. Their ultimate development will be measured and achieved through the acquisition of French citizenship (or the promise to have access to it and be equal).

The current social and organizational position of semi-colonized people is not the “natural” result of contact and acculturation (using Blauner’s argument). It is rather the political processes of cultural transformation, destruction and alienation of people of color’s way of life. This is where the connection between the theory of internal colonialism and racial formation can be made. The position of racially oppressed people is the result of political and economic agendas, which at times have called for immigration in order to meet economic expansion, and at other times, they are perceived as those who cannot and/ or refuse to integrate into French society. The definition of race as a non-fixed, mutable concept allows us to point out to the way those groups are racialized, perceived as culturally inferior, as non-French and as cheap labor. Blauner (1972) states that “cultural exploitation further political control, which serves to maintain economic subordination (p. 33). While Taguieff’s research on differentialism is eye opening, I question his lack of emphasis on race and his over-emphasis on culture. However, Blauner (1972) captures the real idea behind the use of culture to further oppress others as he says that “racism can be defined as a propensity to categorize people who are culturally different in terms of noncultural traits” (p. 112). While culture is important, it is used as a proxy to identify racially visible groups. How can you be scared of children of Algerian immigrants, and all the cultural baggage that comes with it, if you cannot identify them when you interact with them. It takes subjectively selected physical characteristics to determine who is, in the French mind, really French or a child of Algerian immigrants. Those subjectively selected physical

characteristics are the product of the micro- and micro-interactions developed through the historicist racial state. Culture becomes the excuse as to why they cannot integrate, why they do not progress economically, why they are denied housing, while in reality race precedes cultures in determining who will get access to economic mobility and social capital.

Not only French society perceives people of color's culture as the problem but the legal order (racial state) administers the lives of those subordinate groups. They have to follow certain rules to be eligible for French citizenship, to receive welfare benefits and eventually vote. This same system does not apply to European immigrants as they share the general political, economic and cultural ideals. Extra—Europeans, even those born in France, do not qualify for such benefits. Similar to the classic colonial example their lives are being controlled by the colonizer. It is interesting to notice that while France colonized a large part of the world, those who were affected by French colonizers are still thought today as too distant from the French/European model. The civilizing mission either failed or is still in place in order to control colonized people. I will opt for the latter.

However, Omi and Winant (1994) argue that racial formation takes place both at the micro and macro levels. Young men and women born in France from immigrant parents struggle to meet the expectations placed on them by the French institutions. They are expected to become French and understand the duties that come with it. However, those expectations remain rooted in the model of the civilizing mission model that hoped to civilized people of color in their colonies. Therefore, at the macro-level they feel pressured by the way the racial state defines them. Since the definition of race changes depending on the political agendas, the racial state should therefore not be understood as a static thing but rather “as a political force fashioning and fashioned by economic, legal, and cultural forces (forces of production, of sociolegality, and of

cultural representation)” (Goldberg, 2006, p.109). In other words, the racial state defines racial populations, regulates the political, economic, and social relationships between the dominant white group and people of color. Whiteness represents this unnamed but known understanding that classifies you as French or not, culturally and politically. While you might be mistaken for another European it is not as problematic because Europe has been built in different ways but all have in common that civilized ability to create and transform history positively. If you do not appear European, or as extra-European, as visible minorities, as foreigners, as immigrants, as children of immigrants, as Arabs, as Blacks, as Asians and so on your allegiance to France might be questioned. You cannot claim Frenchness (even if born in France) the same way a white French person can because you represent hybridity, heterogeneity and strangeness that might be held against you as you proceed through the social imperatives of life.

The racial state also governs the positions of people of color in society because they have been historically defined, perceived and treated as inferior. Integration could only occur if minorities can adapt to the cultural and structural society but will eventually depend on how the dominant group absorbs them (Park, 1950). Finally, the racial state manages the economic opportunities people of color. One could mention the current proposed policy by the Sarkozy administration to regulate immigration purely on economic needs primarily and not on the reunification of the family as it used to be. Their economic positions are also regulated by the micro-level expectations as to who can perform a job the best. The notion of meritocracy is also rooted in the historical dimensions of civilization.

Using some of Onana’s (2007) words, I would say that whiteness [or lack thereof] is experienced daily as a form of *unnamed hegemonic oppression*. This unnamed [but well felt] oppression is experienced by the lack of access to what everybody has historically defined as

normal, as French, as civilized. While policies are preventing many from gaining access to equality, they remained invisible [at least their problems; they are not taken seriously; they are not being heard] or they expected to change to a point where there is no guarantee that change will bring about a sense of relief, a sense of humanity.

Whiteness serves as the norm to “help” people of color define themselves, show their true love for France, become immersed in the French culture and eventually become integrated.

[INSERT GRAPH 2 HERE]

As shown in graph 2, the *unnamed hegemonic oppression* is manifested at the micro level by the assumptions made by white French individuals about people of color. Using their own norms, values and beliefs, those individuals are using themselves as a yardstick to assess others. The language they might use, the cultural behavioral of how a French person should be like, the assumptions made about somebody else based on historical assumptions, the construction of images provide the framework by which people of color will be evaluated. As Van Dijk (1992) argues, micro-level realities of racism reinforce the macro-level structures of dominance in regards to group membership, neighborhoods, and institutions. Those different occurrences lead to a series of problems people of color might encounter in their everyday lives. They might constantly be subject to scrutiny to decipher whether or not they are really as French as they claim. In a sense, historical assumptions made about them precede any evaluations, and if they don't fit the proper image of what being French means they will have to demonstrate their allegiance to French society. While race is not overtly, and might be replaced by culture, cultural

assumptions made about people of color are made particularly because of the fact that they don't physically appear French. When such cultural assumptions exist, they are then expected to integrate, or in other words culturally change to the French mold.

If in any of those cases, they are not defined as successful according to mainstream society, the blame is to be found in their lack of effort and their refusal to be part of this nation, which eventually serves as a reminder that they are not good enough to be treated as equal under white supremacy.

At the micro-level, people of color already feel French at heart but socially alienated in their interactions with the white French population that still perceives them as foreigners, as children of immigrants, as Africans but rarely as French people (culturally speaking) with French citizenship (legally speaking). Reading Sagot-Duvouroux (2004) was amazing from the standpoint that I recognize myself in his writings. As a white French man who spent time in Mali, he developed a meaning for his whiteness, *blanchitude*, because of his contact with blacks. This identity development did not take place in France. I went through the same mental development in contact with my black female friend from Martinique in France and later on with my interactions with people of color in the U.S.

This acknowledgment of our whiteness was possible through the contact but also through the time taken to listen to the voices and experiences of people of color.

By acknowledging our whiteness, I think it is important to understand that it does not mean that it was not there before. Rather, whiteness ruled over our experiences with people of color without us even having to think about it. The contact or integration hypothesis widely shared in different societies has limits. Interacting with people of color does not guarantee any better life choices for people of color if members of the dominant group do not genuinely listen

to their plight. This idea may seem fairly radical or even revolutionary since the racial state has shaped policies and has socialized individuals to claim their historical superiority through the acknowledgement of their civilized ways that the “others” have not mastered yet.

Goldberg (2006) believes that sameness is perceived as being a value embodied in the homogeneous character of European States. Heterogeneity represents a threat, a danger to the modern state. In other words, by defining others (the external) through race, it is also implied that the internal is racially defined. While it might not be explicitly stated when one says that Blacks and Arabs cannot be true French, it is implied that only whites or Europeans can be. The state becomes the guarantor of that homogeneity which is eventually laid out in the different projects and institutions dealing with the danger of heterogeneity. However, I see, here, a need to interject Omi & Winant’s (1994) racial formation for their definition of race as a never-fixed concept, which gives the racial state (in Goldberg’s view) a more profound meaning. While the racial state might represent a set of projects, institutions, imperatives and so on, reproduced at the micro and macro level, the use of race (or its changing social definition) allows the racial state to fend away any attempts at challenging this so-called internalized homogeneity. As a result, people of color struggle to show their allegiance to France. Their physical appearance is often equated with inferior cultures as it can be witnessed in the everyday language and behavioral expectations of white citizens. People of color see no validation for their historical and cultural lineages (usually thought as non-French and/or non-Europeans). The construction of media images reproducing stereotypes contribute to the lack of representation as do legal matters that prevent many from feeling French and from being protected against racial discrimination.

People of color are faced with this *unnamed hegemonic oppression* that is reproduced at the micro-level everyday and gives them very little chance to be completely accepted. When they

speaking up and voicing their discontent they are seen as disgraceful to the French nation. When they do not come forward with their struggle, they remain invisible or only relevant when “riots” explode and they become associated once again with uncivilized characteristics. As long as white supremacy constructs equality as being white, people of color will be rejected. This rejection will not be argued to be the result of white supremacy since it is unnamed but rather by the so-called “lack of effort” of “others.” This can only serve as a proof that many people of color are not capable of being brought to civility. However, race continues to be ignored because French people do not perceive this conceptual idea as critical to the solution of the problem. Under white supremacy, colorblindness fosters this unnamed hegemonic oppression that cannot bring about positive solutions. Race has to be acknowledged, faced, and dealt with before we can wrap our mind around this idea of racial equality. By refusing to acknowledge race, and therefore the power of whiteness, the status quo remains and the historicist racial remains in place.

According to Goldberg (2006), as liberalism expanded (as described by Mill and De Tocqueville) race only became important in its denial. Goldberg states,

the erasure in the name of non-racialism rubs out at once the history of racist invisibility, domination, and exploitation, replacing the memory of an infantilized past with the denial of responsibility for radically unequal and only superficially deracialized presents. Racelessness is the legacy (p. 70).

Frenchhood and whiteness thus become synonymous. One ought not to think about being French as a matter of race but rather as a matter of duties and civic actions that will link to the French nation. However, not everyone born in France becomes French right away. The historical lineage of one person (ancestors born abroad for instance) might prevent that person from feeling French right away. Whiteness within this historicist framework of the state represents the

yardstick by which “others” will acquire French citizenship and become a French national. In that sense, even a French person of color might be questioned about his/her status. Can they truly be French? Do they have what it takes culturally to be French? How do they show their allegiance to the nation? Since a white German individual might not be physically distinguishable from a white French person, he/she already has an advantage in trying to fit in France and integrate. His/her physical features are not held against him/her nor his/her culture since he/she can pass as French/white.

White privilege can be reproduced by a racial state that itself states and engages in fighting racism without acknowledging its own wrong doing because the racial state in place is thought to be a normal historical organization of the political and civil society. It therefore does not appear to be a question of race anymore (racelessness is at play) but instead it is measured through citizenship (political or social) which is an extension of white privilege historically speaking.

Methodology

Since Winant’s Racial Formation theory is difficult to apply because France never openly created racial classifications, a way to show that it nevertheless can be useful to study the French case would be by gathering statements of how French people understand issues of race and racism at the micro-level. This would allow for a better description of the meaning of the laws passed in France.

Therefore, to accomplish such a task, I have developed an online questionnaire about racism (see appendix for full questionnaire). This questionnaire has been advertised in different media outlets where readers and participants all have an equal chance to answer. By

gathering responses on a detailed online questionnaire about race and by interviewing respondents in-depth about their views on race and racism, I will be able gauge how the French construct have racialized identities of the “other” or the foreigner by denying that race matters. This sample of French respondents affiliated with different political groups will provide answers about attitudes about racism in France regarding how they see themselves, how race is perceived, if their idealistic non-racial perceptions of themselves match the non-racial perception of the other or the foreigner, who is responsible for racism in France and how they understand integration (word used in France to talk about assimilation).

I expect to find convergent views around race regardless of political ideologies while views about racism (and its causes) will dramatically vary. At the difference with Wieviorka (1992) who only studied individual responses to draw a portrayal of popular racism, I intend to link those comments to the institutions to demonstrate that the construction of whiteness, exemplified in individual comments, represents the backbone of French covert racialized society. It is important to recognize that up until now no French scholar has really attempted to bring understanding about some of the words and meanings used around the problems of race and racism. It is therefore difficult to really develop a questionnaire about racism if we do not first decipher the true meanings behind the words used on a daily basis. One could imagine contacting one of the French national polling institutes and asking them to develop a survey about race and racism. However, the problem they would encounter would be about the language to be used in this questionnaire. Unless this survey is just about knowing if French people are racist, only basic questions could be asked. This research will represent an attempt to uncover the meanings behind some of those feelings. Recent polls have highlighted different feelings about the level of discrimination in France (BVA, 2003; CSA / Le Parisien / Aujourd’hui en France / I-Tele, 2006),

about the victims of discrimination (Zappi, 2001), the evolution and perception of what extreme right ideas represent and how they have now become part of mainstream French society (Courtois, 2000), about the role of colonialism in the current political, economic and social events in France (CSA / Le Parisien / Aujourd'hui en France Modernité On-Off, 2006). Those polls only present superficial understandings of the social reality of discrimination in France. It is therefore necessary through in-depth research combining surveys and interviews to dig deeper in the racial or non-racial meanings of such polls.

Moreover, quantitative research methods used for the study of race inequality present inherent flaws because “statistics is a system of estimation based on uncertainty... and the social concept of race affects how we interpret racial statistics” (Zuberi 2001). The researcher’s own bias about race will affect his/her interpretation of race and racial data. However, it takes more than a yes or a no answer to really understand what respondents want to convey. What is a foreigner? Is that the same thing as an extra-European? Who is French? (While Weil (2004) has already answered that question from a socio-legal perspective, do people define it the same way?) What is integration? Is it the same as assimilation? Are there true differences between the political left and the political right when it comes to issues of race and racism? What is a visible minority? All those questions demand a real effort to decipher how French people deal with the issues of race and racism.

This methodology derives inspiration from the critical race theorists who place race at the center of their analysis. The social construction of race and the reproduction of race overtly and covertly can be uncovered by listening to the voices of the subjects. While this method is usually used to help bring forward the voices of those who are being oppressed, I believe that my position as an insider/outsider will allow for the interpretation of the dominant hegemonic voices

within a context of white supremacy developed through the historicist racial state. Critical Race Theorists, according to Solórzano (1998), advocate the intersectionality of race and racism, the challenge to dominant ideology, the commitment to social justice, the centrality of experiential knowledge and the interdisciplinary perspective (Fernandez 2002). Smith-Maddox and Solórzano (2002) therefore call for researchers to investigate a problem by asking difficult questions of why and how. Scratching the surface and only asking people if they are racist or not does nothing to challenge the status quo or what seems so obvious.

Some of the advantages about this internet research method are that the respondents will more than likely be people who are intrigued by the topic of racism and might want to see what it is about, which also means that any political affiliations can be represented. It is not access to the internet that might make them more interested in the topic, but accessing the internet in the privacy of one's home might foster or facilitate a more neutral or non-pressured environment. I would also add that this method does present the advantage of allowing any social expression about this topic to be represented without having the feeling that one is being judged.

It also means that those who answer might be people that can be either very politically involved and feel strongly about their ideas, as well as people interested in the news but who are disillusioned by political parties. This method also allows for reaching a large number of people all across the country and not just in Paris and its surroundings. However, there are some obvious drawbacks to this research in the sense that it might not be completely representative of the population since not everybody has access to the Internet. However, this sample could be read as a stratified sample around factors of age, sex, and political affiliations.

While it has become more and more popular, the Internet has not yet reached the same saturation in France that it has in the U.S. (about 58% of the French population or about 30

million people use the Internet as of June 2007 according to Médiamétrie (2007) compared to roughly 71% in July 2007 in the U.S. (Nielsen-Ratings, 2007)). Therefore, the opinions and feelings of some might be left unheard. It might also mean that a younger population might be reached. However, this method will allow for gathering critical information about how French people (males and females), from different socioeconomic backgrounds, different occupations, and political affiliations interpret issues linked to racism and how they construct race. The numerous responses that I gather from this online questionnaire will provide explanations about what the policies enacted to fight discrimination, to prevent immigration and to enforce the laws of the *République* really mean.

A series of more in-depth interviews was then carried out in order to understand the white French mind as it regards to race, racism and the construction of frenchhood. I contacted about 55 people for follow-up interviews and I was able to complete interviews with about 25 participants from January 2007 to April 2007.

All the answers to the survey and to the follow-up interviews remain confidential and the anonymity of the respondents will be respected as agreed with the Institutional Review Board at the University of California, Riverside.

I expect to demonstrate that a color-blind approach to society does not mean that foreigners are not perceived in racial terms through the use of other factors that eventually essentialize others along racial lines (or quasi-racial lines). I expect to see strong national sentiments about what France represents and the Republican (not in the U.S meaning, but in the sense of what the French *République* represents) ideal of integration, which will also be expressed in the possibility or not for some populations (Europeans versus extra-Europeans; i.e. whites versus non-whites) to really integrate. There is a high likelihood that Italians, Germans

and other European immigrants will be defined as closer culturally to France and therefore more likely to integrate than extra-European immigrants.

I suspect that the negative history of slavery and colonialism will not really be part of the collective memory of the French which would also mean that the way people of color have been treated in the past will continue to influence how French people and their leaders think about foreigners. This will have an impact on the way policies are written.

Through this research, I am filling an important gap not studied in depth yet by social scientists. I am more interested in the understanding of the non use of race in France than focusing on the different forms of racism. Many researchers have focused on the rhetoric of politicians; they have spent considerable amount time studying the effects of the National Front, while ignoring the insidious effect of whiteness and its invisibility. They have not focused as much time on the larger population, regardless of political affiliation. It is therefore not an attempt to blame some individuals for their comments (racist or not) but rather to decipher the double meanings, the undertones, and assumptions that while seemingly innocent reveal a deep structural racial and racist problem in France. Individuals live in an environment and tend to reproduce discourses, ideas, images that they have been exposed to, that they have internalized and which in turn will be reinforced through interactions and perceptions about the “other.” It is therefore more than just a contemporary approach to discrimination in France but rather an examination of the construction of whiteness as a socio-historical concept that is reproduced everyday in daily interactions, and which might lead to greater social problems.

Chapter Four

To see and judge without being seen and judged

Am I black or Am I American? (W.E.B. DuBois, 1999, p. 45)

To start the analysis of my data, I feel the need to reiterate that my goal is not to prove or demonstrate that French people are racist but rather to inquire and find out if through the use of language, daily interactions and private actions, French people contribute to the reproduction of an invisible system of oppression, a system where whiteness is the norm and a system in which race cannot be talked about for fear of awakening deep conflicting values.

Who qualifies as French?

One important key to this research revolves around the way frenchness is defined, how you becomes French, and who can be worth of being French.

Many of the respondents answered like Michel, a 60 year-old retired man who said that a French person is “somebody who has a French nationality²,” or along the lines of “an individual who has a French nationality, as well as the rights and duties that come with it³” according to Jean, a 18 year-old student. This official legal definition for being French is noted by many of the respondents along what the law states, but also according to whether or not you are born in France, whether you already have citizenship or not, whether you speak French or not, whether you live in France or not, or whether your parents were French (or even born in France) even though it might also depend on the numbers of French ancestors you have.

² Quelqu'un qui a la nationalité française.

³ Un français est un individu qui dispose de la nationalité française, ainsi que des droits et des devoirs qui en découlent.

Being French also means to respect the laws as well to engage in the civic duties, which come along with being French. The main question, however, revolves around the definition of civic duties, of the respect of laws, of how many generations you have to account for to be considered a genuine French person and whether or not somebody behaves like one (also a code word for “do you look like one”?). While many cite legal definition or socially acceptable definitions of what it means to be French, many others do not share those visions. Before getting into some of those particular differences, it is also important to note how non-white French citizens define what it means to be French. For instance, as Pierre, one of the non-white men (a 22 year-old student) I interviewed, said,

According to the racist/racialist vision of the world, I am ‘yellow’ and lastly ‘French’ from foreign ancestry, which I contest because I see myself as French, I am French, and I am from France, I was born in the suburbs of Paris, I live French, I think French, I dream French, I f*** in French⁴.

He contests the widespread idea that French people are white. While he is not white, since he is labeled as ‘yellow’ his Frenchness is contested, questioned and debated. Can he really be from here and belong here? He questions the racist idea that being French means being white, but more interestingly, he also questions the racialist idea that race matters. For him, to refute those racist and racialist ideas also suggests that he has heard, experienced and felt the idea that race shapes social interactions even though he refuses to be defined by it. This idea is surprising in a sense but not overtly astounding. It is surprising in the sense that racial thinking is usually not thought to be part of the French social fabric.

⁴ Selon la vision raciste/racialiste du monde je suis un "jaune", un "chinois" et en dernier lieu un "français d'origine étrangère", ce que je conteste car je me considère français, je suis français, je suis originaire de France, je suis né en banlieue parisienne, je vis français, je pense français, je rêve français, je b**** en français

One can therefore wonder about the different perceptions whites and people of color have about race in France, but I will examine this later. On the other hand, this is not astounding in the sense that race has shaped social interactions for a long period of time but while it remains fairly unnoticed, unheard and more importantly not deemed critical enough to be addressed by the larger society (this issue will be addressed in more details later), it can be felt by this person while he refuses to be defined by it.

