

EMBODIMENT AND THE NATION

Mass international migrations dramatically reconfigured the early-twentieth-century world. Much of this story is familiar: nations supplemented their labor power by employing foreign workers, and in particular instances buttressed their populations by incorporating foreigners who were deemed assimilable. The movement of human populations across national borders promoted new hybridities, drew increasingly stark distinctions between self and other, and aided in the formulation of ever more nuanced racial hierarchies. Immigration therefore generated an intense debate on the embodied nature of the national citizenry.

We tend to think of immigration as the founding narrative of new nations like the United States, or as a “problem” located in multicultural Europe. However, the case of early-twentieth-century France provides an alternative example, as it was neither a new nation, nor did its discussion of immigration begin with decolonization. But France was squarely at the center of the demographic transformations that characterized the early twentieth century. After the American quota system was implemented in 1921 and revised in 1924, France was second only to the United States in receiving immigrants across its borders. By the mid-1920s France had become the most important destination for immigrants in the entire industrialized world.¹ In 1930 three million foreigners resided in France, composing 7 percent of its total population.² The issue of immigration was particularly salient in France, where concern for declining population rates had been a central feature of public and political discourse at least since the 1870s. We will see that a wide range

of public preoccupations and political debates were refracted through the problem of immigration, and that immigration policies and politics were crucial and constitutive features of the French Third Republic (1870–1940).

This book examines how French anxieties about demographic decline, labor productivity, interracial sex, race-mixing (*métissage*), and women's nationality and citizenship were deliberated with reference to both European and colonial migrations to the metropole. The immigration of white and nonwhite foreigners—two unstable categories that I will reconstruct and complicate in the course of this book—generated a multifaceted racial discourse, as well as immigration policies which differentially targeted European and colonial migrants. By reading parliamentary debates, nationality laws, police and army records on prostitution, feminist newspapers, legal journals, propaganda from the social hygiene crusade, and published works in demography, anthropology, and medicine, I investigate how social critics, in this period of immense human mobility, imagined the parameters of a racialized and gendered national identity.

In these texts politicians, practitioners of “work science” (*science du travail*), reformers, racial theorists, jurists, and feminists insisted that the integration of foreign populations depended not only on their productivity as industrial or agricultural workers but also on their capacity to mix with the native population, and to insure the reproduction of generations to come. This is because the Republican national narrative underscored the imperatives of production and procreation, and was never uniquely concerned with individual rights, universal humanism, and assimilationism. I therefore recast the question of immigration and citizenship in France to highlight the salience of racial hierarchies and the reproductive practices which sustained them, as well as the predominance of a necessarily hybrid Republican form which facilitated the proliferation of racialized embodiments. By investigating the interrelated realms of pronatalism, prostitution, the marriage contract, racial mixing, and the rationalization of labor and the laboring body, I show how race and reproduction were critical to the construction of French national identity, and how gender intervened in fabricating racial hierarchies which cast white Europeans alone as assimilable.

I suggest that “the intimate” is an analytical category at the core of the study of immigration. In the anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler's account, the intimate encompasses affective ties, moral sentiments, sexual relations, and a

nation's demographic calculus; it is a vital facet of the "management of life" described by Foucauldian biopolitics.³ To explore the intimate requires us to confront the corporality of historical subjects, the degree to which their bodies mattered, and why. It also requires that we interrogate the meanings attributed to desire, whether ordinary or transgressive, and evaluate the perceived relationship between desire and the stability of family, nation, and race. Such an analysis necessarily highlights the mechanisms of the domestic sphere, which is the heart of "private," quotidian life and the site of so many intimate acts and expressions.⁴ Yet as this book will show, the impact of intimacy transcends the ostensibly private world of the household and its members, engaging either directly or more furtively with a macropolitics of power. That is, public discourse on immigration depended on a number of private practices and behaviors. Just as immigration complicated notions of inside and out, of citizenship and subjecthood, national boundaries and imperial frontiers, so too did it problematize the divide between public and private, and between self and other, at the most rudimentary level.

In my analysis the intimate is a product of modernity and its disciplinary technologies, a seemingly private realm which has been subjected to the intruding gaze of social reformers, the police, practitioners of the human sciences, and other liaisons to the state.⁵ As Nancy Cott succinctly argues, "No modern nation ignores the intimate domain, because the population is composed and reproduced there."⁶ My study affirms this observation. In early-twentieth-century France a variety of political actors, social movements, and specialized forms of knowledge engaged the question of how immigration could either enhance or deter the social reproduction of the citizenry. As a result, they interrogated the private life and intimate practices of French citizens, colonial subjects, and European migrants.