It is confirmed by this 33 year-old black French woman, Jeanine, who states that the real, not official, definition of being French applied in France refer to “whites whatever their origins⁵.” There is an interesting difference between those who are French citizens and of color compared to those who identify themselves just as French or white. People of color acknowledge that being French is a privilege reserved to those are white and cannot be obtained easily from those who do not fit this profile. A certain dichotomy exists between people of color and whites about what being French really means. This was demonstrated in Sagot-Duvauroux’s book (2004) who showed that young black men born, raised and socialized as French in France from West African immigrant parents struggle to identify themselves as French because society contests their legitimate presence in France and their allegiance to France. This also exemplified in a different way in Lamont’s (2000) research about French workers and how white French workers tend to have more hostility towards North-African workers. She described the attitudes of white French workers towards their North-African counterparts and showed that many of them hold negative feelings towards them. Interestingly, what Lamont does not address is the actual perception of white French citizens about those immigrants in terms of their legal presence in France. While her interviews with North-Africans workers did not include any French citizens, she is not clear about the way White French workers she interviewed viewed their

⁵ Des blancs quelque soient leur origine

North-Africans colleagues as just immigrants or as French citizens. Basically, it seemed to be assumed in her research that white French workers viewed their North-African counterparts as just immigrants and not as citizens. While she addresses the fact that many immigrants have come to France since the 1950s to fill labor demands, her interviews took place in the mid-1990s, which could mean that some of the children of those original immigrants have become French citizens since. However, the way she describes her interviews and the responses provided to her seems to reveal that indeed white French workers do not see these North African counterparts as real French. Their values, morality and work ethic remain under scrutiny. It seems to be assumed that the White workers do not see them as real French citizens, and that the deciding factor is their racial/ethnic background. Their North African background almost disqualifies them as genuine French citizens. Culture as a proxy for race will be addressed later in more details.

However, while they are judging on cultural values, they are indeed attributing cultural values to phenotype features. In another research, Lamont and her colleagues (2002) interview some North African immigrant men who live in France about the way they construct anti-racist struggle. They found out that there exists a stark contrast between the values held by French workers about the *République* and their desire to bring equality and those men who argued that French people have the privilege to be racist because their [the North African immigrants] positions are always scrutinized as they are always being told they are not home. While white French workers tend to express some moral superiority compared to those who are better off because they define themselves as more caring, North African workers define themselves in more cultural and religious terms while also taking into account their structural realities that shape their social lives.

While I do not want to go into details about Lamont's research, it then posits the question about their children who are born, raised and socialized in France as French citizens. Do they feel the same treatment? How are they perceived? While Sagot-Duvauroux (2004) provide some insights about their conditions, some of the respondents in my survey, such as, Jacques, this young 27 year-old man who identifies himself as both white and Kabyle states that those who are French are "those who claim to be as such and who have neither black skin nor from any north African or African origins⁶." As Sagot-Duvauroux explains, being black or being white in France is more than skin deep. Those identities represent a socio-historical conflict embedded in a white supremacist notion that white is normal and, here, therefore French. I do not have any details about Jacques' background; however, it is interesting to notice that he defines himself as white and Kabyle. Some authors have addressed what they call the Kabyle myth. Macey (1996) argues that the Kabyle myth has been historically constructed to show how Islam was an aggressive religion, which indirectly and incorrectly depicted Muslim as Arabs. Ruedy (1992) condenses the myth or the misrepresentation of the Kabyle "as attached to his ancestral soil, was industrious, practical, curious, democratic, expansive, and far less religious than the Arab, who was soft, lazy, slow-witted, introspective, and given to dreaming and fanaticism" (p. 91). The construction of the Kabyle myth was developed to differentiate the Kabyle from the Arab population and demonstrate that the Kalybes embodied the virtues of the French. The Kabyle-Arab dichotomy actually represented a more complex dichotomy between the European-non-European dichotomy (Lorcin, 1995). As Macey (1996) argues, "the Kabyle myth is one of the means whereby a cultural-linguistic difference was transmuted into a racial difference" (p. 546).

⁶ Tous ceux qui se réclament comme tel et qui n'ont ni la peau noire, ni d'origines nord-africaines ou africaines

Some of the racist perspective about frenchness can be seen through the following quote from one of the respondent who refused to identify himself/herself in terms of gender, arguing that a French person,

should master the language and the judeo-christian culture. If he cannot claim any ancestry, it means that this person cannot exclusively be French. You then have to make a difference between European roots and extra-European ones⁷

While race is not overtly part of this participant's discourse, certain assumptions are being made about who can be considered French. Your ancestry dictates your affiliation and your allegiance to the French nation. While this ancestry might not be easy to identify through your parents, it appears that this individual recognizes a need to differentiate between the fact that a person with European roots might be more likely to be French than an extra-European person, even though historically speaking a member of former colonies might be more likely to speak the language and share French values. This dichotomy between being (Indo)-European and extra-European hides a very obvious racial discourse about somebody's French authenticity. For instance, Paul, this 20 year-old man who find himself on the right of the political spectrum states that a French person is,

a person proud of his/her heritage and who is a descendent of great peoples that emerged out of the great Indo-European migrations that brought them to Europe. French people who are from other races are those who have denied their culture, their identity, to embrace the French one, even more than a citizen of French

⁷ Il devrait maîtriser la langue et la culture judéo-chrétienne. S'il ne peut prétendre à une filiation ancestrale, c'est que l'individu n'est pas exclusivement français. Il faut alors faire la différence entre les souches européennes et extra européenne

stock, and it is okay as long as they remain only 5 to 10% of the overall population.⁸

So, according to Paul, one's frenchness might be acquired through legitimate means but you might remain a foreigner in the eyes of the 'real' French. To be French also means to deny your culture, as if you were to keep it that would prevent your integration in the French fabric of society. However, despite people becoming French by embracing French culture, identity and so on, having more than 5 -10% of them would be problematic.

While some people would argue that the definition of frenchness being equated with being white as an idea mostly shared among voters of the National Front (extreme right party) has some truth to it, as it is exemplified with the following 22-year old man, Stéphane, who states openly that a foreigner is either black or Arab and a French person is white. It can also be seen through the statement made by another 22 year-old man, Yannick, who defines a foreigner as "a person who does not belong in the white race and who is not Christian even through those individuals are allowed to become citizens"⁹. He then goes on to define a French person by arguing that "for politicians, it is somebody that has a national identity card but for me it is represents much more"¹⁰. However, people who share other political views than the National Front do also reproduce similar beliefs about one's Frenchness.

⁸ Une personne fière de sont héritage et qui décent des grand peuples issues des migrations indo-européenne arrivées en Europe. Les français issuent d'autre races sont ceux qui ont renié leur culture, leur identité, pour embrasser celle de la France, encore plus qu'un Français de souche, et cela reste acceptable s'ils demeurent moins de 5% à 10% de la population totale.

⁹ Une personne qui n'est pas de race blanche et qui n'est pas de confession chrétienne bien qu'à titre exceptionnel ces personnes puissent devenir des nationaux.

¹⁰ Pour les hommes politiques, c'est une personne qui a la carte d'identité. Pour moi, c'est bien plus que ça.

Whiteness, as a requirement for frenchness, is also present in the comment made by Cédric, a 40 year-old businessman who shares political ideas with the Green Party, who says that those who are foreigner (and therefore not French) are those “who are not visible in the dominant culture, such as blacks and Arabs for instance¹¹.” He is quick to state this statement does not represent his own feelings but rather the way he perceives how people of color are treated in French society. They are not given the same chance to define what French society is. It is clear here that whiteness is the yardstick necessary to become French.

This previous statement is somewhat echoed by Robert, a 30 year-old military man, on to the right politically, who argues that a French person is “a person who was born on the French national territory even though this can be debated because of the current melting pot¹².” What this man is saying is that you can be French by birth but one’s frenchness can really be questioned if you don’t look like you are French. The fact that he mentions the “current melting pot” refers to the uneasiness some have in regards to the racial and cultural diversity, which exists in France at the present time.

Josianne, a 45 year-old Socialist woman states that a French person refers to the “political and legal idea¹³” of somebody that would qualify as French under the law, but she also says that a foreigner in France is a “non-European¹⁴.” One could read into that since the borders are open to people in Europe, only Europeans could be considered possibly French, and non-European foreigners, but it seems to be more complex than that when she argues,

¹¹ Quelqu’un qui n’est pas visible dans la culture dominante: ex: un black, un arabe

¹² Il s’agit d’une personne née sur le territoire national de la France bien que cela soit discutable compte tenu du melting pot actuel

¹³ Notion purement administrative

¹⁴ Un non européen

I am not racist because I condemn any forms of discrimination based on race or ethnic origins; however, Islam is a totalitarian religion that is incompatible with democratic principles and should be outlawed in Europe.¹⁵

So when she says that foreigners are non-Europeans, she seems to refer in particular to those who practice a totalitarian religion that should not exist in Europe. While she claims to be non-racist, one can wonder about how she judges and deals with individual Muslims. It seems that her non-racist attitude is compromised by her overall definition of Islam and, therefore about those who practice it, without making any individual differences. She is, in a nutshell, essentializing all Muslims as non-compatible with democratic principles, and French ideals. She is racializing Muslims, and most likely Arabs. Whiteness here represents more than just skin complexion, it is also exemplified through the type of culture, or religious affiliation (i.e. Christian); all others cannot be considered French.

On the other hand, this notion of frenchness being equated with whiteness is also shared by other individuals who tend to be affiliated with the left. Eric, a 20 year-old man who is politically close to the Radical Left Party (Parti Radical de Gauche) defines a French person as “an individual whose presence is not the result of immigration (country X towards France)¹⁶.” While this statement remains fairly vague as to whether he is talking about one country in particular or not, and when this immigration took place, he later states that a citizen of French stock (*Français de souche*) is “a French person who could find his family roots in the middle-

¹⁵ Je ne suis pas raciste car je condamne toute discrimination basée sur la race ou l'origine ethnique par contre l'islam est une religion totalitaire incompatible avec la démocratie et doit être interdite en Europe

¹⁶ Un individu issu de l'immigration (pays X vers France)

ages in France¹⁷.” His statement implies that to be a true French one has to have several generations in France, and has established his/her frenchness prior to contemporary waves of immigration. This exclusion includes a large number of population and it also implies that some are not real French, or French by political and legal requirements.

Frenchness also appears to depend on whether one’s presence is the result of past immigration and has an aptitude for learning the French culture and living it everyday. Marie, a 18 year-old woman from the Socialist Party states that a French person has to have the necessary legal documents to qualify as such and that to be integrated means that one has to “know how to behave according to the traditions of the country even when they are imposed¹⁸.” This sentiment is echoed indirectly through the statement of Christophe, an 18 year-old man from the extreme left who defines a French person as,

a person born in France and who lives in France or an immigrant, who is not being sought after for felony charges (unless his/her own ideas represent a danger to himself/herself in his/her country of origin) and who is willing to integrate¹⁹

While this young man brings the soil right (being born on a certain soil might be given automatic citizenship, e.g. the U.S. for instance), to determine one’s frenchness, it is also interesting to note that the first thing that he says after the word ‘immigrant’ is linked to the idea of potential criminal charges. One’s frenchness is set to be determined by one’s ability to conform and to behave according to what French society has placed as normal and civilized.

¹⁷ Un français qui trouverait ses racines familiales dans la France du moyen âge

¹⁸ Savoir se comporter comme la tradition du pays l'oblige, avec ses contraintes

¹⁹ C'est une personne né et résidant en France ou une personne immigrée, n'étant pas recherchée pour délit grave (sauf si ses idées présentent un danger pour sa personne dans pays d'origine) et manifestant une volonté d'intégration

Integration seems to be the main factor that will determine one's allegiance to France, while those who are born in France and who resides in France are not to be questioned.

It is therefore not surprising to see frenchness defined not just along racial lines but through cultural lines as Taguieff (1988) and Wieviorka (1996) have argued. Some are too culturally different to be French. Silverman (1992) is quoted arguing that "idea of a common and trans-historical culture defining the French nation has been a powerful means of racializing the French people" (p. 8). While some question the compatibility of foreign culture with being French such as this young man, Nicolas, who states,

I am against the naturalization process; you are of a nationality or you are not; in France, more and more adolescents show their passion and adopt Japanese tradition, but that does not make them Japanese. Other than for the material, financial, legal interests or other, I do not see what would push a foreigner to become something that he/she is not. The comparison might be pejorative but a dog that behaves like a cat remains a dog, this is a question of essence, you do not become a national just because you wish it. Can you verify honestly a person's good faith that defines himself/herself as French (or as a nationality other than his/her own)?²⁰

According to Nicolas, one's frenchness is something natural. The legal and social process of acquiring French citizenship will remain a legal action but will not be met with any real social meanings because culture is essential, it is immutable; in other words, it is rooted in your cultural

²⁰ Je ne suis pas pour la naturalisation, on est d'une nationalité, où on ne l'est pas ; en France, de plus en plus d'adolescents vouent une passion et adoptent les us et coutumes japonaises, ça ne fait pas d'eux des Japonais. Hormis l'intérêt matériel, financier, légal ou autre, je ne vois pas ce qui pousserait un étranger à vouloir devenir ce qu'il n'est pas. La comparaison peut être péjorative, mais un chien qui se comporte comme un chat restera un chien, c'est une question d'être dans son essence, on ne devient pas d'une nationalité parce qu'on le souhaite. Peut-on vraiment vérifier la bonne fois d'une personne qui se considère comme français (ou d'une nationalité autre que la sienne)?

DNA. The essentialization of a group will lead to the racialization of that same group where one can recognize your every characteristic and personal traits by just looking at you, and the legal process cannot hide who you really are. His distaste for the naturalization process goes as far comparing dogs and cats to show that being French is clearly incompatible with any other “species” because they are too different. Taguieff (1994) has addressed these types of arguments. He highlighted the ideas of certain segments of French society who have favored a cultural differentialist proposition when it comes to immigration. The main ideas revolve around the incompatibility of cultures and of the immutability of one’s culture. Without bringing any openly racist arguments, they have argued that certain groups should stay in their home countries because it would be to their interests to assert their cultural values, but not here! In other words, we support your struggle for self-determination as long as it is not taking place in France. Our culture is too different from yours and it is in the interests of all of us to not live in the same areas.

On a last interesting note, Gilbert, a 35 year-old man defines a French person as “someone who is a member of either the Socialist Party or the Communist Party²¹.” Frenchness is just being defined as being politically affiliated with a leftist party.

How do French people talk about race?

I would like to start this section by a quote from a French Arab 25 year-old Socialist man (Norredine) who defines being white as “living better before anything else. Of all the whites that I know, they do not realize that, but most of them come from higher social classes than me. However, for me, white represents so many things that we cannot really define

²¹ C'est quelqu'un qui a sa carte du PS ou du PC

it. Or as I said before that helps me define myself as Arab.²²” This young man demonstrates that in his life being white represents a certain higher social standing that he is not able to relate to. He is defining himself in contrast to what it means to be white, which makes white being the norm. While it is not surprising to see a person of color defining whiteness as such, some of the following statements divulge that whites do not have the same perception of what their whiteness represents in French society.

One of the most interesting facets of this research was to determine what the concept of “race” represents in French people’s minds. From scholars themselves shying away from race as a social construct (Weil, 2004a; Taguieff, 1994) to the law, where racism is defined as a way to prevent discrimination based on race (its definition in the law remains vague) among other factors, to politicians who denounce racism but refuse to admit that race is socially important, while at the same moment creating implied racial categories like “visible minorities,” race seems to represent the forbidden word that nobody wants to acknowledge while understanding some of the effects it has on society. I think it is important to recognize that race is not addressed socially speaking because it does not have any relevance for the dominant group, because they do not have to think about it. This is the social privilege inherited by whites (McIntosh, 2002; Wildman, 2002). Since race does not exist in a vacuum but in relationship with others, the dominant group does not have to think about its privileges, and since the dominant racial group controls the development of knowledge, race does not enter the realm of realities. As we will see later, their realm of reality revolves around how whites are the ones being victimized by most of the discrimination existing in France.

²² Cela veut dire d'abord mieux vivre. De tous les Blancs que je connaisse, ils ne s'en rendent pas compte, mais la plupart est issu de classes sociales supérieures à la mienne. Mais pour moi, il y a un côté où Blanc représente tellement de choses qu'on ne peut pas lui donner une définition. Ou, comme je disais plus haut, cela me sert à me positionner en tant qu'Arabe

While some of respondents to the survey decry the use of race because as Martin says “there are no human races²³” or according to Jacques, a 59 year-old work retired man who is close to a leftist party, says that “I am among those who think that the notion of race is a myth, for me, there are people with varying history and different culture, and diversity is an asset for mankind.²⁴” Other participants actually define themselves as white, Caucasian, as a citizen of French stock, European, Indo-European when asked about which racial group they belong to. About 64% of the respondents (out of 272 answers) described themselves as such. The second largest group was made of those who believe races exist (other than the human race); they represented roughly 14% of the respondents. This is a significant finding because of the persistent notion in France that race should not be addressed and should not be part of the social discourse. I would here suggest that while most respondents define themselves racially in one way or another it does not necessarily mean that they understand the social meanings behind those identities.

When probed about what it meant to be white in France, many answered in a similar way as Bertrand, a 40 year-old white-collar worker who shares political ideas with center-right political parties. Bertrand states that to be white means that “I have to be careful to put sun cream on when I am in the sun, and that I have to be careful when I travel in places where anti-white racism exists (such as Guadeloupe).²⁵” While there is no doubt that Bertrand probably needs sun cream in the sun, he does not talk about how he got the money to buy this sun cream. Jerome, a

²³ Les races humaines n'existent pas

²⁴ Je fais parti de ceux qui pensent que la notion de 'race' est une fumisterie, pour moi, il y a des peuples, avec une histoire et une culture différente et la diversité est un atout pour l'humanité.

²⁵ Que je dois faire attention à me mettre de la crème solaire quand je vais au soleil, et que je dois faire attention quand je voyage en des lieux où existe le racisme anti-blanc (comme en Guadeloupe)

50 year-old physician states that being white means “it is just a color among others²⁶.” Those statements clearly reveal that being white does not represent a conscious social marker that could bring any privileges to those individuals. For Bertrand, it also represents a possibility of being harassed in a place where whites might not be welcome. Despite the fact that he acknowledges the irrelevance of skin complexion from a social perspective since he talks about sun cream, he nevertheless comes around to provide some social context to it: race is only meaningful when it is used against him. This idea that being white represents a handicap was present a few times in the survey and in my interviews. Most white participants did not acknowledge their privilege but instead affirmed their victimization as whites at the hand of people of color. The following respondent, Didier, a 30 year-old man states that being white means “to be the recipient of racist comments from people of color. It means having white skin and being of French origin or from any other white country for a certain number of years.²⁷” A couple things jump out of this comment. First, it is the victimization of whites by people of color, and second the fact that being white means being French. Those two comments demonstrate the complex contradiction behind some of the perceptions whites have of their environments. While one can acknowledge that some individual whites have had some negative experiences with some individuals of color, the socio-historical oppression of people of color by whites would contradict this notion of anti-white racism. Second, by saying that French are white, they acknowledge indirectly that people of color are the ones who will be required to prove their allegiance to France, and will therefore be the recipients of scrutiny by the “genuine” French individuals. This is what Van Djik (1992) would call denial of racism. In his data, he finds that most racist comments were accompanied

²⁶ Ce n'est qu'une couleur parmi d'autres

²⁷ Subir les propos racistes des gens de couleur. Cela signifie avoir la peau blanche et être d'origine française ou autre pays blancs depuis de nombreuses années.

with disclaimers or denials. On one interesting note, he argues that it is easier for whites to point out to a specific negative characteristic of a person of color because they might find some justification to it while a more general negative attitude towards racial/ethnic minorities might be more revealing of one's prejudice or racism. Van Dijk (1992) states "denials of racism often turn into counteraccusations of intolerant and intolerable anti-racism" (p. 90). In this regards, the last few quotes by Bertand and Didier are revealing of deep-seating form of racism as they might very general comments about others by stating that being white if facing anti-white racism from people of color.

On another note, some whites are aware of the privileges that whiteness confers to them. Isabelle, a 20 year-old woman, who says that "whites are in general more privileged; they live in industrialized countries, with the comfort that comes with it. I feel reassured when with whites because people of color scare me."²⁸ While she talks about privileges, she talks about it mostly from a socio-economic perspective in the sense that the standard of living in European countries might be higher than the ones where people of color live. She, therefore, acknowledges privilege from a global perspective but not from a French domestic perspective. Being white in France does not seem to represent anything in particular in her eyes. The second part of her statement also reveals some much deep-seated anguish about what people of color represents; they are dangerous and we (i.e. whites) need to interact with them with caution. In another question where she is being asked about racial discrimination in the workplace and in housing, she continues saying,

yes [it exists], according to news reports, but I know that Africans do not respect the places they rent and they ransack them because they are dirty. In regards to

²⁸ Les blancs sont en général mieux favorisés, ils vivent dans des pays industrialisés, avec le confort qui va avec. Je suis rassurée avec les blancs car les gens de couleur me font peur

hiring practices, I find it [racial discrimination] unacceptable but maybe people are scared that it will become more difficult to find jobs for whites first.²⁹

So while she might agree, acknowledge and disapprove of racial discrimination problems, she nonetheless argues that it might be justified since they are known for ransacking their places, and because they are dirty. I can't help to think about former President Chirac's quote when he stated on June 19, 1991 that:

What is the most urgent: to save the identity of French people or to accept all those, using political arguments, who would like to come and get on welfare, and to use our hospitals and our universities? . . . Our problem is not the foreigners, it is more the overdose of foreigners. Maybe it is true that the foreigners are more numerous than before the war, but they are different, and it makes a difference. It is certain that having Spaniards, Polish, and Portuguese working on our soil, create fewer problems than having Muslims and blacks. How do you expect a French worker and his wife, both working and, making 2150 dollars a month, and who see as his next door neighbor, a family composed of a father, his three or four wives, and about twenty of his kids, making 7150 dollars from welfare, without of course, working . . . and if you add the noise and the smell; well this French worker becomes crazy. And it is not racist to say that³⁰ (INA, 1991)

²⁹ Oui d'après les enquêtes télévisées, mais je sais que les africains ne respectent pas le logement qu'ils louent et ils le saccagent car ils sont sales. Pour l'embauche je trouve cela inacceptable mais peut être qu'on a peur car ça devient difficile de trouver du travail déjà pour les blancs

³⁰ Notre problème, ce n'est pas les étrangers, c'est qu'il y a overdose. C'est peut-être vrai qu'il n'y a pas plus d'étrangers qu'avant la guerre, mais ce n'est pas les mêmes et ça fait une différence. Il est certain que d'avoir des Espagnols, des Polonais et des Portugais travaillant chez nous, ça pose moins de problèmes que d'avoir des musulmans et des Noirs [. . .] Comment voulez-vous que le travailleur français qui travaille avec sa femme et qui, ensemble, gagnent environ 15000 francs, et qui voit sur le palier à côté de son HLM, entassée, une famille avec un père de famille, trois ou quatre épouses, et une vingtaine de gosses, et qui gagne 50000 francs de prestations sociales, sans naturellement travailler . . . si vous ajoutez le bruit et l'odeur, hé bien le travailleur français sur le palier devient fou. Et ce n'est pas être raciste que de dire cela...

This idea of blacks being dirty seems to have entered the collective memory and consciousness as it is now being reproduced by people who claim to be non-racist. Moreover, the blame-the-victim ideology is present in this quote as poverty seems to be the result of their wrongdoing.

Culture as a proxy for race?

Since race is not being acknowledged openly one can then look at the issue of culture. I would like to point out to one respondent in particular who saw himself as a culturalist and not as a racist. Joel is a 43 year-old professor in the suburbs of Paris. He is also the chair of a department in the Business division in his university. He shares many ideas with the Left Radical Party (*Parti Radical de Gauche*). He is married with a black woman who is originally from Cameroon. His culturalist perspective is expressed in the following statement:

There is no need to suspect in principle an Arab of dishonesty; but on another side (and my spouse who I talked about earlier could attest of that) there is an undeniable overrepresentation of Arabs among delinquents, compared to their social global presence. But it is not because they are Arabs, this is because (I am over-simplifying) they are poor (this is the culturalism I mention later). This is a vicious circle of course: in a large part, they are poor because they are Arabs and because they are denied access to jobs. Okay, this is a fact. However, once we have acknowledged this fact, what do we do? Should we continue to favor family reunification, to close our eyes on illegal immigration and therefore to sustain this problem? Or should we say “let’s stop and think, let’s take measures to help the integration of immigrants already here (even if it means affirmation action

policies, even though the idea of it pains me), but we stop the arrival of new immigrants?³¹

While this professor is sympathetic to radical left ideas, his culturalist approach to French society and immigrants resemble culturalist approach of the right wing but without being as explicit. While he acknowledges that Arabs face social problems that might lead them to engage in criminal activities, he dismisses quickly this idea by saying that bringing more immigrants would create more problems. So it is not Arabs who are the problems, but the social problems they face (such as hiring discrimination), but consequently, we need to stop their arrivals because they might continue to contribute to delinquency. So instead of focusing on the discrimination they face, the precarious jobs they might get, he emphasizes that Arabs and their families should not be reunited.

The other issue about his statement is that he assumes that most Arabs might be facing those issues and therefore getting into trouble. So is the problem the culture or Arabs themselves and what they bring culturally? Under the cover of culture, this man reproduces images of cultural inferiority that might be the problem in the first place. This is reinforced by one of his first statements that there is an overrepresentation of Arabs among delinquents, and his wife can attest of it. First, under the cover of culturalism, race is very much present. Since France does not keep statistics about the origins and racial background of people, how is that idea being reproduced? Assuming that it is true that most of the delinquents are of Arabic origins, why

³¹ Il n'y a pas de sens à soupçonner par principe un Arabe de malhonnêteté ; mais d'un autre côté (et ma compagne, évoquée ci-dessus, peut l'attester de visu) il y a une incontestable surreprésentation des Arabes parmi les délinquants, comparativement à leur présence sociale globale. Mais ce n'est pas parce qu'ils sont Arabes, c'est parce qu'ils sont (en simplifiant) pauvres (c'est le "culturalisme" que j'évoque en plus tard). Cercle vicieux, bien sûr : dans une large mesure, ils sont pauvres parce qu'ils sont Arabes et qu'on ne veut pas leur donner de bons emplois. Bon, ça c'est le constat. Une fois que ce constat est fait, qu'est-ce qu'on fait ? Continue-t-on à favoriser le regroupement familial, à fermer les yeux sur l'immigration clandestine, et donc à proroger le problème ? Où dit-on "on arrête, on réfléchit, on prend des mesures pour favoriser l'insertion des immigrés existants (si nécessaire par la discrimination positive, quoique l'idée me soit pénible), mais on limite l'arrivée de migrants supplémentaires"?

mention about their Arabic origins and not about their French background? It is assumed here that those delinquents are not French citizens (just children of immigrants) and therefore are more likely to engage in those types of behaviors because they do not share French cultural values, or the ones necessary for them to be integrated (i.e. values that would prevent them from engaging in criminal activities). In following statements, this professor tries to develop his ideas further by precisizing that being “culturalist” is different from being racist. He states that,

One simple example: in many cities in black Africa, making music as well as listening to music is shared, it is part of the community, and most people appreciate when a neighbor plays on his CD player the latest album from such and such artist that he allows, through his window, the neighborhood to enjoy; if I am in black Africa, I am not going to go in the street and say ‘I am bothered by it, lower the volume down’; however, when an African ignore or continue to ignore that you do not do that in France, and turn his stereo all the way up, with his windows wide open, that irritates me. But I would like to insist that it is only statistically important to notice that this will be questioned most often with immigrant populations: the dominant factor is probably your social environment, and this is why I use the word ‘culturalism.’ There are certain aspects of the culture, of popular ways of life that drives me insane and it happens, that in today’s French society, with its inequalities, that type of culture reinforced by the misunderstanding of France’s social environment, is often found (but not exclusively) in immigrants’ households. I can say it more directly even if it hurts: I get along much better with a black college professor than a white man on welfare, but it happens that there are a lot more white college professors and black

men on welfare. One more detail about ‘culturalism:’ I like the French language, and I am saddened when I teach upper-level division classes to see foreign students who come get a French diploma in France and do not care one bit about being able to express themselves in a semi-correct manner, without even realizing that they working conceptual ideas for which they do not have the basic foundations³²

There are many interesting points being made in this quote, which bring forward some more profound internal contradictions. First, he acknowledges that culture in black Africa is different from France’s culture. He admits that each country has its own cultural understandings about listening to music but that in France, those behaviors would be unacceptable. Therefore, when a person is playing loud music in France, he assumes that statistically speaking, the person is probably an immigrant from Africa, and this behavior is due to his lack of understanding of the French culture. This is a very important point because first, there is an assumption that being black means that you are African, and second that this person is probably not a French citizen because he is not white, and being black would mean not having an understanding of French culture. Kelman (2005a, 2005b) has discussed this issue in details in a couple of his books. He

³² Un exemple simple : dans beaucoup de villes d'Afrique noire, la pratique musicale, y compris de l'écoute musicale, est très partagée, voire communautaire, et la plupart des gens apprécient qu'un voisin mette sur son lecteur CD le dernier disque de tel ou tel artiste dont il fait, par la fenêtre, profiter le voisinage ; si je suis en Afrique noire, je ne vais pas aller dans la rue et dire "ça me gêne, baissez le volume" ; par contre, quand un Africain ignore ou feint d'ignorer que cela ne se fait pas en France, et fait hurler sa chaîne toutes fenêtres ouvertes, ça m'exaspère. Mais j'insiste sur le fait que ce n'est que statistiquement que la question se posera plus souvent avec des personnes d'origine immigrée : le facteur dominant est sans doute l'appartenance sociale, d'où mon mot de "culturalisme" : il y a des aspects de la culture, des modes de vie "populaires" qui me hérissent, et il se trouve que, dans la société française d'aujourd'hui, avec ses inégalités, il est fréquent que ce type de culture, renforcée par la méconnaissance du "terrain" français, se trouve souvent (mais non exclusivement, il s'en faut) chez des immigrés. Pour le dire encore plus vite voire brutalement : je m'entendrai beaucoup mieux avec un professeur d'université noir qu'avec un RMiste blanc, mais il se trouve qu'il y a nettement plus de professeurs d'université blancs et de RMistes noirs. Encore un détail sur ce "culturalisme" : j'aime la langue française, et je suis attristé, lorsque j'enseigne en 3ème année de licence, de voir des étudiants étrangers qui, clairement, viennent chercher un diplôme en France en se contrefichant de s'exprimer d'une manière ne serait-ce qu'approximativement correcte, sans même être conscient qu'ils cherchent à travailler sur un matériau conceptuel sans en posséder l'outil de base.

contests the widely accepted idea that blacks are just Africans and therefore not from France, and indirectly do not understand what it means to be French culturally speaking. He talks of the inability, even among open-minded well-intentioned white French, to question the cultural belonging of blacks in France, as they are always perceived as Africans first. White French society expects them to always be in touch with their African roots, which indirectly create uneasiness about accepting them as full Frenchmen and women. This leads to what Sagot-Duvaurox (2004) described as some forms of retrenchment of young black men and women born and raised in France, but who are rejected by white French society because they do not fit the profile of being French. Their frenchness being questioned they, in consequence, developed a *blackattitude*, which is in between being French and being “noir” (a French version of the U.S. racial identity formation).

Second, this professor tries to show he shares many common points with other black individuals sharing his educational background than a white man from a lower socio-economic status. I find this comment really interesting because he is not talking about Africans anymore but he argues that a black person with the same education would be somebody with whom he would have a good relationship. While he makes a socio-economic distinction, he nonetheless makes a racial distinction. He could have said that he gets along better with a black colleague than with a black welfare recipient, which would make his point even stronger in terms of education and culture but he does introduce race, and I suspect to prove that he just want to appear non-racist while emphasizing cultural commonality.

Third, he talks about his experience as a college professor and how disappointed he is with the level of fluency among foreign students. I find myself confused between the different terms he uses to depict non-French persons. He first talks about them as being Africans, then he

talks about those who are black and educated and he continues by referring to foreign students as having problems speaking French. Are the foreign students just coming to France temporarily there to study, which could explain some of the struggle they face about expressing themselves in French, or is he talking about students coming from immigrant groups who have been living in France for a while? After inquiring and probing him about this particular issue, he explains that he was talking about student coming from abroad otherwise he would have used the term “immigrants,” which is interesting in two ways. He understands that some do not speak proper French because they just came from another country, but he uses this argument in the same discussion as those who live here and turn their radio on and just don’t understand French culture. Second, he refers to other students living in France whose parents might be immigrants as just immigrants without knowing first hand if they are French citizens or not. They are automatically immigrants and therefore non-French.

His following statement regarding his “culturalist” attitude depicts a more complex set of explanations that contribute to the reproduction of whiteness in France. He states, the notion (wrongly named) of ‘culturalism’, I don’t apply it to others but to myself. When I think (and I do think about it because I am also subject to oversimplifications) that ‘this Arab gets on my nerves’, I correct myself by thinking that ‘it is stupid to say ‘this Arab’’ but I say it because (and this comes from a conditioned reflex, which is wrong, and it is the result of objective observation, but not as much) what he does and what gets on my nerves is linked to certain cultural traits that are mostly found among people with certain type of physiognomy, with the origins of their nationalities or from their parents’ etc... designated as ‘Arabs’, but there are a lot of Arabs who do not have that particular

unnerving trait while many citizens of French stock do have it. You are free to think that this form of ‘culturalism’ is hidden rationalization for a real form of racism but I do believe it. Recently, a young Arabic man opened a pizzeria in the first floor of my building; before he opened, he talked to the inhabitants of the building regarding the new store front in the building, and informed us of the different nuisances and what he would do to reduce them etc... and this person has all my respect; but when the white owner of a cheap restaurant turns his juke-box all the way up in the next door building, I would not have minded giving him what he deserves³³

This professor exemplifies a perfect example of the use of culture as proxy for race. Through some of his explanations, he demonstrates the impact of society on his thinking and how he perceives his environment. While he argues that he should not be thinking about somebody being “Arab” when he has a bad interaction, he nonetheless attributes another person’s bad action by how they look. He has a particular telling moment, when despite his regrets of talking about the individual he dealt with as “Arab”, he justifies his action by saying that most of those cultural traits are found among people who tend to look Arab along with their non-French origins. When he concedes that some citizens of French stock might engage in the same type of behaviors, he does not say that it represents one of their cultural traits. In other

³³ La notion (mal nommée) de "culturalisme", je ne l'applique pas à d'autres, mais à moi-même. Quand je pense (et il m'arrive de le penser car je ne suis pas à l'abri des simplifications) "cet Arabe m'énerve", je fais juste après le correctif : "c'est idiot de dire "cet Arabe", mais si je le dis, c'est parce que (et cela relève en partie du réflexe conditionné, ce qui est mal, et en partie de l'observation objective, ce qui l'est moins) ce qu'il fait et qui m'énerve est lié à certains traits culturels qui se trouvent plus fréquemment chez des gens que leur physionomie, leur nationalité d'origine ou celle de leurs parents, etc., désignent comme "Arabes" - mais il y a beaucoup d'"Arabes" qui n'ont pas ce trait énervant, alors qu'il y a nombre de Français "de souche" qui l'ont". Vous êtes libre de penser que ce "culturalisme" est une rationalisation cache-sexe d'un vrai racisme, moi je ne crois pas. Récemment un jeune homme d'origine arabe a ouvert une pizzeria en bas de mon immeuble ; il a préalablement consulté les occupants sur le changement de la façade, informé sur les éventuelles nuisances et les mesures prises pour les éviter, etc., et cette personne a toute mon estime ; mais lorsqu'un gargotier "bien blanc" mettait à fond son juke-box dans le café de l'immeuble voisin, je l'aurais volontiers réduit en compte.

words, when you deal with an Arab-looking person there might be a good chance that certain cultural traits (they also tend to go against French cultural values) might come out, that they are probably not French citizens (he seems to continuously develop a dichotomy between a genuine French person and the one that is not), and that even when a citizen of French stock (i.e. white) does something bad it seems like it is more like an exception than the rule. The fact that he provides the example of the new pizzeria's Arab-owner in his building as an example that they are not all bad seems to suggest that it is also more of the exception than the rule. He has developed a certain perception of society, which seems to blame bad behavior, on how a person looks, but he also tries to be careful not to over-generalize. One could wonder whether his attention to not over-generalize is a product of self-censorship as he is just editing himself as he goes or whether he is genuinely not interested in casting all Arabs as sharing identical cultural values and behaviors.

This example raises interesting implications. First, the groups that are mostly targeted as trouble-makers are those who are said to have negative cultural values, and they can be pointed out because of their "visibility." Therefore, cultural differences provide the space for the dominant group to depict those who do not follow the rules while at the same time appearing normal, morally right and proving one's allegiance to French culture. However, under the cultural operation of uncovering bad elements, racial profiling represents the foundation for the identification of those culturally non-integrated elements. If a member of those groups behaves in a non-deviant way, he/she ends up an example of a "normal" persons among those "abnormal" groups.

Second, this represents a perfect example of whiteness where minority groups are the subjects of constant scrutiny while the dominant group (unnamed most of the time) remains

unexamined. While he mentions a couple of examples about white French individuals engaging in negative behaviors, he does not group them with the rest of the white French population. They represent an anomaly in this “normal” dominant group.

Racism: an individual or institutional problem?

According to recent polls, about 33% of French were openly declaring themselves as racist in 2005 up 9% from 2004 (CSA, 2005b). However, there is an historical perception of France as being an open-minded country that opened its arms to blacks after WWI and a place where everybody is treated the same according to the Republican values of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. With my survey and my interviews, I wanted to find out how French people define racism, and therefore how they would envision a solution to the problem. If it is an individual problem then some form of re-education or rehabilitation would be necessary for some individuals, but if racism is defined as something more institutional, then how would they picture any changes to this social problem?

Joséphine, a 19 year-old administrative assistant, who lives in the south of France and shares many ideas with the Socialist Party believes that institutional racism is not a problem of the past. She states, “I am fearful that it is the case! We still have many people who have dealt with the colonies where indigenous peoples (as we used to say at the time) were sub-humans; among those people, some are in the political elite and are of old-age and are among those mentioned earlier. There is still institutional racism³⁴.” Moreover, when asked how she would define racism she first says that racism is “the lack of respect given to somebody based on

³⁴ Je le crains! Nous avons encore beaucoup de gens qui ont connus les colonies, ou l'on traitait les 'indigènes' comme on disait à l'époque comme des sous hommes. Parmi ces gens, il y a la classe politique dont beaucoup sont âgés et font parti des gens décrits plus haut. il y a encore un racisme d'état

his/her skin complexion, his/her origins, to deny hiring for a job and to deny access to housing (public or privately-owned)³⁵.” She provides an answer that is consistent with the institutionalization of discrimination in a society. She is not focusing on individuals but rather on the trends that contribute to this societal ill. She also provides a wider perspective on racism as she adds that racism is today,

more than skin complexion but this is the thing everybody can see. Therefore, everybody regardless of one’s origins will suffer from it at one point in one’s life...but racism encompasses other angles: today religions are more and more targeted especially Islam. To live in certain neighborhoods, to have a certain last name or first name that reminds one of your African origins, to be denied a job because the place where you live has a bad reputation is another form of racism³⁶.

Many of the points she makes here have been discussed by Maurin (2004) in his research on the suburbs of Paris and the perception associated with living in those neighborhoods. The place where one lives precedes them; certain groups are being defined by the location, the attributes of that location, the negative perception of those attributes which eventually lead individuals from those areas to face constant animosity. In other words, many of them are victims of statistical discrimination (Wilson, 1996; McGuire et al, 2007). They are being defined by the group they belong to and not by their individuality, that in turn, makes it harder for them to prove that they are worth being hired or being given a chance to succeed.

³⁵ Manquer de respect à la personne en utilisant sa couleur ou ses origines, exclure d'un recrutement pour un poste de travail, pour l'attribution d'un logement (social ou privé)

³⁶ Le racisme est plus que juste la couleur de peau, mais c'est la chose qui se voit le plus donc toute personne quelque soit ses origines aura à souffrir de sa couleur de peau à un moment ou à un autre de sa vie..... Mais le racisme revêts d'autres angles : - aujourd'hui les religions sont de plus en plus pointées du doigt surtout la religion musulmane. Vivre dans certains quartiers, porter un nom ou un prénom à consonance africaine, arabe...et se voir refuser un emploi parce que ce quartier à une mauvaise étiquette c'est aussi une forme de racisme

However, Joséphine's case does not represent the majority of the individuals who filled out my questionnaire and took part in my interviews. What I mean is that everybody understood that racism referred to the unequal treatment of people because of their external physical characteristics. However, when asked who was responsible for racism, many of the responses hinted at individual behaviors or were more evasive in terms of being willing to identify the oppressor. The reasons for the existence of racism in French society were extremely vague at times ranging from "French people are too conservative"³⁷ to it is due to "the fear of the other and changes that might occur"³⁸ to "the economy and the media reinforce those beliefs"³⁹ to more political statements such as "massive extra-European immigration; the voluntary blindness of politicians; white ethnomasochism, well represented by a leftist and radical-leftist education"⁴⁰. This last statement is really intriguing in the sense that racism is not only blamed on leftist politicians but that racism is constructed by the invasion faced by white nationalists who seem to construct race as equal to the nation they live in along with the inherent cultural values developed there, and by the inability for French people to step up and defend what is theirs in the face of that invasion.

This type of ideology is usually referred to as ethnomasochism, which is said to represent the crumbling of French values and history by favoring political decisions that will lead France to its downfall. I will address later the construction of the victim(s) of discrimination, but I want to show here that this individual has very definite attitudes regarding racism. Fernand is a 22

³⁷ Les français sont conservateurs

³⁸ La peur de l'étranger et des changements.

³⁹ L'économie et les medias qui entretiennent ces faits.

⁴⁰ L'immigration extra- européenne de masse. - L'aveuglement sûrement volontaire des politiques. - L'ethno masochisme des blancs, bien représenté par une éducation de gauche voire d'extrême gauche

year-old man who shares some of the National Front ideas. Earlier in his interview, he admits that a foreigner is “an extra-European. I have nothing against intra-European immigration, we have a common culture, which does not create any form of acculturation phenomenon or mixed relationships as with extra-European immigration,⁴¹” and as a result of the extra-European immigration, racism might be necessary to “preserve one’s genetic heritage.⁴²” According to Fernand, racism is just the natural response to waves of immigrants who have changed the face of this country. He actually argues,

racism is the ultimate taboo in France...I think we have demonized a legitimate ethnocentric feeling that I would recognize to any people as a form of ethnomasochism after WWII...I think the sense of belonging to one’s race is a legitimate feeling, that one needs to defend one’s primary heritage, or even primate, that the love and the defense of one’s fellows is not a shame.⁴³

Some of Fernand’s comments are very similar to De Gobineau’s arguments from 1800. A clear dichotomy is made between indo-Europeans, e.g. whites, and extra-Europeans, e.g. non-whites. Being indo-European means more than white, it also represents a European culture that despite different languages has a common genetic component to it. Fernand also admits that some form of institutional racism exists in France but in the opposite direction from the way others have talked about it. In other words, racism is a positive factor if it means defending France and its genuine values. However, he sees the present form of institutional racism as

⁴¹ Un extra-Européen, je n'ai rien contre l'immigration intra-européenne, nous avons une culture commune, cela ne crée pas de phénomène d'acculturation et de métissage comme l'immigration extra-européenne.