By investigating the terrain of the intimate, I wish to highlight a series of critical juxtapositions: the relationship between household and polity, the resonance of familial and national metaphors, and the many parallels between the bonds of citizenship and other affective ties. The intimate is critical to the study of immigration because it was an essential site upon which ideas about assimilability and belonging were elaborated. For example, the "cultural competencies" of Frenchness were learned at least as frequently in the home as in the public world.⁷ Likewise marriage, fertility, and conjugal sexuality were considered central to the rebuilding of an underpopulated

France, which was now dependent on successful mixings between foreigners and the native-born, as well as their capacity to produce assimilable children. French social critics were well aware of the importance of intimate matters to the so-called immigrant question, and therefore turned their attention to the racial composition and reproductive value of foreigners and French people alike. In turn, political, demographic, scientific, juridical, and feminist discourses invested the bodies of subjects and citizens with the power to either revivify or degrade the “French race.”

Distinguishing citizens from subjects was a critical facet of both imperial and immigration discourses. Subjects included colonized people and non-naturalized European migrants, but these groups’ intertwined trajectories ultimately diverged once refracted through the Republican racial taxonomy. While the citizenry was composed of both men and women, each sex was attributed with deeply gendered roles of national service and unequal access to citizenship rights. French women were subject to the legal restrictions of the Civil Code of 1804 and were denied voting rights and other modes of formal political participation until 1944.

As a consequence, immigration discourse reaffirmed a hierarchical social taxonomy in which race and gender differences were explicitly linked to a history of political economy and national identity. This book therefore contributes to the growing body of work on race and nation in the French context,⁸ and it interrogates the curious interplay of universalism and particularism in French Republicanism, a theme to which I repeatedly return.⁹ However, I wish to move beyond existing scholarship by insisting that as the stakes of immigration were increasingly expressed in terms of racial hygiene, intimate matters of marriage, sexuality, and reproduction became particularly vital to constructing French national identity. The canonical works of scholars such as Gérard Noiriel, Rogers Brubaker, and Yves Lequin, which have richly contributed to our understanding of immigration to France, have not systematically investigated the relationship to this historical and historiographic question of family, reproduction, and gender roles—or the ideologically productive oppositions of masculinity/femininity, maternity/paternity, and husband/wife.¹⁰ And if themes of gender and reproduction were virtually absent from earlier histories of immigration to France,¹¹ a second wave of scholarship has only recently begun to explore the critical impact of these categories.¹²

By underscoring the salience of reproduction, I am able to bring into focus the role of French and foreign women in reconstituting the nation and its citizen body. This interpretive labor is critical because, in the words of the feminist theorist Anne McClintock, even though women function as “symbolic bearers of the nation,” they are typically “denied any direct relation to national agency.”¹³ As a result, female citizenship is often linked to a woman’s reproductive capital, while a woman’s desire to control that capital—either by limiting births or by refusing to heed population restrictions—may be construed as treasonous acts of selfish disregard for the nation.¹⁴ For example, in early-twentieth-century France motherhood and warfare functioned as differently gendered versions of the “blood tribute” (*impôt du sang*) to the state, as both were expressions of physical and moral suffering on behalf of the beleaguered nation.¹⁵ To more thoroughly explore these gendered modes of national service, I have relied in particular upon three engagements suggested by the feminist scholars Nira Yuval Davis and Floya Anthias in their groundbreaking work on the gender of nationalism: women as biological reproducers of the members of national collectivities; women as reproducers of the boundaries of national groups (because of restrictions on sexual or marital relations); and women as active transmitters and producers of the national culture.¹⁶

Attention to the problem of reproduction—including its symbolic representation, its regulation, and the resistance of historical subjects to the disciplinary mechanisms which invest reproduction with ideological value—inevitably returns us to the problem of race, for reproduction is necessarily a racializing force.¹⁷ The literary theorist Alys Eve Weinbaum makes explicit the connections between race and reproduction, as well as their role in generating and sustaining various strategies of exclusion, when she writes that “the interconnected ideologies of racism, nationalism, and imperialism rest on the notion that race can be reproduced, and on attendant beliefs in the reproducibility of racial formations (including nations) and of social systems hierarchically organized according to notions of inherent racial superiority, inferiority, and degeneration.”¹⁸ Throughout this book I follow Weinbaum’s strategy of illuminating the vital relationship between race and reproduction, tracing its ideological resonance both within and beyond domestic space, and charting how it was deployed in the formation of social hierarchies. I do not argue simply that the domestic sphere was steadfastly political (although

I believe this to be true), but that the intimate acts, identities, and sentiments associated with this realm — among them fertility, childbearing, parenting, sexual practices, and ideologies such as “Republican motherhood” — were deeply implicated with the processes of race making, nation building, and imperial rule.

This book therefore reveals how discussions of the nation and its citizenry persistently returned to the body: its color and gender, its expenditure of labor power, its reproductive capacity, and its experience of desire. Of paramount importance was the question of what kinds of bodies could assimilate into the greater national body; as we will see, this was contingent upon which forms of *métissage* were thought to benefit the “French race.” I argue throughout that to understand national belonging and fitness for citizenship in France at this time, one must account for these marked bodies and their place in an order of desire, signification, and power.¹⁹ Thus I show how French social critics sought to categorize and hierarchize immigrant populations by intervening in debates on production and reproduction, marriage and sexuality, and degeneration and regeneration.