⁴² La préservation de son héritage génétique

⁴³ Le racisme est le tabou ultime en France. Je pense que l'on a diabolisé un sentiment ethnocentrique légitime que je reconnais à tout peuple en un ethno-masochisme après la Seconde Guerre mondiale j'estime que l'attachement à sa race est un sentiment légitime, que l'on se doit de défendre ce qui constitue son patrimoine objectif primaire, voire primitif, que l'amour des siens et leur défense n'est pas honteux

a form of institutional anti-racism, which leads to the cult of non race. Today, you have to be mixed to be a modern citizen. Ethnic minorities (while they will soon become the majority) are constantly helped out, despite the population's opposition. Everything is done to promote at the institutional level a melting pot and those who refuse to go along with it are punished by law. The state has created a dogma, whose goal is to modify our society, to destroy differences around the identities of people. The superior race is today the mixed individual or the foreigner, and the inferior one that we make feel guilty because of his oppressive history is the white man.⁴⁴

This is a very interesting quote. This young man tries to turn the fight against racism on its head. For him, the current policies aimed at promoting sameness are an infringement on his right to affirm his frenchness, and therefore, an attempt to prevent his right not to tolerate those who are not real French. His other problem with the current institutionalization of decreasing differences between peoples is an attempt to discredit the white man, which represents for him an anachronistic view of France's history since whites have been the dominant group (socially, politically and economically speaking) for ages and now it is about to be surpassed by ethnic minority groups. In a sense, the real problem of racism is the institutionalization of the values of minority groups on his genetic right to remain French without having to accept any changes.

While a few respondents (and we should not discount their position in society) shared Fernand's values and attitudes about what racism represents that the state is not standing up for

⁴⁴ C'est une forme d'anti-racisme d'Etat, finalement le culte de la non race. Aujourd'hui il faut être métissé pour être un citoyen moderne. Les minorités ethniques (certes bientôt elles seront en majorité) sont de façon constante mise en avant, malgré les réticences de la population. Tout est mis en oeuvre au niveau institutionnel pour promouvoir le melting pot et les gens qui s'y refusent sont pénalement condamnés ! L'Etat a érigé un dogme selon lequel le but de notre société est de se modifier, de détruire les frontières identitaires entre les gens, éliminer les différences. La race supérieure aujourd'hui c'est le métisse ou l'étranger et l'inférieur que l'on culpabilise de son histoire d'opresseur, c'est le Blanc.

real white French and is being discriminatory against people like him, and while a few others did share the type of institutionalization presented by Joséphine, most other respondents did not see institutional discrimination as something that would really exist in French society. However, a few respondents pointed out that while the laws are not racist, some of the politicians tend to be. This is what Albert, a 28 year-old engineer, says regarding the absence of institutional discrimination, “I rather think that there are people who work for the state that are racists.”⁴⁵

Others argues that racism is just a feeling that changes as time passes and the laws are reflective of those feelings because they do not change everyday. Interestingly, some said that it was part of human nature to be racist and therefore we should not be surprised to see racist acts occurring in society.

Jérémy, a 26 year-old financial consultant, argues, if systematic discrimination occurs because of one person’s cultural characteristic, which does not go against the respect of human life, then yes we can talk about institutionalization of racism. However, besides the veil controversy, I do not think that there exists any form of institutional racism in France⁴⁶.

This is a remarkable answer in the sense that this respondent, while presenting a possible example of systematic racism, would nevertheless acknowledge the non-systematic nature of racism in France. I think it also reveals something much deeper. Even when presented with actual examples some respondents cannot fathom the existence of systematic racism because they are not confronted directly with it. This is revealed indirectly in some of his other answers. He acknowledged that those who are the most victims of racism are people coming from French

⁴⁵ Je pense plutôt qu'il existe des personnes travaillant pour l'Etat et qui sont racistes.

⁴⁶ Si une discrimination systématique s'opère sur le fait qu'un individu du fait d'un élément de sa culture, qui n'est pas contraire au respect des droits de l'être humain, alors oui, on peut parler de racisme d'Etat. Pour autant, mise à part l'histoire du voile, je ne pense pas qu'il y ait de racisme d'Etat en France.

Caribbean Islands, people from the Maghreb, from West Africa and Romanians, because of assumptions made about them and because of the lack of understanding of their different cultures by the rest of the population. He does not realize that if assumptions about one's culture are being made, it is because they can be easily identified through certain external physical characteristics. When asked about what it meant for him to be white, he just said that having certain types of body reactions (i.e. sunburns) when in the sun. This, of course, means that laws like the 1993 Pasqua Law giving law enforcement agencies the right to objectively check somebody's ID to check if one's presence in France is legitimate would apply the same way to any type of populations in France (i.e. racial profiling has not really entered the collective mind).

Alain, a 39 year-old white-collar employee, does not think such systematic discrimination exists. He says, "I do not think [it exists]. I think that the behaviors of certain groups and the formation of communities forces institutions to become [discriminatory]⁴⁷." According to Alain, there is no systematic racism, or maybe there is some but only as a way to control those who do not know how to behave and who are a result of the formation of communities undermining what France is.

On the other hand, some really see racism as an individual act. Jean-Philippe, a 33 year-old man states, in a sense, that racism is an individual problem and we should not ask the government to intervene. The solution to racism is "everybody's role but unfortunately we live in a country in which people are asking for a hand and therefore everybody relies, as always, on the state, let's think⁴⁸." Basically, if everybody were doing their share to check their behaviors and

⁴⁷ Je ne pense pas. Je pense que l'expérience sur le comportement de certains groupes et le communautarisme pousse les institutions à le devenir.

⁴⁸ C'est le rôle de chacun mais malheureusement on vit dans des pays d'assisté et donc on compte toujours sur l'état, réfléchissons.

attitudes, then we would not have racism. He is also presenting a very individualistic perspective where governmental intervention is not necessary and should be discouraged.

While not everybody is as explicit as Jean-Philippe, many just construct racism as negative feelings toward certain individuals and we just need to have a strong public relations campaign to re-educate people who have those feelings, and by reinforcing the idea of equality and sameness in our schools. The idea of sameness represents one of the Republican values under which the integration (assimilation) comes. Many have argued that achieving equality or sameness through the integration is contradictory (Todorov, 1994; Silverman, 1992; Jugé & Perez, 2006) as it is based on the inequality of people before they can become equal.

Racism: who are the victims?

While racism was for the most part understood from an individual perspective, the victims of racism were not always the ones I expected. While I expected a lot of denial about racism in France, I was extremely surprised by the number of respondents who expressed their anger regarding what they call anti-white racism. Let's be sure to state that according to some of the statistics gathered by certain agencies over the last few years, racial and ethnic minorities represent a very small number of the French population (Boëldieu & Borrel; 2000; Daguet & Thave, 1996). However, it seems that, while other research (Cediey & Foroni, 2006) suggests that systematic hiring and housing discrimination towards blacks and Arabs exists, many respondents felt that the government was passing laws that are discriminatory to whites. When asked about whether there is discrimination in hiring and in housing, Géraldine, a 25 year-old female teacher, states,

yes, but once again it is against either French people or those who are Caucasian. Immigrants, even undocumented, will get a spot before you because this is what is ordered. Certain business owners are reprimanded or have to go to court if they do not hire foreigners. This is ironic when this business owner is supposed to make sure everything is going well in his business⁴⁹.

This young woman is obviously alluding to the idea of the French version of affirmative action, called in France *discrimination positive* (positive discrimination). The term “positive discrimination” does carry some negative connotation but it has not even been put in place yet. Some companies are voluntarily changing some of their hiring procedures in order to have a more diverse working population. Adecco and L’Oréal were found guilty of discrimination by engaging in unfair hiring practices aimed at seeking white applicants only (Ortiz, 2007). However, the idea of instituting French affirmative policies creates paranoid reactions in which the dominant group now feels oppressed.

This is also expressed by a 27 year-old man, Gérard, who works for the state. When asked about the existence of discrimination in housing, he replied,

yes, in Paris city hall. Afro-Maghreb individuals have de facto priorities.

Otherwise how would you explain the Parisian population be so racially mixed?

How would you explain that the only whites who live there are in the well-off neighborhoods, while in the popular neighborhoods or middle-class ones, whites

⁴⁹ Oui, encore une fois envers les gens soit français soit d'origines caucasiennes. Les personnes immigrées, voire sans papiers auront une place avant vous car ce sont les ordres qui sont donnés. Certain patron on des remontrance ou se voient mettre au tribunal si il n'embauche pas des étrangers. Un comble pour un patron qui doit vérifier la bonne marche avant tout de sa boutique.

are less and less numerous because of the social housing policy. Moreover, Afro-Maghreb people have priorities in the public sector, especially in the police⁵⁰.

This young man provides a very detailed description of the perception of why some groups are living in certain areas of Paris compared to others. While he answers his own question indirectly, it does not come to his mind that the present arrangement overall benefits whites over people of color. Anyway, he does resent the fact that those groups are given priorities in housing. While as an employee of the state, he might have a privileged position to witness those trends, one can question the openly discriminatory policy that the state would have in place to ensure that people of color have their housing needs fulfilled before whites. This would go against French Republican values.

This anti-white perception seems to be really be anchored in some people's minds. Despite the small percentage of people of color in France (Sofres / Le Cran, 2007), they seem to be causing a lot of problems to the white French – they are accused of taking everybody's jobs, given preferential treatment in housing and in hiring, and to be anti-French and anti-white. In other words, they are behaving in such a way because politicians and the laws apparently facilitate those types of behaviors and do not condemn them for their anti-white racist acts. Some of those feelings are demonstrated in this very long quote by Gérard (who was already quoted above) who mentioned very specific examples of anti-white racism. When asked about anti-examples, he declared,

yes, I have a few examples. My wife who is European but not French had to suffer that type of racism several times. Many times, when she goes buy some

⁵⁰ Oui, à la mairie de paris, les afros magrébins sont prioritaires de fait. Sinon comment expliquer que la population parisienne soit aussi métissée? Comment expliquer que les seuls blancs qui y habitent sont dans des quartiers bourgeois, alors que dans les quartiers populaires ou de classe moyenne, les blancs sont de moins en moins nombreux du fait de cette politique de logement social. De même, les afros magrébins sont prioritaires dans la fonction publique, notamment dans la police

bread at the next-door bakery, which is owned by a Maghrébin, the customers who are of African or North-African origins, even though they arrived after her, were served along with her, with no explanations. In the bus, while there were many people there, she was verbally assaulted by a North-African man and an African woman under the pretext that she was not moving fast enough even though she was pregnant (I should clarify that according to her, there was an older Maghrébine woman in front of her as well as an African woman, she was not about to push them either). How can you explain such behavior? For my part, I was insulted a few times as “dirty whities” or “fucking Frenchie” while I was assaulted. When I tried to file suit for racist comments, the police officer explained to me that the court could not interpret the law against discrimination in this direction. I called several numbers where people deal with discrimination and I was denied any consideration under the pretext that it was not a case of racism (even though the insults were rather explicit!) Moreover, here is a more general case of anti-white racism: have you ever been to the French courthouses to see who are the perpetrators of those assaults and who are the victims? You will see that there are a number of white victims and a large number of Afro-Maghreb perpetrators. Once again, how do you explain this if it is not some form of covert racism? One more example in the criminal justice system: last year, five young men of Afro-Maghreb origins from the ghetto burned a church. The prosecutor was quick to declare before the court before the investigation was over that it was an anti-white form of racism. The perpetrators were put on probation. However, when some young white men who burned a Mosque were sentenced to jail and

racist allegations became part of the case (and I agree with it). If you want another example, I want to remind of the protest of high school and college students against the CPE [a law that would made jobs more precarious for young people] when a horde of young people coming from the ghettos (Afro-Maghreb for the most part) targeted young white high school students. The philosopher Finkelkraut actually broke a media taboo by denouncing this type of racism. An example regarding jobs to change topics: a friend of my wife, who is Russian applied as a cashier in a grocery store in our neighborhood following up on an ad. The owner, a North-African woman, clearly told her that the store was not looking to hire Russians. On top of that, all the cashiers are all either African or of Maghreb descent. The only white women are old secretaries. As for me, I already said it, when I was looking for a job as a security officer and the ads would read “looking for Arab or black security officers in a grocery store and for special events.” To conclude, it is always good to recall that in the police, even though it is seen as a racist institution, recruiters have been told since the days of Jean-Pierre Chevènement [former minister of France] and his “community police” that the priority was to have a more representative police force by recruiting the youth coming out of the ghettos. What it means is that if I had tried to apply as a police officer, I would have had a lesser chance because I am white. This time another example but regarding cultural issues: Martine Aubry, Mayor of the city of Lille, financed this year a certain number of Muslim festivals. However, this year, for the second Christmas in a row, she prevented many small business owners from displaying crèches in the main avenue of the city.⁵¹

⁵¹ Oui, j'en ai plusieurs. Ma femme qui est de souche européenne mais non française a eu à subir à de nombreuses

Gérard addressed many issues but it seems that they represent an excuse for many of the things he and his wife have not been to accomplish in life. He pointed to specific examples in which it is not clear whether being white was really the main problem. He does not provide any substantial reasons for what happened to his wife. She is basically essentializing those people as being anti-white. He is quick to show what the youth from the ghettos are doing but fails to really address what the white youth are doing. He also mentions, in passing, the name of a philosopher who did come out against anti-white racism. Finkelkraut (2005) denounced the idea of anti-white racism by arguing that if it is okay for minorities to blame France for colonial issues and to blame the West for slavery, the causality should also be addressed to minorities

reprises ce racism. Plusieurs fois, lorsqu'elle allait acheter du pain à la boulangerie d'à côté, tenu par un maghrébin, les clients d'origine africaines ou nord africaines pourtant arrivés après elles ont été servis avec elle, sans explication. Dans le bus, transportant pourtant plusieurs personnes, elle s'est faite agresser verbalement par un nord africain et une africaine sous prétexte qu'elle ne libérait pas assez vite le passage, alors qu'elle était enceinte (je précise d'après ses dires, qu'une personne âgée maghrébine se trouvait devant elle, ainsi qu'une femme africaine, elle n'allait pas non plus les pousser). Comment expliquer un tel comportement? Pour ma part, je me suis déjà fait traiter quelques fois de "sale toubab", "enculé de céfran" lors d'agressions. Lorsque j'ai voulu porter plainte pour propos racistes, l'officier de police judiciaire m'a expliqué que le parquet n'acceptait pas d'interpréter la loi contre le racisme dans ce sens. J'ai téléphoné au numéro contre les discriminations et on a refusé de considérer mon cas sous prétexte que ce n'était pas du racisme (pourtant les insultes étaient explicites!) D'ailleurs, un exemple plus général de racisme anti-blanc: êtes vous allé dans les tribunaux pénaux français pour voir qui sont les auteurs d'agressions et qui sont les victimes? Vous verrez qu'il existe une forte représentativité de victimes blanches, alors qu'à l'inverse, il y a une forte représentativité d'auteurs afro maghrébins. Encore une fois comment expliquer cela si ce n'est pas par un effet de racisme sous jacent? Encore un exemple sur le thème de la justice: l'année dernière cinq jeunes de banlieue d'origine afro-maghrébine ont brûlé une église. Le magistrat s'est empressé devant les journaux avant la fin de l'enquête de déclarer qu'il ne s'agissait pas d'un acte raciste anti-blanc. Les auteurs ont pris à peine de la prison avec sursis. En revanche, les jeunes blancs qui ont brûlé une mosquée viennent de prendre de la prison ferme avec le racisme intégré dans l'accusation (ce que j'approuve d'ailleurs). S'il vous faut encore un exemple, je vous renvoie à la première manifestation nationale des étudiants et lycéens contre le CPE ou des hordes entières de jeunes de banlieues (des afro-maghrébins pour la plupart) ont pris pour cible des étudiants et lycéens blancs. Le philosophe Finkelkraut avait d'ailleurs brisé le tabou médiatique en dénonçant ce racisme. Un exemple sur le thème de l'emploi pour changer: une amie de ma femme, de nationalité russe s'était présentée pour un poste de caissière dans un supermarché de notre quartier, suite à une petite annonce. La gérante, une nord africaine lui a dit clairement que le magasin ne cherchait pas de russes. D'ailleurs, toutes les nouvelles caissières sont soit africaines, soit maghrébines. Les seules blanches sont d'anciennes employées de l'ancienne direction. Pour ma part, j'ai déjà eu l'occasion de lire, lorsque je recherchais un emploi dans le gardiennage "recherchons vigils reubeus ou black pour sécurité dans supermarché et événementiel". Pour finir, il est toujours bon de savoir dans le cas de la police, pourtant institution réputée raciste, que les recruteurs ont eu instruction depuis Jean Pierre Chevènement et sa fameuse police de proximité de mettre en priorité les jeunes issus de l'immigration afin d'avoir une police plus représentative. Cela veut tout simplement dire que si je tentais d'entrer dans la police, je serais défavorisé car blanc. Exemple cette fois sur le thème de la culture: Martine Aubry, maire de Lille a financé cette année de nombreuses fêtes et cultes musulmans. Pourtant, cette année, pour le deuxième Noël consécutif, elle a interdit aux commerçants de la rue centrale d'exposer des crèches...

who are engaging in anti-white forms of racism. He added that those who were born after the colonial period should not be viewed as victims. This argument obviously contributes to the idea that the colonial framework should be done away with in order to explain some of the situations applying to racial/ethnic minorities. The anti-white racism contributes to shifting away from a colonial discourse by turning racism on its head by saying that anti-white racism is as bad as anti-black or anti-Arab racism. It also allows the white dominant group to ignore the systematic, historical and collective negative memory transmitted from one generation to the next about racialized minorities.

Other respondents are not sure about the type of discrimination occurring in France. While they acknowledge certain problems exist, the reasons behind them are not as clear. Matthieu is a 28 year-old musician. He is ideologically close to the party of the current President of France (Union for a Popular Majority). He remains skeptical of the real nature of housing and hiring discrimination trying to look at the different reasons as to why it might happen in France. He stated,

yes, some housing discrimination exist, and probably some hiring discrimination too. The problem comes from the experiences business owners and landlords have had with Africans (they are the minorities that everybody calls victims) but also due to the colonial past, which perceived the black and the Arab as a sub-citizen. However, there is also an integration problem on the part of the minorities, that even the second generation does not speak proper French, they have inappropriate behaviors for society and the workplace. Whose fault is it?

The state cannot substitute itself to the intelligence of the parents. But the parents cannot teach what they do not know⁵².

Discrimination seems for him to be more a matter of cultural values. However, some of his comments reveal similar trends noted earlier in this research. Africans, blacks and Arabs are essentialized without really addressing some of the individual differences within those groups. Second, it reveals a not so-colorblind society since those are always the ones being mentioned (being white in other quotes is also being mentioned but often as a position of oppression as I addressed above). Matthieu does make some interesting comments regarding the perceptions linked to the colonial period but despite pointing out and emphasizing the roles of employers and business owners in discrimination, he focuses more on the lack of knowledge, cultural values of the parents of the young people who are victim of discrimination. It is also as if the educational system could not help them out despite good intentions, and that eventually it is about the parents' intelligence. In that sense, it is even damning that culture and the colonial view persists. Very little is said about the systematic discriminatory practices that those groups face; it becomes more of cultural argument (which hides the real racial argument behind culture).

Romain is a 25 year-old Ph.D. candidate in one of Paris' universities. He is sympathetic to the ideas of a right-wing political party called Movement for France (Mouvement pour la France). When asked about the type of discrimination occurring in France, he vehemently denies much of it has to do with racial discrimination as he argues,

⁵² Oui il existe une discrimination au logement, et sans doute à l'embauche. La faute vient de l'expérience des propriétaires et employeurs avec des africains (car ce sont ces minorités qui sont déclarées comme victimes) mais aussi du passé colonialiste de la France qui peut voir 'le noir ou l'arabe' comme un sous citoyen. Pourtant il y a eu aussi un problème d'intégration des minorités - qui fait que même la seconde génération ne parle pas bien français, ont des comportements inadaptés à la société et au monde du travail. A qui la faute? L'Etat ne peut se substituer à l'intelligence des parents. Mais les parents ne peuvent enseigner ce qu'ils ne connaissent pas.

according to me it is false that foreigners with education are victims of segregation during the hiring process. I have dozen of counter-examples. In the sectors where employees are representing the company (sales, food industry, administrative positions), it is possible there is some 'segregation' regarding third generation immigrant children. But this discrimination can be explained sometimes by the lack of comportment from those individuals even when they are educated. Discrimination, is according to me, necessary in that sense. However, in those sectors, discrimination based on physical characteristics also exists but people of foreign origins are not the only victims (obese individuals, one-eye people etc...). Regarding housing issues, times are hard for everybody⁵³.

Most of the discrimination in the workplace is due to the lack of cultural values even when one is educated. However, this respondent is quick to notice that those who do not have social graces are children of immigrants. Racial discrimination is here completely ignored, and the rationale is that it might be necessary for some businesses to engage in selective discrimination when their images are at play. Therefore, people of color might have to suffer a bit until they learn how to behave. His arguments do not include any social class issues, as one could think those coming from lower socio-economic classes might be less likely to know how to behave in certain environments because they are exposed to them. He primarily focuses on children of immigrants, stripping them of their socialization in France, their education and putting the blame solely on the parents. In order not to appear condescending, he adds that

⁵³ Il est faux à mon sens que les diplômés étrangers connaissent une ségrégation à l'embauche. J'ai des dizaines de contre exemple. Dans les secteurs où l'employé doit représenter l'entreprise (commerce, restauration, secrétariat), il peut y avoir une certaine 'ségrégation' concernant les jeunes 'issus de la troisième génération d'immigration'. Mais cette discrimination s'explique parfois par le manque de manière de ces personnes qui peuvent pourtant être diplômés. La discrimination est dans ce sens nécessaires à mon sens. Pour autant, dans ces secteurs, une discrimination due à l'apparence physique existe aussi mais les personnes d'origines étrangères n'en sont pas les seules victimes (obèses, borgnes, etc...). Dans le cas du logement, les temps sont durs pour tout le monde.

people with certain physical problems such as being obese and being one-eyed is as problematic or equal to forms of discrimination based on other physical characteristics. It seems that even with an education they cannot shake those bad habits they have learned in their families. This reminds me of a popular saying in the U.S. that you can take the kid out of the ghetto but you cannot take the ghetto out of the kid. It is based on cultural determinism where race allows one to determine which cultural group you belong to.

What is “intégration”?

“Intégration” à la French has been one of the major points of contention over the last decades or so, and at this day still represents one of the major elements put forward by the *République* in order to achieve *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*. The reason for its contention revolves around two arguments. One is that if the *République* is able to bring people in by integrating them, then they will be more likely to actively participate in French society; second it will guarantee their equal place in society, and third it will prevent the formation of communities, or what Anderson (1991) would call “imagined communities”, that could threaten the fabric of France by allowing too many cultural differences. On the other side of the debate, the problem revolves around the conditions presented to individuals in order to be integrated, and second, about the guarantees of equality that will follow if one does what is expected of him/her. I should also say that based on what Sagot-Duvauroux (2004) wrote, those who are already French at heart still have to prove their allegiance to the nation; however, they are constantly questioned about their civic roles in French society. This argument is exemplified by Romain (already mentioned earlier) who states,

integration only makes sense when one talks about an adult who has not received an education in France. This term is meaningless when it is used to refer to young people of African origins who have spent all their lives in France, who have attended school in France and who have watched French television.⁵⁴

Romain understands that those young people are French in their heart even though they might need the legal documents to prove it. However, Romain's conceptualization of integration is not shared by every one. While today there is a lot of debate around the notion of integration (Lévy, 2005), Bouamama (1992) argues that the substantive effect of integration is the same as the one of assimilation but under another name. Moving from assimilation to integration was supposed to mark a break in the French colonial collective mentality in 1955. The debate around the real meaning of integration as opposed to assimilation is on-going. Integration comes from the assimilationist tradition of France going as far back to the 1789 French revolution. Hajjat (2005) defines assimilation as the cultural homogenization of the nation, or of the community of citizens. However, this assimilationist tradition is contradictory to the idea of universalism set up by the French revolution. The French type of universalism is based on the exclusion of "foreigners" from citizenship. Different scholars have called this practice either a form "universal chauvinism" (Sayad, 1999) or a form of "abstract universal" (Khosrokhavar, 1996) to denounce the use of universalism in effect to enforce ethnocentric ideas. While there is a definite political definition of citizenship, there has also been a historical definition of citizenship based on culture (if not racially structured) (Hajjat, 2005).

Other respondents remain more neutral about what integration represents to them. Take Marcel, for instance. He is an 18 year old student who says that,

⁵⁴ L'intégration a un sens lorsqu'il s'agit de parler d'une personne adulte qui n'a pas reçu une éducation en France. Ce terme n'a aucun sens lorsqu'il est employé au sujet des 'jeunes d'origine africaine' qui ont passé toute leur enfance en France, sont allés à l'école en France, ont regardé la Télévision française.

integration is the demonstrated will of new immigrants to integrate themselves, to melt into the *République*, or in other words to melt into the public space while at the same time maintaining their own private behaviors. Integration is the love of France and the desire to always see your country grow.⁵⁵

His attitude towards integration does not preclude any private behaviors to change. The only requirement to be integrated is showing your willingness to participate in French society and to love your country. This remains a very open requirement about integration. This open requirement about integration and this meaning of integration is not shared by a large number of respondents. However, this comment also reveals some interesting dynamics. The newly arrived immigrant needs to show his/her will to integrate into French society, however the problem with this argument is not so much the effort put forward by the immigrant population but the level of scrutiny and of acceptance developed by the dominant group. As in other theories of Assimilation (Park, 1913; Gordon, 1964) the burden of change is on the shoulders of the immigrants but the decision of whether or not one has fully integrated or assimilated remains in the hands of the dominant group that assess the integration effort. One can imagine a society where immigrants do what they are asked to do but still remain at the margins of society because of the eternal non-commitment of this society to see them as equal. When asked about the difference between integration and assimilation, Jean-Bertrand, a 22 year-old student, states the following,

integration means to socialize people in a host society while guaranteeing the respect of their culture of origin. Assimilation necessitates an immigrant to adopt the culture of the host society. France has typically been a system of integration

⁵⁵ L'intégration c'est la volonté de la part des nouveaux immigrés à s'insérer, se fondre dans la république c'est à dire la chose publique tout en ayant des pratiques privés qui leurs sont propre. L'intégration c'est l'amour de la France et le désir de voir son pays toujours plus grand

leading today towards the formation of communities. The waves of immigration in the twentieth century, mostly from European immigrants, led to an assimilation of Italians, Polish, Portuguese, and this assimilation was very fast. While those populations faced some form of racism, you have now have to admit that they are completely integrated and do not cause the same problems as extra-European immigration today. There is no comparison. Moreover, since Giscard [former President of France from 1974 to 1981] everybody has understood that assimilation would not be possible for extra-European populations. From that point on, integration started, and it is a complete failure (politicians from the left and from the right acknowledge that it is today a complete failure.⁵⁶

This young man makes a couple of very interesting points. He defines integration in the same manner as Marcel (previous quote on page 144) but he is more detailed about his definition of assimilation which basically entails abandoning one's culture in order to adopt and become culturally entrenched in the French society. However, his definition of assimilation resembles very much the expectations of today's French society, however, under the term "integration." That is, integration is said to create communities, and is therefore problematic in the eyes of French society. Yet if people are able to maintain their cultural background in the privacy of their homes then why is it a problem when some people meet together to share cultural events?

⁵⁶ L'intégration consiste à socialiser les gens dans la société d'accueil tout en garantissant le maintien de leur culture d'origine. L'assimilation veut que lorsqu'un immigré vient, il se doit d'adopter la culture du pays d'accueil. La France est typiquement dans un système d'intégration aujourd'hui, voire progressivement de communautarisme. Durant les vagues de migration du premier tiers du XXème siècle, qui concernaient des populations européennes, on a eu clairement une assimilation des Italiens, des Polonais, des Portugais, assimilation souvent très rapide. Cependant il y a aussi à l'époque des phénomènes de racisme vis à vis de ces populations, mais force est de constater qu'elles sont totalement intégrées et n'ont jamais posé les problèmes que cause l'immigration extra européenne aujourd'hui. C'est sans commune mesure. D'ailleurs, à partir de Giscard en France on a vite compris que l'assimilation n'était pas possible pour les populations extra-européennes. On a donc mis en oeuvre l'intégration, un échec complet (pour que les politiciens de gauche comme de droite le reconnaissent aujourd'hui c'est que c'est vraiment un échec complet...).

Why is it okay for Catholics to meet in churches but seen as an attempt to resist French integration when Muslims meet in Mosques? Therefore, since the formation of communities represents a threat to the stability of the French *République*, it is therefore imperative for people to only adopt French culture and relinquish their old culture. At this point, Bouamama (1992) was right, what is called integration today is more or less the same thing as assimilation was yesterday. The second point made by Jean-Bertrand touches on some of the problems I addressed earlier, which is the invisibility of whiteness. When he refers to Italians, Portuguese and Polish, he is mostly talking about white European immigrants, who despite a few problems of discrimination, eventually assimilated into French society. He is also quick to point out that extra-European (i.e. non-white) populations are the ones who not only do not want to assimilate or integrate but also create social problems in our society. Their otherness is not only rooted in their external physical characteristics but also in their culture (religion, traditions and so on), which seems to be contrary to the white French tradition. In consequence, their presence and behaviors are condemned and deciphered as a will to stand up against the French Republican model of equality. Jean-Claude, a 27 year-old Kabyle software programmer expresses some of those contradictions as follows,

integration and segregation are two sides of the same coin. Often, politicians of European origins (Italians, Hungarian, Spanish, Polish, German, Portuguese, and others) say to French individuals from French Caribbean territories that they have to integrate for instance, and this makes absolutely no sense, despite that this has been a topic of discussion for decades now. The discourse about integration is only a smokescreen, a bad alibi that the collective conscience has been using for decades to exclude ethnic groups and casting them in disgrace. Integration is a

national joke, a politically correct phrase aimed at hiding a deep-seating racism in French society.⁵⁷

Jean-Claude seems to be well aware of the contradiction of integration. It is interesting to notice that integration, from his own understanding, represents a misleading rite of passage towards your acceptance in French society used in reality to hide a more ugly truth: exclusion on the basis of equality.

How do French people understand colonialism? How do they see its social relevance in today's society?

While colonialism officially ended more than three decades ago, behaviors, discourses and attitudes might at times remind us that this period of history might not be rooted in the past as one might think. French people seem to be unaware of the extent of the oppression felt by people around the world under the French colonial rule. Marcus, a 30 year-old man, argues “France built roads, trains, and schools during the colonial period. We can therefore talk about the past if we do not feel guilty,⁵⁸” and Jeanine, a 18 year-old female student states “I do not know enough about this period of time to say much on this topic but I don’t see any reasons why

⁵⁷ L'intégration et la ségrégation sont les deux faces d'une même pièce. Il arrive très souvent que des hommes politiques d'origines européennes (italiennes, hongroises, espagnoles, polonaises, allemandes, portugaises ou autres) disent à des français noirs des Dom Tom par exemple qu'ils doivent s'intégrer', ceci n'a absolument aucun sens, mais malgré cela ce discours est d'actualité depuis des décennies. Le discours au sujet de l'intégration n'est qu'un paravent, un mauvais alibi que la conscience populaire utilise depuis des décennies pour exclure des catégories ethniques de personnes en jetant l'opprobre sur elles. 'L'intégration' est une blague nationale, une expression politiquement correcte destinée à dissimuler un racisme installé dans les profondeurs de la société française.

⁵⁸ La France a construit des routes, des trains, des écoles... lors de la colonisation. On peut donc parler du passé si on ne fait pas que de la culpabilisation.

we should talk about it now.⁵⁹” Those two statements reveal two important points; first, the idea that colonialism was not a bad endeavor and the French were engaged in morally right missions, and second, that contemporary France might not have and should not have to face up to some of the atrocities perpetuated during the colonial period, and since it is the past and there is no need to reassess those problems from a contemporary perspective. French colonial legacy remains a major source of contention in France. One should note that those ideas might be representative of the official view of history that the French government wanted to impose on its historians. It is therefore not surprising to see that the French National assembly and the Senate adopted a law on Feb 23, 2005 stating the following (translation is mine):

University research programs will recognize the history of the French presence overseas presence, particularly in North Africa, the place it deserves. School programs will acknowledge above all the *positive role* [emphasis is mine] of the French overseas presence, particularly in North Africa, and will recognize the history and sacrifices of the combatants of the French army originating from these territories the distinguished place they are entitled to. Cooperation to connect the oral and written sources available in France and abroad is encouraged.⁶⁰

It was eventually repealed after prompting a large number of discontent and protest.

Nonetheless, France’s past continues to haunt its current immigration policies. It is therefore important to show that the past *civilizing mission* that the French carried out during the colonial

⁵⁹ Je ne connais pas assez ce moment de l'histoire pour m'exprimer, mais je ne vois pas pourquoi on en reparlerait maintenant...

⁶⁰ Les programmes de recherche universitaire accordent à l'histoire de la présence française outre-mer, notamment en Afrique du Nord, la place qu'elle mérite. Les programmes scolaires reconnaissent en particulier le rôle positif de la présence française outre-mer, notamment en Afrique du Nord, et accordent à l'histoire et aux sacrifices des combattants de l'armée française issus de ces territoires la place éminente à laquelle ils ont droit. La coopération permettant la mise en relation des sources orales et écrites disponibles en France et à l'étranger est encouragée

period remains an important aspect of the *République* and of the cultural value attached to frenchness, e.g. whiteness. While the racial discourse remains overtly inexistent, the universal mission of the *République* continues to deal with “others” in racial terms, while the dominant group (i.e. white) remains unnamed or invisible. The idea of common French identity (as opposed to multicultural identities) is based on the universal notion of non-differentiation or neutrality which is nonetheless representative of the dominant group, i.e. “the neutral one is a white man from the middle or upper classes” (Bancel & Blanchard, 2005, p.40). Interestingly, on November 30, 2005 a poll revealed that 64% of the French were in favor of this law (CSA-Le Figaro, 2005a). Jean-Luc, a 30 year-old lawyer, expressed this positive aspect of colonialism as follows,

yes, France was a colonizer. France has often exploited peoples. But it was with good conscience, because its desire was to bring ‘THE’ civilization, as they used to say at the time. My grandparents were colonizers and they often told me stories about how we built everything there: roads, hospitals, schools, vaccination campaigns, literacy programs, patience and complete dedication of missionaries, teachers and so on...⁶¹

The positive aspect of colonialism could be opposed to some of Aimé Césaire (1955) most direct attack on colonialism as he stated in *Discourse on Colonialism* that,

they talk about progress, about ‘achievement’, diseases cured, improved standards of living...I am talking about natural economies that have been disrupted – harmonious and viable economies adapted to the indigenous population – about

⁶¹ Oui, la France a colonisé. La France a souvent exploités des peuples. Mais elle le faisait avec bonne conscience, car elle désirait apporter 'LA' civilisation, comme on dît à l'époque. Mes grands-parents étaient colons, et m'ont souvent raconté qu' l'on a tout construit, là-bas : routes, hôpitaux, écoles, campagnes de vaccination, d'alphabétisation, patience et dévouement infini des missionnaires, des professeurs, etc.

food crops destroyed, malnutrition introduced, agricultural development oriented solely towards the benefit of the metropolitan countries (p. 42-43)

Apparently, even the newly elected French President, Nicolas Sarkozy (2007), still has trouble dealing with colonialism and its consequences on the African continent. As he visited several African countries during summer 2007, he somewhat recognized what France participated in during the colonial period but was therefore quick to say in one of his speeches that.

Africa's tragedy is that the African has not entered history enough. The African peasant, who for thousands of years, has lived with the seasons, and whose ideal is to be in harmony with nature, only knows the eternal renewal of regular beat through the repetition of the same gestures and the same words... Africa's challenge is to learn how to make itself the heir of everything that is universal in all human civilizations... It is to acquire science and the modern techniques as the product of all human intelligence.⁶²

This discourse is very reminiscent of the paternalism of the French colonizers of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. It could have been written at that period of time, very few people would have really noticed it. Sarkozy, through this discourse was made in Dakar, reproduces some of the old beliefs about Africans (I.e. blacks) and Europeans (i.e. whites, or French here). While he acknowledged some of the problems created by colonialism in the first few sentences of his speech, he then turned to the African youth and challenged them to embrace modernity. Three important elements therefore emerge as a result of this argument. First, Africans are not modern

⁶² Le drame de l'Afrique, c'est que l'homme africain n'est pas assez entré dans l'histoire. Le paysan africain, qui depuis des millénaires, vit avec les saisons, dont l'idéal de vie est d'être en harmonie avec la nature, ne connaît que l'éternel recommencement du temps rythmé par la répétition sans fin des mêmes gestes et des mêmes paroles... Le défi de l'Afrique, c'est d'apprendre à se sentir l'héritière de tout ce qu'il y a d'universel dans toutes les civilisations humaines... C'est de s'approprier la science et la technique modernes comme le produit de toute l'intelligence humaine

people and they need to do more to enter history and human civilizations by distancing themselves from nature. He mentioned several times in his speech the idea that Africa has to “learn,” and why not learning from those who know best, Europeans! Second, Europeans are the carriers of science and modern techniques and this is what makes them modern. They are the modern Men! (Trouillot, 1995). Third, this ethnocentric view of Africa contributes to the image of inferiority of Africans and blacks, and the need and necessity for them to progress. This seems to represent the modern version of the civilizing mission under the cover of whiteness

Those comments made on the African continent do enter the collective memory. They represent the official position of France about Africa, and those comments, as they are presented in the media and dispersed in the general population, become some sort of truth. As white French people face blacks, Arabs and other non-European groups, a certain assumption remains about the cultural, political and economic superiority of Europeans, and whites over those we can identify through their external physical characteristics, i.e. people of color. Sarkozy’s comments also attracted international attention as the United Nations’ Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, Doudou Diène, accused President Sarkozy of contributing to a dynamic leading to a legitimization of racism; he was referring in particular to the July 2, 2007 speech President Sarkozy gave in Africa as well as to the DNA testing necessary for family reunification, which was part of the immigration reform law of October 2007. He vehemently condemned the comments directed at Africa and its need to enter history, and compared those comments to those made in racist discourses in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries (Boloignon, 2007).

Many of the respondents in this research study do share some of the ideas of President Sarkozy. They share this idea that France has helped more than it destroyed, that it was in a sense

necessary for those “peoples” to be civilized, otherwise they would have never progressed and unfortunately, and that France is not appreciated for those efforts. For instance, Martin, a 24 year-old student states in a sarcastic way, “we are very mean people who built schools and hospitals in under-developed countries. We should let them starve, that would have caused fewer problems⁶³” or Fabien, a 22 year-old state employee, who argues that, “colonialism helped under-developed countries get out of their misery and helped them become modern countries. It is therefore not important to talk about it. Slavery is part of the greatness of the empire⁶⁴”, and Jean-Jacques, a 25 year-old graphic designer, continues with a similar argument, “the role of France was to build clinics, roads, schools, in other words to extract the wealth of those peoples who were unable to do it by themselves. Yes, we need to continue to talk about it [colonialism] in this manner⁶⁵”, and finally, Marco, a 21 year-old cook and a member of the Socialist party, who says that France has “absolutely no responsibility; if the colonizers had not gone in those countries, they would still be at the stone age, you just need to see what they have done with what we left them with.⁶⁶”

It is like a child who breaks his toy. France graciously (out of the generosity of the French civilizing mission) gave them the tool necessary to help them develop (because they could not do it by themselves), and they now have the audacity to complain while they are the

⁶³ Nous sommes des méchants ayant crée des écoles et des hôpitaux dans des pays sous-développés. On aurait mieux fait de les laisser mourir de faims, ça nous aurait posé moins de problème.

⁶⁴ Le colonialisme a sorti des pays sous-développés de leur misère et en a fait des pays modernes. Il n'est pas important d'en parler. L'esclavage est parti de la grandeur d'un empire.

⁶⁵ Le rôle de la France est d'avoir construit des dispensaires, des routes, des hôpitaux, des écoles, en bref d'avoir développé la richesse de peuples incapables de le faire par eux-mêmes. Oui il faut en parler mais de cette façon.

⁶⁶ Aucune responsabilité, si les colons n'avait pas été dans ces pays ils en seraient encore a l'age de pierre, il suffit de regarder ce qu'il ont fait des restes de civilisation que l'on leurs a laissé !

ones who do not have the intellectual capacities (that French people have) to maintain this tool for their own benefit.

On the other hand, some are now talking about the colonization of France by former colonized peoples as Pierre-Philippe, a 23 year-old student close to the right-wing political party MPF (Movement for France), who states,

when I talk about the colonization of France, it is of course exaggerated. It is not the wish of the people, and the ambition is not to exploit the country. People who come in our country seek a better life than the one they have in their countries, we cannot fault them for trying to live with decency! My complaints are not aimed at the immigrants themselves, but at our political establishment and its deplorable handling of this phenomenon. However, it is true that many foreign heads of states, Arabs in particular, rejoice from it and would like to see a colonization, which actually started in the 1970s with European-Arab agreements.⁶⁷

While this young man does not direct his frustration at the immigrants themselves, he nonetheless criticizes those migration patterns. Later during the interview, he reveals some deep-seated negative feelings for those populations, as he would state that to civilize members of former colonies would mean,

to have them adapt to our civilization, which is very difficult for people who, for example, come a village in Mali, where the birth rate is close to 10 and where the majority of people is illiterate. For those who have lived in France for the twenty

⁶⁷ Quand je parle de colonisation en France, c'est bien entendu très extrapolé: ce n'est pas un vœux de la population, et n'a pas les mêmes ambitions d'exploitation du pays. Les gens qui viennent chez nous y trouvent une vie meilleure que dans leur pays, nous n'allons quand même pas leur reprocher de vouloir vivre décemment! Mes reproches ne s'adressent pas aux immigrants en tant que personnes, mais à notre classe politique et sa gestion déplorable de ce phénomène. Toutefois, il est certain que de nombreux dirigeants étrangers, Arabes notamment, se réjouissent de ce phénomène et souhaite une "colonisation". Phénomène amorcé dès les accords Arabo-européens des années 70...

years, and do not speak French, and live in a 3 bedroom apartment with 10 people, along with the three wives of the head of the household, who feeds everybody with a job as a janitor, and the rest coming from welfare benefits...

Let's focus first on those who are already in France before welcoming more.⁶⁸

Many of the responses from the survey and from the interviews are in concordance with the theoretical claims made earlier. The definition of one's frenchness is expressed by certain traits and characteristics that lead one to believe and think that whites living in France are not to be questioned about their nationalism or patriotism while people of color are described along cultural lines and against a larger group whose presence in France is continually questioned. The interviews reveal a set of non-overt racial standards used to present what France is currently about. Looking non-French, e.g. non-white, almost automatically means that one's presence and desire to participate in French social institutions is to be suspected. In a sense, their "visible" physical characteristics serve as a reminder that they represent a threat to sameness and French homogeneity. As a result, people of color are confronted in their daily lives with the expectation to behave as a French person, and if they deviate from those expectations by speaking another language or by engaging in other cultural behaviors, they are used as an example for the entire group that they refuse to integrate.

However, the most surprising element of this research is the level of racial consciousness exerted by white French people. They are aware that they are white. While they might say "white", the meanings associated with it remain very vague and superficial, which in turns makes it more difficult to really understand racial problems in French society. They end up perceiving

⁶⁸ Adapter à notre civilisation, ce qui est très difficile pour des personnes venant, par exemple, d'un village malien, où le taux de natalité frôle la dizaine et où les analphabètes sont en majorité. Des personnes sont en France depuis 20 ans, ne parlent pas un mot de français, et vivent à 10 dans un 3 pièces, en comptant les 3 femmes du chef de famille, qui nourrit tout le monde avec un emploi de "technicien de surface", le reste provenant des aides sociales... Occupons nous d'abord des personnes déjà en France, avant d'en accueillir d'autres.

their position as “white” as a handicap that contributes to the obliviousness about discrimination. While racial categories are carefully negotiated at the micro-level, it seems difficult for French people to engage in a conversation about race as a social construct. It seems to be the result of the fact that discrimination, racism and other forms of prejudices are understood solely at the individual level with little comprehension of the institutional aspect of discrimination developed through the law, politics, media, imagery and social understanding of the construction of frenchness. Culture, however, seems to be more meaningful for most of the respondents, and issues revolving around religion (and Islam), civic behaviors, language and daily interactions with others. However, the racialization of culture is often indirectly talked about but there is little understanding on how the European-extra-European (or Indo-European-extra-European) dichotomy around cultural lines reproduces a clear white-non-white dichotomy whereby French people of color (by birth, or through legal and administrative proceedings) are caught in the middle. The definition of frenchness seems to be deeply rooted in whiteness, encompassing physical traits, culture and political status, and is reinforced by the universal idea of integration, whose goal was to bring equality, but has in reality been contradictory, and reinforced inequality. Under this *unnamed hegemonic oppressive system*, integration represents the tip of the iceberg.

Chapter Five

The power of Invisibility

Some of these knowledges have been kept from us— entry into some professions and academia denied us. Because we are not allowed to enter discourse, because we are often disqualified and excluded from it, because what passes for theory these days is forbidden territory for us, it is vital that we occupy theorizing space, that we not allow white men and women solely to occupy it. By bringing in our own approaches and methodologies, we transform that theorizing space.
(Anzaldúa, 1990, p. xxv)

Based on the analysis of my data, I would define white privilege as the conscious or unconscious, but nevertheless harmful and racist, set of individual actions and structural policies designed to reinforce the power and resources held by those who are white – whether they acknowledge it or not, or even want to deny it – within a larger social historical context. A privilege is something that is earned through conformity of society. If one is not in compliance with whatever society needs of him or her, then one is not considered privileged. Being privileged also allows the individual to choose whether he or she would want to struggle with whatever is considered the norm.

Being white is not defined exactly the same way in each and every society across the globe because of the particular historical context. However, it is important to notice that being white is also within a larger historical context being able to define others, e.g. people of color, in a way that clearly delineate that they appear as different, backwards, uncivilized and not worthy to share the same political, economic and social place in society. This is where one can draw a distinction between citizenship as a set of rights or as a symbol of allegiance to a nation or a community. If you are not worthy of getting a set of rights, then your allegiance to a nation will continually be put into question.

You are also white by the characteristics used to define another person as a person of color, which can range from skin complexion to hair texture. However, each society defines whiteness in a particular way. For instance, it is said that money whitens in Brazil (Taylor, 2005). While some individuals were able to “pass” as white (Harris, 1993) during Jim Crow segregation for instance, it remains that those who have been defined as having European physical features who will be most likely to be considered white, and therefore most likely to “belong” politically, socially and economically, and less likely to face problems of racial discrimination. This is possible because white Europeans invented the concept of race.

In that sense, you do not have to define yourself as white *per se* to be white because the focus remains on those who cannot meet the standards defined and developed within this white supremacist historical context. It does not mean that one is not white, and that there are not any privileges linked to this social position, but rather that the invisibility of whiteness represents the standard that is understood by all but only spoken by those who cannot reach that social position. Therefore, being white is being able to pass as “normal,” being able to comment about others and being able to maintain a system in place that will represent the cultural values and norms while at the same time ignoring the historical impact of whiteness on people of color. This larger historical context can be facilitated through the use of race in the open to remind us of the so-called superiority of one group (U.S. example) or through the denial of race as a social factor, which allows its social relevance to be hidden (French case). Revealing its social power [race] would highlight the unequal treatment people of color feel under this system. This is what I call *unnamed hegemonic oppression*.

Unnamed Hegemonic Oppression

This unnamed hegemonic oppression is reproduced by the Republican call of universality and equality. Under such a paradigm, other perspectives, cultural expressions, and experiences are presented as an attempt to break down the French social fabric. White is safe and white is freedom from being judged by your skin color first, and your humanity second. Thus, being white naturally has privileges, because being white comes from having positive and not negative stereotypes against your skin color. I define this *unnamed hegemonic oppression* as the overtly non-racial set of beliefs, policies and daily actions and interactions normalized by whiteness (as invisible racial system of hierarchy), which contribute to the social, political, economic inequality and psychological impact that people of color have to deal with on a daily basis. White individuals, both consciously or unconsciously, contribute to this *unnamed hegemonic oppression* through their daily interactions with other whites and people of color, and social and economic policies as well as use of language.

The unwillingness or unconscious non-identification of whites “as white” makes the problem more difficult to address and, therefore, more difficult to solve. As the Philosopher Finkelkraut (2005) and others debated on a televised show in May 2005 whether or not anti-white racism exists, I could not help but notice that when anti-white racism was being discussed, it was always as a reflection of what young people of color were saying, while when issues of discrimination in the workplace or in housing affecting minorities were addressed, whites were never mentioned as the perpetrators. It was as if ‘it just happened, and it was bad’ but the perpetrator remained invisible. Racism just happens but very few individuals are held accountable because it would become a reflection of the larger society. When some are held accountable (Perrier, 2008; Brafman, 2008; AFP, 2008), it appears to only be a reflection of

those bad individuals or corporations but no national discussion emerges to address the severity of the problem of racial discrimination, and its significance in French social institutions.

When the term anti-French is thrown out as a reflection of the attitudes of some young children of immigrants (rarely talked about as French citizens) as a way to state their anger and emotional relationship with a country that does not recognize them as French, the “anti-French” expression is a way to convey the notion of anti-white racism without ever stating the obvious. If blacks and Arabs have to be held accountable for their anti-white racism (which I think represents a cover for not addressing the real issue of normality embedded in whiteness), then whites as “white”, not as invisible beings, should be talked about. It can be addressed from a micro-perspective in which daily interactions reproduce negative perceptions toward “others” of color, but also from an institutional (not just legal) perspective where the law, education, housing, hiring practices and other cultural entities are examined in order to understand the weight put on people of color so they can attain the goal of integration, that appears feasible on the surface but unattainable in reality. Hooks (2002) has another reason why whiteness should be examined, which is to “subvert the liberal belief in a universal subjectivity (we are all just people)” (p. 21). Since many whites do not want to admit to the privileges of whiteness, they instead believe that if they hold true to the idea of universal subjectivity, then racism will just go away. Unfortunately, race relations are ingrained in French society and cannot be so easily changed. By focusing on whiteness, one shifts the angle of analysis toward white privilege to understand that it must be given up in order to end racism.

The unreal expectations are rooted in the historicist racial state through whiteness, as the *unnamed hegemonic system of oppression*. How can France claim to have a society based on equality when people of color face a double-consciousness (Sagot-Duvauroux, 2004), when their

presence in France is questioned while the presence of whites is not (because they are assumed to be normal and to be “real” French). Whites do not have that double consciousness because they are the privileged group. Using Du Bois’ (1999) phrase, “Am I black or am I American?” (p. 45) could be transposed to the French case of “Am I black, African, Arab or Am I French?”

Whiteness creates psychological (Fanon, 1967), social, economic and political dilemmas for people of color that white French do not have to be confronted with these issue. This type of thinking is represented in the interviews and comments made by the respondents who participated in my survey and interviews when stating that being white means having to put sun cream to prevent sunburns. They do not think nor do they have to think about the social meaning of whiteness because they construct themselves as normal, as French while those who appear different are evaluated on a different basis. While some respondents have identified themselves as white – which was a very surprising finding –, this identity remains a very superficial factor in explaining a social reality. The few persons of color interviewed in this research depicted or showed the dilemmas they face in trying to fit in as French while being consistently judged on other social factors, such as race.

The collective imagination, historical memory or consciousness of French people does not posit whites as problematic but this is exactly what it does to people of color. Their state of being is deconstructed, observed, analyzed, criticized and demonized to eventually conclude that they do not really have any allegiance to the nation while they are an integral part of French society. In the meantime, lovers of justice and equality (white liberals) fail to listen to people of color’s voices, and ignore their plight – which is being themselves and dealing with the struggles they face being themselves – as mere complaints that could be easily fixed if people of color were to conform and forego their self. After all, the white dominant group knows best what it

means to be normal in this society; therefore people of color just need to conform. Consequently, it creates identity crises. While whites might mention some form of anti-white racism (one of the few times whites ever acknowledge their whiteness in France as a source of meaning to explain their position in French society), their identification as French is never contested in part because this is the way it has been constructed, white = French! Having a French identity also means not having the need for introspection.

On the other hand, people of color in France are French, want to be French but might doubt at times their French identity because under this *unnamed hegemonic oppression* they might not look French. The Pasqua Law of 1993 is a perfect example of how law enforcement agencies can continually racially profile because they are given the authority to “objectively” asked people who do not look French their ID documents. It could actually be argued that this racial identity as blacks or Arabs is the by-product of the way their frenchness has been contested. In a perfect world, one would not want to be black or Arab if one was automatically accepted and treated as French or as an integral part of this society.

Colorblindness is not the only issue. The denial of whiteness as a social issue is more than a colorblind issue. Even if people were to talk about race as a social matter, the denial of whiteness would still persist. The social historical context of the historicist state has created this perpetual numbness to racial issues. This is particularly revealing in the lack of appreciation for the effects of colonialism on people of color, and the lack of understanding of how colonialism was racially constructed and forced upon.

Colonialism and slavery are rarely discussed (Adamson, 2006). Post-colonial Great Britain has been subjected to critical and in-depth research while France has made a point to forget and numb its population from its historical responsibilities under the *République* call of

Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité. As a result whiteness persists under an *unnamed hegemonic system* where people of color remain in a precarious situation trying to choose between being French and acting as such while facing possible discrimination or finding another identity that will be meaningful to them. In that case, people of color are continually being seen as unwilling to integrate. People of color find themselves in a double-bind. Either they accept to become what is expected of them and still face rejection, or develop an opposite identity as a result of their experiences but still remain outcast. In Fanon's words, it means "turn white or disappear," (Fanon, 1967, p. 184) and whiteness remains an unreachable goal.

This era of colorblindness is, however, particularly useful in the reproduction of this *unnamed hegemonic oppressive system* in two ways. First, race does not exist, and second, it allows for a discussion about cultural differentialism. Culture has not replaced race in the everyday language, but culture has replaced race in the formation of hierarchies between groups; it has reinforced differences that are used to be based on physical characteristics while they are now embodied in culture. Culture has become a proxy for race. Lentin's (2005) research demonstrates that human differences are now explained away from racial categories in favor of cultural distinctions that are essentialized. She argues that the passage from race to culture has developed since 1945 after the Holocaust by anti-racist scholars who wanted to point out the positive aspects of cultural differences while at the same time allowing for "primitive" cultures to progress. However, Lentin (2005) goes on saying that this shift from race to culture did not expunge the ranking of human groups established under an openly racist system.

In a sense, this was revealed in President Sarkozy's speech in July 2007 (Sarkozy, 2007). The speech he gave in Africa embodies one of the major problems around the historical French position on colonialism. He admits the havoc created by French colonial policies but he is quick

to mention that it is over and that France is the friend of and not the enemy of Africans. However, a few lines later, he artistically condemns African countries for not embracing modernity, for being too close to nature, or in other words too primitive. This type of discourse is very reminiscent of the colonial period when the French did not claim superiority openly but just wanted to civilize the world. Embrace modernity or you will be condemned to remain in that inferior position for a long time. These ideas are very paternalistic and in a sense, the call for integration resembles this paternalistic call. In other words, the *République* is asking all those who are not “naturally” French to change their cultural behaviors, ways of thinking to the modern civilized French way otherwise you will remain excluded. French equates white, which also means modernity while African equates black and therefore backwardness. The *unnamed hegemonic oppression* is revealed here through the assumption that Africans, blacks, Arabs and other people of color have to be educated and therefore learn to be French. The call for integration is a call for civilizing those who are not white, while whites never have to prove their frenchness.

Without explicitly using a racial language, Sarkozy (2007) locates Africans as being behind or backwards in terms of their cultural development and their abilities on the international scene. This is what Van Dijk (1995) would call denial of racism: by engaging in not only self-glorification (presenting France as a great place for everybody) but also in the imposition a fair framework within which France can continue to be great (it is necessary to engage in immigration reforms because it is necessary), the French are not found to be guilty of anything. He explained that this combination of self-glorification and fairness is an attempt to blur the lines between humanism and realism (caring but being realistic about the situation about immigration for instance). One should be against racism because it is immoral but some policies need to be

passed to protect our nation even if it means engaging in discriminatory actions; one is not racist, one is just realistic about the current situation.

Another aspect of white privilege is more than just possessing more status than somebody else or more than just being in a position of power, it is also about not having to know about other people and their experiences because you have THE choice to ignore their problems. By having the choice to ignore others, one can therefore frame what is important in a society (it, of course, goes hand-in-hand with a position of domination) or hegemony. Therefore, when “legitimate” knowledge is created, it only encompasses the experiences of the dominant white group; other experiences are not noticed and have a difficult time to enter the realm of appropriate knowledge. This can be noticed through standpoint theories of knowledge developed by feminists and people of color (Collins, 1990; Hartstock, 1987; Smith, 1980) who are able to provide a unique aspect of their oppressions but which knowledge is continually contested by mainstream society.

Hegemonic Oppression through Construction of Knowledge

The dominant group remains for the most part oblivious to those oppressions in part because they do not have to know and worry about these experiences. The plights of oppressed groups remain invisible to the dominant group because it is not part of their realm of thinking or “what one should know!” If integration is known as the official policy for immigrants and people of color to follow in order to be accepted, any other opinions, perspectives and commentaries are relegated to anti-French radical ideologies aimed at threatening the French Republican values. Under this *hegemonic system of oppression*, being critical about the way institutions function is equated with contempt and exclusionary thinking.

Some of the consequences are that whites might be more likely to contest this new knowledge than acknowledged its relevance. This is mainly due to the fact this new knowledge is constructed mostly in opposition to the dominant framework, - racism only exists among bad individuals, otherwise everything is fine! There seems to be a real numbness about how the values and the policies being put forward really hurt people of color. Therefore, the dominant group engages in the production of counter-knowledge by finding answers elsewhere and possibly by continuing to look at people of color as the main problem (i.e. blaming the victim or anti-white racism). For instance, some of the interviewees brought up anti-white racism as an important aspect of French society. Anti-white racism is constructed in a way that allows the dominant group to ignore its responsibility, to ignore the knowledge produced by oppressed groups, and to reaffirm its domination by developing new hegemonic discourses where race, in the case of France, only matters when people of color are engaging in bad behaviors. I would suggest that the idea of reverse discrimination in the U.S. was a way to counter the arguments brought by people of color in order to reaffirm whites' racial domination. Anti-white racism in France reaffirms whites' social domination by enabling whites to control the debate and the language about racism. As long as this debate continues, the real victims of racism remain alienated and hurt. This anti-white or reverse discrimination argument represents a component of white supremacy against the people who do not want to strive to the level attained by whites. In a sense, it is a way of taking issues with the belief that "normal" (spoken) or "supremacist" (unspoken) racial hierarchy and oppression will be compromised or "muddied" by including other racial groups in the fabric of French society. Therefore, by focusing on the anti-white racism element, whites continue to perpetuate a system in which other voices will be silenced as being anti-French, and not deserving to be part of this nation. Anti-white racism becomes one of

the most salient, if not most important, forms of white supremacy and racism. Under this *unnamed hegemonic oppression*, people of color can speak out but they will be tuned out by the mainstream claim of anti-white racism.

Another very interesting point coming out of my survey and interviews is the dimension of integration. The fact that integration has so many meanings in the minds of French individuals reveals the vagueness of this idea. Integration is usually used by white French people to refer to the lack of effort being put forward by blacks and Arabs to be part of the French society, and the need for them to not only learn the values of France but also to abandon their original cultural ways, whether it is in the public space or in their private locations. One point seems unclear though: how do you measure one's integration? If speaking French is important, most immigrants and their children meet this qualification – even though one could imagine that recent older immigrants would have a harder time to master a new language – however the expectation is for them to speak French both in public and in private spaces. Second, French cultural values have to be learned; this is, however, a more delicate issue. While certain cultural values exist nationally they also vary from region to region. How is a child born in France from immigrant parents supposed to prove his/her frenchness when he/she has been socialized in French schools? Unless there is something terribly wrong about the French education system, those young people are socialized to be as French as anybody else. However, it seems that they are still being judged based on their outward physical appearances. This precedes them and it forces them to always be aware of their surroundings and the behaviors they put forward, e.g. double consciousness. This double consciousness is not expressed among white French – except maybe when they argue that being white means having to put more sun cream on their skins when in the sun.

Formation of “Communities” Defined as an Act of Anti-French Resistance

Many of the opinions expressed by respondents reveal the fear they feel when they perceive another “community” is taking over France, and trying to redefine what France means to them. There is little attempt at empathy for those respondents to put themselves in the shoes of people of color in France. By defining themselves as normal and French, they are defining “others” as not part of the French community even though it is not explicitly stated. Being French is being part of a community (Lévy, 2005), but being black or Arab goes against the ideals of the *République*. As Tatum (1997, 2007) explains, different communities are not bad as long as they provide a meaningful place for marginalized populations, and those communities are a way to bring people of color together out of the alienation they might feel in mainstream white society. However, communities can be problematic if they are based solely on separation and lead already marginalized groups to remain ostracized. One of the major points of contention is the idea of what is called “community withdrawal” (my translation for the French word *communautarisme*). The formation of communities is defined in French social institutions as a refusal to integrate French society. It can be explained by Tatum (1997) as the result of psychological development processes in response to stress and racism. Allying yourself with somebody who shares a similar struggle can help you cope with the pain felt by racism (Tatum, 1997).

The term *communautarisme* is very difficult to translate because it denotes many different ideas unique to the French context. There is often a pejorative comparison made with the racial/ethnic communities in the U.S. For the most part, it defines a negative attitude of mainstream society toward the existence of racial, ethnic, sexual communities. There is seldom

positive meanings associated with this term, which I think reveals a deep-seated problem of language. Part of this *unnamed hegemonic oppression* is the development of this anti-community ideology unique to France, which decries any cultural values celebrated in France that might be considered different from French cultural values.

The term “community” carries negative meanings in France because it is usually used to depict something that is different or goes against mainstream perspective. Part of my critical race theory training would describe this phenomenon as the hegemonic construction of knowledge only legitimized by what white French mainstream society wants to be without ever paying attention to the meanings people of color attribute to this word. The development of communities is, according to Lévy (2005), not the product of the actual emergence of communities (as an ideological goal to reach) but rather the emergence of the ideology of community withdrawal (as defined by mainstream society) coupled with the already existing communities. Those communities exist but it is the result of the demands of labor in the 50-60’s and the fact that many of those same jobs are now gone and represent what many would call the French ghettos (Maurin, 2004). People are still there. Therefore, communities exist because of economic issues but to state that their existence is a form of refusal to integrate is to mystify and blame the victim. In terms of ideological communities, it is more difficult to demonstrate that they truly exist because there are very few organizations, which are formed on the basis of race and ethnicity (one of them will be examined in the next few pages). However, this ideology of community withdrawal brings those non-white communities to light, and it is from this point that they become demonized. These non-white communities are represented as places of anti-French cultural values where integration is resisted. It is also interesting to note that in one part of Paris, there is a large community of 35,000 French citizens of Asian descent concentrated in a few

buildings. They have been there for generations but rarely are they being talked about as a community despite signs both in French and in their specific Asian languages, despite the fact that they continue to celebrate certain events that are not particular “French.” They represent in a sense what whites do not want to see happen to blacks and Arabs in certain places around Paris. They also epitomize a community that maintains cultural values and languages specific to certain countries where parents and grandparents came from, without being viewed as anti-French. A community does not mean lack of frenchness or allegiance to France. There seems to be a similar depiction of Asians in France as there is in the U.S., that they care about working, education and that they don’t make waves. As one of my interviewer stated, we never hear about Chinese people. I would suggest that in reality they are used as a way to show that there is something particular symptomatic to blacks and Arabs. They might also be the French model minority even though they face discrimination themselves.

Part of the debate about the meaning of communities is the role played by mainstream anti-racist organization such as SOS Racisme and LICRA. However, it is important to address the true meaning of these organizations. While they might be deeply engaged in the fight against racism, they are very close to the same political parties that contribute to the formation and reproduction of this racial state. As Pierre, a young man who identifies himself as anti-capitalist, stated during the interview,

SOS Racisme is movement organized by the Socialist Party to transform the march towards equality.⁶⁹

In a sense, his argument is that some political parties have hijacked the fight against racism by bringing other issues to the forefront, and by developing a new fight against racism without focusing on the issues people of color really care for.

⁶⁹ SOS racism fut un mouvement organisé par le PS pour transformer la marche pour l'égalité

Being French is never perceived as being part of a large community because it is normal and it is taken for granted, but the existence of ethnic and racial communities are a danger to French society because they are visible and challenge whiteness as a normal state of being. Lévy (2005) makes a very important point when he quotes a white French feminist scholar (Vianès) who advocates for the integration of members of those communities into French republican values. Vianès is quoted as saying that belonging to a community means to wish to acquire special rights, affirmative action benefits and privileges that others, non-white French people, do not have or do not benefit from. This definition of a community is not surprising coming from a privileged scholar rooted in mainstream culture. She does not understand that the “privileges” she has because she posits herself as a member of the “normal” group or the referent group, and therefore, does not have to think about what she represents in the eyes of oppressed racial and ethnic groups. Part of the problem she faces is that she does not recognize their experiences and voices as valid because race is not part of the language of oppression in France. She cannot fathom the idea that she actually has the privileges that she decries other communities want to access. People of color are therefore constructed as separatists unwilling to adopt French “normal” cultural values. She does not recognize them as French and ascribe them that label of anti-French community builders. Vianès does not make a distinction between racial/ethnic identity formation as the result of struggles, and the need to bring those struggles forward in the public sphere versus separatism aimed at threatening French social institutions. In a sense, the lack of integration is always constructed as a threat to French social institutions and never as a means to be recognized as a people within those same institutions. It is also important to recognize that discrimination also operates through the use of language whereby the white dominant group intimidates, inferiorizes, and excludes people of color (Van Dijk, 1993). People

of color's racial/ethnic backgrounds remain the major obstacle to their integration in French society, not their willingness to become French. Their willingness to be part of this French society that constantly rejects them is a testimony to their desire to be fully part of French culture, but not at the detriment of their beings. The social cognition of whites about members of minority groups supports the discriminatory forces and the sustainability of a discursive framework in which discriminatory acts are justifiable. While it might not appear as such to whites, the way they speak about members of minority groups contribute to the reproduction of shared social feelings, attitudes and opinions, which reinforces their social dominance (Van Dijk, 1993).

As long as whiteness remains this invisible yardstick that regulates private and public actions, overt and covert practices, societal and individual actions, the racial state will continue to ostracize people of color in France for their refusal to see whiteness as the rule and the need for them to fully accept and change, even if change means destruction of self.

The lack of identity recognition by white mainstream society reveals a critical refusal to take into account another's social and cultural capital. The social capital people of color have developed through their *communities* is not acknowledged as being reliable and/or valid. Instead of acknowledging the real presence of systematic racism in France, one hears more about the emergence of a form of anti-white racism. The discourse of oppression is therefore shifting from the experiences of people of color to what whites perceive as more important: the threat to their non-overtly-admitted-but-nevertheless-important privileges. While people of color want to be considered French (Kelman, 2005a, 2005b; Sagot-Duvauroux, 2004), their skin color ascribes them a culture – whether one identifies with it or not – but one's social position in French society demands a denial of that culture – which one's skin will not let one do. They want to be

recognized as French but not without having their struggles along race and culture be heard and addressed. The newly formed group, *Le Cran* – which stands for the Representative Council of Black Associations – while facing controversies by the very idea of its creation, was founded to address some of the problems faced specifically by blacks in France. French black voices are now institutionalized through this organization. In an article published in May 2007, the French sociologist Esther Benbassa (2007) questions the emergence of identity organizations, which are trying to bring recognition to the plights of their communities. She, in other words, questions the formation of *Le Cran*, as being defined too narrowly around problems encountered by visible minorities. I have the impression that Benbassa is against the emergence of identity politics revolving around what French society call visible minorities. By refuting this idea, she also rejects the invention of visible minorities by French social institutions, whether it is by using the term “visible minorities” itself or by constructing a colorblind society in which people of color are at a clear disadvantage. Benbassa disavows the market of memories in particular when she argues that nobody can be solely defined by one’s negritude, one’s femininity, one’s working condition and so on.

I think there are a couple problems with this perspective. While she is right that nobody can cohesively define oneself by any one particularity, it nonetheless does not mean that individuals do not feel the need to express their concerns regarding one particular issue. For a woman to be a feminist does not make her less French, nor a black man advocating for better treatment and recognition of blacks in France make him less French. I think there is this idea that being French overrules every other single particularity. Césaire, through *négritude*, dealt with the idea that the more one is defined as black, the more human one becomes. Using a Hegelian idea, the need for blacks to be recognized as blacks is critical for their entering humanity. Not only can

they define themselves as human but it also benefits the white dominant group to also be more human. This idea is also reinforced by Camus (1971) when he states,

if men cannot refer to common values, which they all separately recognize, then man is incomprehensible to man. The rebel demands that these values should be clearly recognized as part of himself because he knows or suspects that, without them, crime and disorder would reign in the world. An act of rebellion seems to him like a demand for clarity and unity. The most elementary rebellion, paradoxically, expresses an aspiration to order (p. 29).

Popeau (2002) argues that Césaire's definition of *négritude* was a form of rebellion against colonialism and a justified way to negate the oppressive nature of assimilation, which as a result would legitimize his presence as a black man in the world. It was also a way to contest the European definition of universality and humanism. He stated, "my conception of the universal is of a universal rich with all that is particular, rich with all the particulars there are, the deepening of each particular, the coexistence of them all" (Césaire, 1957).

Second, by questioning the existence of those groups or organizations, Benbassa (2007) is diminishing the impact of their experiences as they live them, and discounting any possibility that those voices matter in the social fabric of France. If they are there, why do they exist? It seems to be another attempt to relegate their experiences as illegitimate claims.

Yosso (2005) addresses *community cultural wealth* in a recent theoretical piece. Using a Critical Race Theory approach, Yosso (2005) argues that mainstream knowledge as it is developed, oppresses and silences people of color. However, she also suggests that there should be an alternative to Bourdieu's cultural capital theory and as a result develops a community cultural wealth theory. She challenges Bourdieu's assessment that some communities are

culturally wealthy, e.g. white middle-class, while others are culturally poor or deficient, e.g. communities of color. While Bourdieu's argument is a critique of how mainstream white middle-class environment, ideas, experiences and education benefits from how a society is structured, it is nonetheless created with this same white middle-class as normative. According to Bourdieu, cultural capital is "an accumulation of knowledge... valued by the privilege group" (Yosso, 2005, p. 76). As a result, communities of color are always compared to this standard unsuccessfully trying to live up those expectations.

Yosso (2005) challenges the idea of white middle-class as culturally wealthy and theorizes about the formation of community cultural wealth identifying six forms of capital emerging out of the lives of people of color: aspirational capital which refers to "the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future" (p. 77), linguistic capital as "the intellectual and social skills attained through communication (p. 78), resistant capital as "those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality" (p. 80), navigational capital as the "skills of maneuvering through social institutions" (p. 80), social capital as the "networks of people and community resources" (p. 79), and familial capital as "cultural knowledges nurtured among kin" (p. 79). The key point of her theory is to confront the normality of whiteness, the standard set up by white supremacy, and to bring forward the social experiences of people of color into the open as valid sources of knowledge. However, it remains extremely difficult to accomplish in the French context when whiteness is invisible and made more invisible each day race is ignored. The racial experiences of people of color are continually constructed as radical and as anti-French because rooted in *communities* negatively defined by French social institutions under this *unnamed hegemonic oppression*.

In a sense, the experiences of people of color cannot be taken seriously by mainstream French society for two reasons. First, their “community” experiences are illegitimate because of the very nature of those communities, and because of the anti-French sentiment associated with them, which together represent an attack of the notion of universality preached by French social institutions. Since anti-French is defined as anti-white, people of color are faced with two issues: they cannot be seen as equal French citizens, and their racial/ethnic communities are seen as a problem – this is very ironic since the very presence of race is not acknowledged. As a result, the very knowledge created out of their racial experiences, of their communities, and daily struggles remain illegitimate. One key point that I want emphasize to make sure I am not misunderstood is the fact race is real; real in the daily social experiences of people of color. It is also very real for whites but it goes unnoticed. Since blackness cannot exist without whiteness (Dalton, 2002) the experiences of people of color, as real as they experience them, struggle with them and feel about them, cannot exist without whiteness as a system whereby race locates people in different strata, creates hierarchies and reproduces ideas and beliefs about those who do not benefit from this social arrangement.

As a consequence, their social and racial experiences do not exist because of the non-recognition of race as a real and salient social phenomenon. Those experiences remain illegitimate within a historicist racial state. One’s Frenchness, through whiteness, remains the only position of legitimacy one can use to challenge French social institutions. Since race is perceived as a sticky issue and also because it only exists when whites feel oppressed by it (anti-white racism), the racial experiences of people of color remain unacknowledged or only rooted in the negative individual interactions they might, at times, face. After all, racism is only

understood in extraordinary terms – a few bad apples might engage in racist acts - but rarely does one address how ordinary or embedded racism is in French social institutions.

Chapter Six

Concluding Remarks

Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged (Hegel, 1977, p 111)

The colonial relationship. . . chained the colonizer and the colonized into an implacable dependence, molded their respective characters, and dictated their conduct (Memmi, 1991, p. ix)

Knowing the color of the sky is far more important than counting clouds. Or to put it in another way, the most radical art is not protest but works that take us to another place, envision way of seeing, perhaps a different way of feeling (Kelley, 2002, p. 11)

I think it is important that at the end of a research project, recommendations be enunciated. While working on this dissertation, many friends, colleagues and family members hinted at the fact that too often sociology remains very theoretical, which for the most part only contributes to the intellectual enrichment of other “intellectuals” within the field of sociology. Taking into account one of the most important ideas from the Chicano Sociology paradigm developed by Professor Alfredo Mirandé, sociology should be used to challenge the status quo. I, therefore, expect through this research to raise some eyebrows, to challenge what French white people have taken granted for too long, and to put them in a very delicate and uncomfortable position that I hope will push them to reassess their positions and the privileges they have enjoyed through whiteness for so long. They can also decide to reproduce whiteness by completely ignoring this research, which would only reinforce the points I have made so far. Therefore, I have five important recommendations that I hope will lead to real social change in French social institutions, in micro-level interactions and in the larger French society.

Racism should not be understood exclusively as individual actions

Using the words of historian Robin D.G. Kelley (2003), racism is not about ignorance, it is about knowledge. Racism cannot be defined as not knowing. He defines racism as the systems of knowledge used to reproduce racial hierarchy. This powerful idea carries important implications in the study of race relations, racial oppression and eventually solutions to those problems. If racism is not ignorance but rather a system of knowledge whereby some people are assigned negative characteristics, it means that those ideas remain unchallenged but are reproduced through socialization to make them appear as normal. By acknowledging that racism is knowledge, it becomes much more difficult not to challenge the status quo. When one is said to be ignorant, one might just dismiss or not pay much attention to bigots and decide not to associate with them anymore. However, when racism is a system of knowledge, one has to contemplate and become critical in the role one plays in the formation and reproduction of that type of knowledge. Nobody really wants to be known as racist but many of us reproduce those same ideas that we despise. To understand how this type of knowledge is created and what it means, one has to acknowledge the very systematic nature of this knowledge that one individual, alone, cannot reproduce and create. We are the racial inequality we are all the witnesses of. It is therefore imperative to not solely understand racism as a bad act by one bad person but rather as a system.

This system of knowledge, reproduced through religion, philosophy, history and many others academic realms represents the historicist racial state whereby whiteness is reproduced as the only normative and acceptable form of knowledge. Whites have to understand what they participate into, what knowledge they create and how it eventually benefits them without even realizing it, because it is so normal! The scope of this idea is much larger than this dissertation but it falls right into the historicist notion of the racial state in which individual behaviors as well

as policies, appearing to be colorblind or neutral, have actually the effects of creating a system of knowledge in which people can truly feel good about themselves and their place in society because what they are doing or saying is constructed as legitimate.

It is, therefore, imperative to situate the debate about race and racism along political, economic and social lines. Colonialism was an economic enterprise through which race became the justification for the unequal treatment that people of color endure in their home countries, and which has been re-organized within the global economy to reproduce the same very old beliefs. Today, colonialism has taken on slightly different forms. While social institutions are not openly discriminatory, they are nonetheless reproducing the same logic of exclusion. The historicist racial state has reproduced micro-level behaviors and systematic expectations that are rooted in the racist form of paternalism expressed during the colonial period. While people of color are not called *indigènes* anymore, they are nonetheless still treated as such. We need to move away from this French/non-French dichotomy that obscures some of the obvious racial realities people of color face in France, and highlight the deep racial tensions (not just ethnic or religious tensions) that divide this country.

Race IS a social construct to be reckoned with

It is acceptable for scholars studying French social institutions to refer and talk about race openly as long as it is an expression of the social ills felt by those who are the most affected. Race is lived, experienced everyday as a social matter. I am not reifying race. It is very much part of our reality even though we want to blind ourselves about its social relevance. When addressing the recognition of race as a critical social factor in France, it is equally as important to make sure that the ethno-racial categories used to understand the problem of discrimination are

not borrowed from the U.S. but are rather the product of the French context. The social-historical construction of race in France is particular to its history; while there are some important global relevance to race and white supremacy (Mills, 1997), one should not impose categories on French society borrowed from somewhere else. Also as Simon and Clément (2006) have noted, while there exists some disparities between self-identity and ascribed identities, it remains more than ever critical to take them into account to address discrimination in France headfirst. Part of their discussion also revolved around the uneasiness for blacks and Arabs to be referred as “blacks” and “Arabs” while whites not as much. Interestingly, Simon and Clément’s (2006) report do not mention the different way in which whites might define themselves. However, they found that whites were still more favorable to that nomenclature than Arabs, and just slightly more than blacks.

Those findings are not incompatible with the findings presented in this dissertation about developing French ethno-racial categories to measure discrimination, nor is it incompatible with the notion of double consciousness and whiteness argued earlier in this dissertation. I would argue that Arabs might feel uneasy about such categorization if those categories are used to continue to demonize and portray them as non-French. Not being counted as blacks or Arabs does not also mean that they are not aware of the treatment they face everyday in French society, and therefore would concur with the development of a double consciousness. I think the fear of being categorized comes from the idea that the fact that those ethno-racial categories, while widely used in the privacy of daily interactions, are not openly talked about in a positive way in the public domain (media, politics, movies). There might be a fear that being seen as openly Arab would reinforce some of the arguments made by those who are in favor of integration and who see the emergence of communities as problematic. Those publicly accepted identity markers

might continue to convey pejorative meanings, and people of color might not want to still be perceived as just black or Arabs. I think the inclusion of a “white” category would definitely raise some form of consciousness for some, and could lead to a better discussion about who is oppressed and who contributes to this oppressive system. I doubt that when whites start understanding what it means to be white in French society, one would truly continue to say that being white (as noted in my interviews) would only mean having to put some sun cream on when in the sun. The social position of whites would be reassessed and discussed in accordance with the issues of discrimination. The frame of analysis would switch from a victimization of people of color in France to a reality check about those who control the institutions, e.g. whites, the language about discrimination, and the meanings attached to behaviors and attitudes. That would result in putting the French racial state on trial.

Those types of reports (Simon & Clément, 2006) are critical because they raise important questions and bring forward even more elaborate discussions about the social reality of race in France. For instance, the social construction of those ethno-racial categories *à la French* would probably have to include more than just physical characteristics. Simon and Clément (2006) mentioned geographical origins, birthplaces, mixed or multiracial identities and so on which would be particular to the French case. I can already hear critics say that I am engaging in racialization and that I, myself, contribute to the problem. I could answer that racialization has been in place for decades but whites have not had the courage to tackle the problem of discrimination.

Let's take for example one of the most recognized anti-racist organizations in France: *SOS Racisme*. While they have reached a certain level of legitimacy they have also advocated for the implementation of the French Republican values of equality. However, as I mentioned

before, this paradigm of equality operates within an *unnamed hegemonic oppressive system* and their actions contribute to the reproduction of this system even though they are trying to undo racism in France. Part of their fight lately has been to prevent the gathering of statistics regarding people of color. They oppose this database because they don't want people to be categorized based on the color of their skins, based on their ethnic origins, based on religion, and they don't want people's identities to be reduced to one colonial history or to the Vichy government.

I think it is not impossible to talk about race without making it your primary identity. However, race does represent a set of experiences that is specific to certain populations. While race might not be a primary identifier, it represents, if not just an identity, a lived oral history from where pain, happiness, struggles, successes can emerge, and might not be substituted solely with a French identity, even though they are French. While this refusal to gather statistics is indeed very interesting and combats any form of essentialization and racialization, it operates within this unnamed *hegemonic oppressive system* that already racializes and essentializes different populations. *SOS Racisme*, itself, takes part of this process by using terms such as "visible minorities" and/or "extra-European" surnames. Members of *SOS Racisme* advocate for the "testing" method, which aims at identifying actual acts of discrimination. While it does provide some results, it also has some obvious drawbacks. This method only points out to the individual acts and does not take into account institutional actions. While they might be able to talk about institutional discrimination, they have little evidence in terms of data that something is taking place. In many of their reports, they, nonetheless, use the terms "*black, blanc, beur*", e.g. black, white, Arab and people of foreign origins (outside the European Union), e.g. non-white. While they want to appear to operate within a framework that goes against the formation of identities around race and ethnicity, they nonetheless reproduce the same language used by

whites under a white supremacist system. While they condemn the use of race and ethnicity as sources of experiences and as primary or secondary sources of identity, they do not operate within a colorblind approach.

Members of *SOS Racisme* are also against the formation of communities revolving around racial/ethnic identities. I do think that there is a disconnect with the fact there is discrimination affecting people of color in France and the refusal to acknowledge their collective experiences because they believe in the sanctity of French Republican values of equality with the state being the insurance of such equality. In a sense, they operate within a paradoxical approach where they understand that discrimination affects certain populations based on race and ethnicity, and they demand the institutionalization of their organizations while at the same time decrying the use of racial/ethnic statistics and the formation of communities around racial/ethnic experiences. One would think that they should challenge the whole race issue completely to be consistent with their beliefs. As a result, people of color would have an automatic right to be part of French society without having to be defined by race. It is not that simple and race still represents an added burden to the life of people of color. After all, racial/ethnic communities in the U.S. do not see themselves as less than Americans, and actually ask for their recognition as equal American citizens as whites. In this regards, people of color in France organizing themselves around the formation of communities is not incompatible with their allegiance to the French nation.

However, the way *SOS Racisme* operates, and the political ties linked to this organization prevent true anti-racist actions because they have been co-opted by a political system rooted in a historicist racial state with whiteness being its engine.

People of color DO matter in this struggle

It is also important to take into account the voices of people of color, the way they identify themselves and their everyday struggles. Essed (1991) developed a methodology, which uncovers systematic racism by focusing primarily on the day-to-day realities of racism as experienced by people of color and women. It focuses on what she calls everyday racism, and which has received little attention in mainstream academia. Through qualitative research, one could uncover the everyday complexities of racism not just as an expression of unequal treatment but also as an extremely valuable force to deconstruct the effects of systematic oppression people of color and women.

Therefore, it is most appropriate to pay attention to the meaning and decision for blacks in France to voice their presence. I am referring to the fairly new organization called *Le Cran*, which represents blacks living in France. While there has been tremendous amount of controversy around it, especially from other black individuals who do not want to be seen as “black”, I think it is a start. Members of the *Le Cran* are not to be considered victims but rather agents of change. In order to recognize people of color as agents of change, one has to listen to all the voices coming from the different lived experiences. While *SOS Racisme* calls for a non-racial/ethnic approach to the question of discrimination, others like *Le Cran*, calls for the recognition of blacks in France, and in order to fight discrimination, discriminatory acts have to be made visible. One major difference between *Le Cran* and *SOS Racisme* is their respective position on the existence of communities. *SOS Racisme* denounces such communities organized around racial/ethnic identities and call for the *métissage* of France, while *Le Cran*, according to Ferdinand Ezembe, President of the Education and Cultural Commission of the organization (Kongo, 2007), believes that,

everybody is part of a community. However, it is forbidden to say it. This is the real problem. There are white communities in France; nobody criticizes them. As soon as blacks get together to defend a social cause, even if it is the right thing to do, then they are accused of forming communities⁷⁰

Le Cran is aware of the racial dynamics that impact whites and blacks in France, and can admit of the presence of a white community, or several of them, while *SOS Racisme* remains anchored in the invisibility of race and ethnicity (contradictory statement if one wants to fight against racial/ethnic discrimination) to defend its project of racial/ethnic unity through the *métissage* of France.

People of color make sense of their daily realities and they should be taken into account without reducing their voices to mere complaints. Part of the acknowledgement of their voices is for the white dominant group to recognize the social, historical, political and economic feeling of uneasiness of people of color in France.

Whiteness HAS to be acknowledged

All of the preceding recommendations made above cannot be fully accomplished if whiteness is not acknowledged. I see this point as crucial to the solvency of such a large problem. One has to challenge the system of knowledge but also acknowledge what whiteness represents.

When one talks about blacks, Arabs and essentializes them as being the problems of what the French République faces, one is also ignoring the invisible but salient presence of whites.

Being white is more than just being non-black or non-Arab in the French model. Being white

⁷⁰ Tout le monde est communautariste. Mais l'on interdit à certains de le faire. C'est ça le vrai problème. Il existe bien des communautés blanches en France. Personne n'en parle ; personne ne les critique. Dès que les Noirs se mettent ensemble pour défendre une cause, aussi juste soit-elle, on les accuse d'être communautaristes.

means not having to think about what it means to be black and Arab, and never having to face constant scrutiny about one's allegiance to France. Therefore, it is important to address the social and historical construction of whiteness and the logic of integration before we move forward. Being white is more than being French it is also having the privilege of not having to think about it feels to be considered non-French. One's blackness does not exist by itself; it exists in opposition to whiteness. I am not French because you are American. I am not Muslim because you are Christian. However, I am black because you are white. Blackness and whiteness signifies critical social markers widely adopted by different populations. However, if one exhibits a social marker in one area, it is hard to explain the non-existence of the other, e.g. whiteness.

I can foresee some criticisms suggesting I blame everything on white people. I am not saying that French white people are racist but rather that they contribute to the problem by not understanding the language they use, the institutions they participate in and how their daily actions have a devastating impact on people of color in France. By acknowledging their whiteness, fair-minded people, lovers of justice and moral people would realize that their whiteness gives them a decisive edge. However, in the current state of affairs, their whiteness remains an untold story in the collective mind. To truly tackle discrimination in France, one has to look at the causes and the problem of not acknowledging one's whiteness. Winant (2004) states,

the contemporary crisis of whiteness – in its dualistic allegiances to privilege and equality, to color-consciousness and color-blindness, to formally equal justice and to substantive social justice – can be discerned in the contradictory character of white identity today (p. 5).

This white identity is expressed in France through the frame of French Republican values. While Bonilla-Silva's (2003) four frames (abstract liberalism, naturalization, cultural racism and minimization of racism) could be more or less applied to the French case, they are located in the historicist racial state and in the contradictory French Republican values of equality. Out of the four frames of colorblind racism, the naturalization frame is the one the less likely to be found in France since race does not exist, racial segregation and other forms of racial hierarchy are not expressed as something natural. Part of the lack of the racial understanding about those racial issues is the *unnamed hegemonic domination* of whiteness as natural. So it is not racial inequality that is understood as natural but rather the non-acknowledgment of whiteness as an oppressive invisible racial system embedded in the racial state.

The problem of the French *République* is the problem of the denial of the color-line. Under the premises of equality, this denial of the color line reproduces what the *République* is actually trying to prevent: racial inequality. However, acknowledging it is not enough; one has to engage in social change.

Whiteness HAS to be confronted from within

Since the voices of color are unheard despite their daily struggles, it is therefore necessary for whites to become race traitors or new abolitionists (Winant, 2001). This step is probably the one that will be the most difficult to achieve. For a person to confront whiteness, his/her own privileges, one has to acknowledge it and be willing to fight for a truly better society. It also means to confront social institutions and the way they operate, to make other people feel uncomfortable about their actions, words and behaviors.

It is obviously not easy to do – and I am not trying to contradict myself and stay away from my responsibilities as a white man - but one also has to take into account the larger social, political and economic framework from which we operate. For instance, I am willing, trying and challenging whiteness. However, as a non-tenured faculty member, one has to take into account the risks associated with standing with what is right. I truly and genuinely feel to need to intervene – and I am also aware of the privilege I have not to act if I feel my career is on the line.

This dissertation only represents a starting point for more in-depth understanding of whiteness in France. One could imagine focusing more on the different ways whiteness has been conceptualized in other studies (Garner, 2006) and point out the particularity of the French construction of whiteness. Garner (2006) points out five different characteristics of whiteness: whiteness as malevolent absence as “an invisible perspective, dominant and normative space against which difference is measured” (p. 259), whiteness with content as the “maintenance and policing of the colour line (p. 260), whiteness as a set of norms, whiteness as resources, and finally whiteness as contingent hierarchy where “one dimension of whiteness is its dialectic relationship with non-white otherness” (p. 264). At first sight, I would argue that those five concepts are found in France but some important overlaps exist among them. For instance, I would argue that whiteness, based on this research, has been exemplified by its absence in the collective and individual imagination but this is what makes it so salient. While whiteness in this form might lead to a non-racial identity based on race, it is at the core of the French universal identity advertised in French social institutions as well as in individual interactions.

To conclude, it would be interesting in future research to study the application of the term “black” – and not “noir” – not only in the French black community, even though Sagot-Davouroux (2004) addresses this issue, but most importantly, how mainstream white society uses

this word. Its use in conversations seems to be used as a way to express what blacks go through in France but without really acknowledging their plight. The term “black” in France conveys some kind of exoticism in the mouths of whites, which does not express any real empathy. Saying the term “noir” seems to carry different meanings that whites tend to have problems addressing or acknowledging. It seems to be another way of putting the problems that blacks face in France onto somebody’s shoulders and another way to shy from France historical participation and responsibility in this historicist *unnamed hegemonic oppression*.

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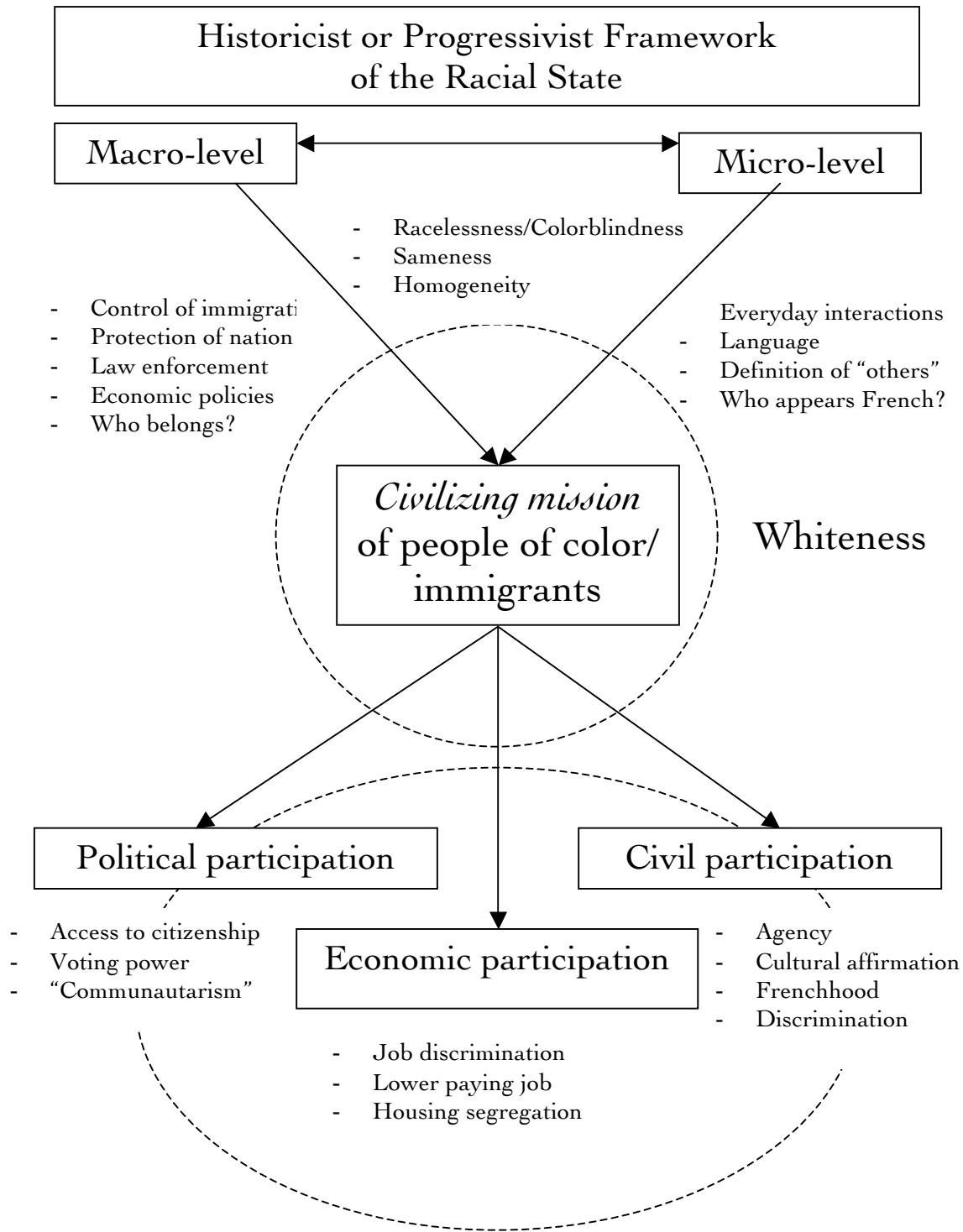
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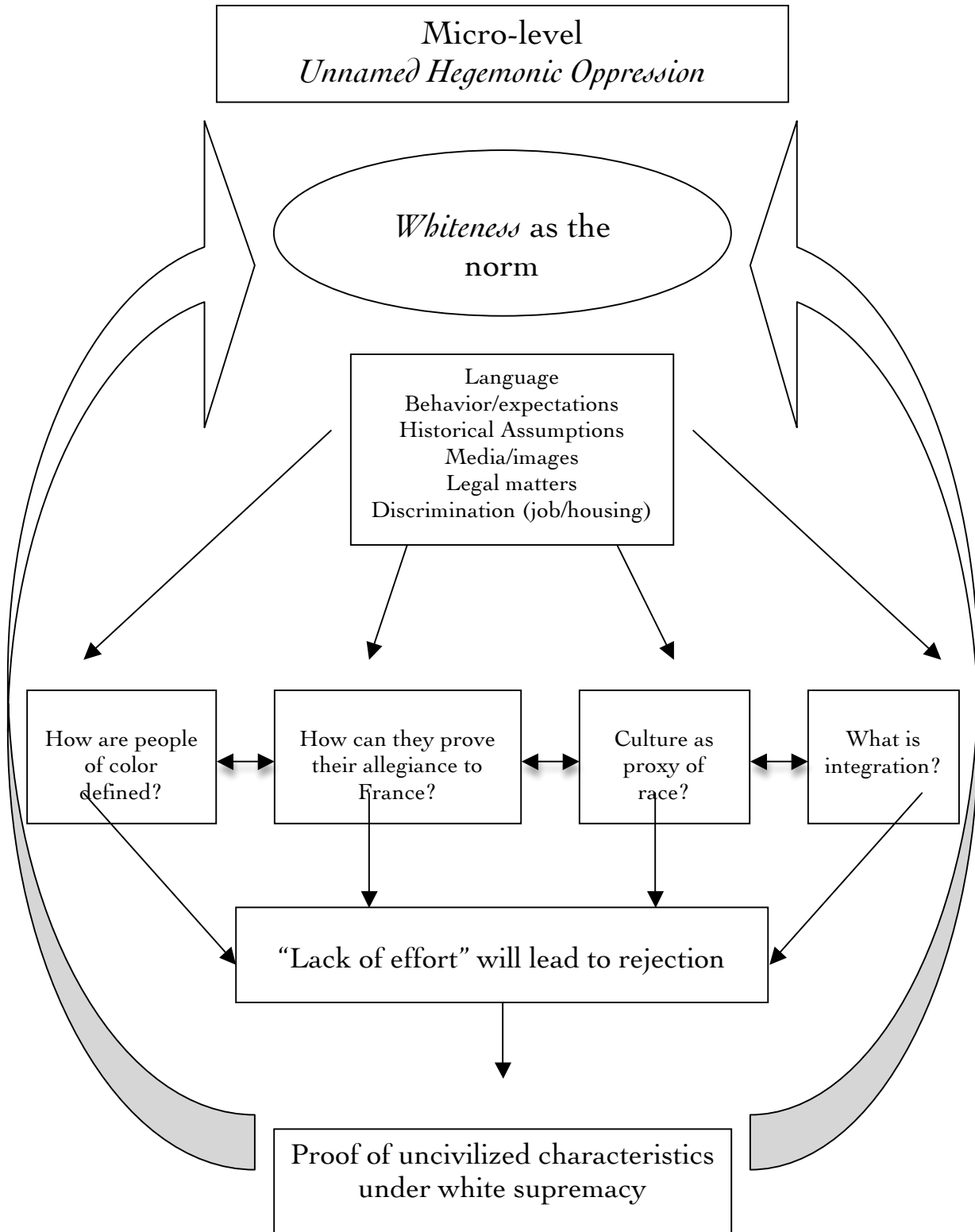
APPENDIX 1

GRAPH 1 – THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK



APPENDIX 2

GRAPH 2 – UNNAMED HEGEMONIC OPPRESSION



APPENDIX 3

SURVEY QUESTIONS (FRENCH/ENGLISH)

1. Quelle est votre profession ?
What is your occupation?
2. Quel est votre âge ?
What is your age?
3. Quel est votre salaire annuel ?
What is your annual income?
4. De quelle origine êtes-vous ?
Where are you from?
5. Quels journaux lisez-vous ?
What newspapers do you read?
6. Quelle est votre affiliation politique?
What is your political affiliation?
7. À quelle catégorie raciale appartenez-vous ?
What is your racial group?
8. Selon vous, qu'est-ce qu'une race?
According to you, what is a race?
9. Qu'est-ce qu'un étranger en France?
What makes somebody a foreigner in France?
10. Qu'est-ce qu'un « bougnoule »?
What makes somebody a XX?
11. Qu'est-ce qu'un Français?
What makes somebody French?
12. Qu'est ce qu'un "Français de souche"
What makes somebody a native French?
13. Selon vous pourquoi certains disent que l'équipe de France de football ne les représente pas. Qu'essayaient-ils d'expliquer ?
According to you, why are some people saying that the French national team of Soccer does not represent them. What were they trying to explain?

14. Selon vous, qu'est-ce que le racisme? Comment définiriez-vous le racisme ?
According to you, what is racism? How would you define racism?
15. Quelles sont les principales raisons de l'existence du racisme en France ?
What are the main reasons for the problem of racism in France?
16. Selon certains intellectuels, le racisme est un sérieux problème en France? Qu'en pensez-vous?
According to certain intellectuals, racism is a serious issue in France. What you think about it?
17. Qui est responsable du racisme en France? Qui est à l'origine du racisme en France ?
Who is responsible for racism in France? Who is at the source of the problem of racism in France?
18. Selon vous, pensez-vous que la France soit raciste ? Les français sont-ils racistes ?
According to you, is France a racist country? Are the French racists?
19. Selon vous, existe-t-il de la discrimination raciale à l'embauche et dans le logement ?
Comment est-ce possible ?
Do you think that there is some racial discrimination in the workplace and in housing? How is that possible?
20. Selon vous, quelles sont les principales victimes de la discrimination raciale en France et pourquoi ?
According to you, who are the main victims of racial discrimination in France and why?
21. Selon vous, quelles sont les conséquences de la discrimination raciale vécue par l'individu?
According to you, what are the consequences of racial discrimination experienced by the individual?
22. Selon vous, quelles sont les conséquences de la discrimination raciale vécue par des groupes ?
According to you, what are the consequences of racial discrimination experienced by groups?
23. Selon vous, quel est le rôle du gouvernement pour empêcher la discrimination raciale de s'étendre ?
What do you think is the role of the government to prevent racial discrimination?
24. Que pensez-vous des associations anti-racistes en France ? Lesquelles connaissez-vous ?
What are your feelings about anti-racist organizations in France? Which ones do you know?
25. Qu'est-ce qu'un « petit blanc » ?
Who is considered a little white in France?
26. Qu'est-ce que cela signifie pour vous d'être blanc ?
What does it mean for you to be white?

27. Qu'est-ce que cela signifie pour vous de dire que les blancs ont un avantage sur les personnes de couleur dans notre société ?
What does it mean for you to say that whites have an advantage over people of color in our society?
28. Qu'est ce que le terme racisme anti-blanc signifie pour vous?
What does the concept of anti-white racism mean for you?
29. À quoi pensez-vous lorsque quelqu'un parle des banlieues ?
What comes to your mind when somebody mentions the French ghettos?
30. Quelles sont les différences entre les immigrants européens (i.e. portugais) et les immigrants des pays africains ou du Maghreb ?
What are the differences between European immigrants (i.e. Portuguese) and immigrants from North Africa and from West Africa?
31. Il y a eu beaucoup de discours et de débats sur l'intégration en France ces dernières années. Qu'est-ce que l'intégration signifie pour vous ?
There have been a lot of speeches and debates around the issue of integration/assimilation in France over the last few years. What does integration/assimilation mean to you?
32. Selon vous, quels sont les groupes qui doivent s'intégrer en France, et pourquoi ?
According to you, who are the groups who should integrate in France and why?
33. Selon Que pensez-vous de l'idée qu'il existe un racisme d'état (i.e. racisme ancré dans les institutions françaises) ?
What do you make of the idea that there exists institutional racism?
34. Pourquoi y-a-t-il plus de noirs (Antilles, pays africains) et de maghrébins dans les banlieues ?
Why do think there is a higher number of blacks and Arabs in the ghettos than in other areas?
35. Les problèmes du chômage, de l'insécurité et de la précarité sociale représentent des sujets brûlants en France. Selon vous, quelles sont les causes de ces problèmes ?
Unemployment, precarious social conditions and insecurity in France remain burning topics in France. According to you, what are the causes of those problems?
36. Pensez-vous qu'il existe un lien entre la précarité sociale et la discrimination raciale en France ? Comment ce lien est-il possible ?
Do you think there is a link between precarious social conditions and racial discrimination in France? How is that link possible?
37. Qu'est-ce que cela signifie pour vous d'avoir des personnes de couleur dans des positions de pouvoir (politique, économique, télévision etc....) ?

What does it mean for you to see people of color in position of power in politics, the economy or even the media?

38. Quelles sont les raisons pour le manque de personnes de couleurs au pouvoir ou à la télévision ?

What are the reasons what there isn't any person of color in positions of power or in the media?

39. Pourquoi existe-t-il un manque de débats et de discussions sur le racisme en France ?

Why is there a lack of discussions and debates around the problem of racism in France?

40. Que pensez-vous de l'idée que le manque de discussions sur le racisme en France est dû en partie du fait que ceux qui sont au pouvoir (politique, économique, sociale) ne sont pas confrontés au racisme ?

What do you make of the idea that the lack of discussions and debates around the problem of racism in France might be due to the fact that those in power are not personally impacted by racism?

41. Que pensez-vous du fait que les Européens (allemands, italiens etc.) installés en France puissent voter aux élections locales alors que les immigrés africains et maghrébins installés en France depuis 20-30 ans ne puissent toujours pas voter ?

What do you make of the fact that Europeans (Germans, Italians etc...) who settled down in France can vote in local elections while African and Arab immigrants who have lived in France for more than 20 years still cannot vote?

42. La loi Pasqua de 1993 autorise la police à vérifier « objectivement » le titre de séjour des étrangers ? Qui sont les étrangers en question ? Que pensez-vous de cette loi ?

The 1993 Pasqua law gave law enforcement authorities the right to objectively check the residency of foreigners? Who are those foreigners? What do you think about this law?

43. Quelle est la responsabilité de la France pour son rôle dans le colonialisme et dans l'esclavage ? Est-ce vraiment important d'en parler aujourd'hui ?

What is France's responsibility in the past institutions of colonialism and slavery? Is it really important to talk about it nowadays?

44. Que savez-vous du colonialisme et de l'esclavage?

What do you know about colonialism and slavery?

45. Quelle est la responsabilité de la France pour son rôle dans le colonialisme et dans l'esclavage ? Est-ce vraiment important d'en parler aujourd'hui ?

What is France's responsibility in the past institutions of colonialism and slavery? Is it really important to talk about it nowadays?

46. Que pensez-vous du fait que la France a officiellement reconnu son rôle dans la traite des noirs - esclavage ?

What do you think about the fact that France has just recently recognized its roles in the slave trade?

47. Que pensez-vous des déclarations de Nicolas Sarkozy utilisant des mots comme "racailles" et "nettoyer au Karcher" pour parler des banlieues?

What do you make of the recent comments made by the interior minister Nicolas Sarkozy using words like « racailles » or « cleaning with a Karcher » when talking about the French ghettos ?

48. Avant d'être élu Président de la République en 1995, Jacques Chirac, alors Maire de Paris, déclara en 1991 que "notre problème, ce n'est pas les étrangers, c'est qu'il y a overdose. C'est peut-être vrai qu'il n'y a pas plus d'étrangers qu'avant la guerre, mais ce n'est pas les mêmes et ça fait une différence. Il est certain que d'avoir des Espagnols, des Polonais et des Portugais travaillant chez nous, ça pose moins de problèmes que d'avoir des musulmans et des Noirs [...] Comment voulez-vous que le travailleur français qui travaille avec sa femme et qui, ensemble, gagnent environ 15000 francs, et qui voit sur le palier à côté de son HLM, entassée, une famille avec un père de famille, trois ou quatre épouses, et une vingtaine de gosses, et qui gagne 50000 francs de prestations sociales, sans naturellement travailler... si vous ajoutez le bruit et l'odeur, hé bien le travailleur français sur le palier devient fou. Et ce n'est pas être raciste que de dire cela... ". Que pensez-vous de cette déclaration?

Before becoming President of France in 1995, Jacques Chirac, at the time Mayor of Paris, made the following statement in 1991: « our problem are not the foreigners but rather their numbers. It might be true that we have more foreigners than before the war but there are not the same and that makes a difference. It is obvious that having Spaniards, Portuguese, and Polish immigrants working here create fewer problems than having blacks and Arabs. How do you expect a French worker and his wife who together make around \$2500 a month to react when their next door neighbor is a family composed a man and his three or four wives with about twenty kids and making \$10000 a month on welfare without of course working... and if you had the noise and the smell then the French worker becomes insane. And it is not racist to say that » What do you make of this statement?

49. Que pensez-vous de ce questionnaire sur le racisme ? Quelles les questions que j'aurai du demander et j'ai omis ?

What do you think about this survey about racism? What are the questions I should have asked and did not ask them?

50. Seriez-vous d'accord d'être contacté pour un entretien confidentiel plus approfondi ? si oui laissez vos coordonnées (téléphone, adresse email)

Would you be willing to be contacted for a more in-depth interview? If yes, please leave your contact information (phone number, email)