National Narratives and Bodily Practices

This book takes as its starting point the notion that in early-twentieth-century France the concepts of race and race mixing were elaborated and concretized with reference to economic production and procreation. This was due to a widespread concern about demographic decline across a broad political spectrum, a fear that the perceived shortage of French citizens was a symptom of France’s degeneration and evidence of national decline. The question of labor power assumed paramount importance for politicians and industrialists confronted with depopulation and the upward social mobility of the French working class; they were forced to concede that only by importing foreign labor could economic growth be sustained. In time, the tremendous needs of the wartime economy heightened the demand for workers from Europe and the colonies, and after 1919 immigrant labor played an integral role in reconstructing postwar France.

I will show how the labor power provided by immigrants was evaluated and hierarchized with persistent reference to racial origins. That is, according to industrialists, government officials, “work scientists,” and others, white labor was always preferable to that of Africans and Asians, who were

deemed suitable only for unskilled work. However, we will see that the racial taxonomy sketched out in these texts did not simply distinguish between whiteness and color. Instead, the same commentators assigned unequal value to work performed by diverse European populations in France; as a result, they formulated an internal hierarchy within the category of white labor, and fragmented whiteness itself.

For the various social commentators described in this book, depopulation was never construed as a problem of production alone. Instead, it was a total social phenomenon which had decimated the citizenry as well as the indigent labor force. Thus to replenish the population, immigrant workers would also have to be assimilable, and able to produce children who could reliably become French. Immigrants were therefore evaluated according to their productive and reproductive value, and both of these components determined their place in a racial taxonomy which spanned the metropole and its colonies. In my analysis French population politics was one facet of a wider development in the early decades of the twentieth century, when European nations came to view international competition in terms of demographic strength rather than productive capacity alone. State interest in population reframed reproduction as a public concern, and hence a legitimate object of social inquiry.²⁰ In time, the nationalist aim of improving the quality and quantity of the French population was extended to racially compatible foreigners as well, for by the interwar years immigrants were largely responsible for demographic growth in metropolitan France.

The association of production and reproduction is especially salient to this story because it signals the confluence of biopolitical strategies of governance and mass international migrations. Productive and reproductive exigencies converged as the consequence of a historically situated political economy subject to the multiple influences of depopulation, rationalization, Republicanism, and empire. For this reason, Thomas C. Holt has suggested that modern debates on immigration may have foregrounded intimate matters of the household and its reproduction in response to the requirements of a capitalist economy: “The iconic power of [family narratives] may well reflect the fact that actual, biological reproduction is perceived to be essential to the reproduction of the nation. Mature capitalist economies generate cultures and values inimical to large families and high levels of reproduction. Immigrants augment the national workforce, but at a cost to its racial

and/or cultural homogeneity; fissures therefore emerge between the perceived needs of the nation and those of capital. The timing of these difficulties may be instructive. They arose in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as capitalism matured and extended its global reach, pressing heavily upon the destinies of nations.”²¹

An important aim of this book is to explain how the contradictions invoked by Holt were debated within the specialized forms of knowledge which claimed jurisdiction over the immigrant question. I begin by exploring how the needs of capital were reconciled with the perceived necessity for demographic growth in France, and how this productivist and populationist discussion shaped the development of a historically contingent racial regime. Each chapter considers in detail how the stakes of migration and its projected effects on the national body engendered a proliferation of family narratives, sexual metaphors, and allegorical uses of gender to express these most intimate facets of power and knowledge. For example, we will see how the early-twentieth-century French state defined maternity and paternity as obligations of citizenship, and therefore subjected the bodies of mothers and fathers to a wide array of disciplinary technologies. But the state was so thoroughly invested in reproductive practices that it also concerned itself with men and women who shirked their civic duty to procreate: namely bachelors, “New Women,” and prostitutes, along with the “Malthusian couple” described in detail by Foucault.²²

Because Republicanism envisioned the family as a microcosm of the state, parents and especially mothers were assigned much of the responsibility for nurturing in children the cultural competencies of Frenchness. It follows that for foreigners, assimilability was measured in terms of their ability to execute these gestures with some degree of verisimilitude, as well as the desire and the capacity to impart them to one’s offspring. But an aptitude for performing Frenchness in either public or domestic space depended on a complex interplay of innate affinity and acquired behavior, and not simply a willingness to enter into the social contract and thereby affiliate with the nation. For this reason, a merely universalist and assimilationist model of Republicanism masks the racial exclusions upon which the polity was based: as this book will show, biocultural sameness presupposed the possibility for assimilating into the French nation.

Embodied Individuals and Universalist Histories

This book traces the genealogy of several mutually constitutive racial projects salient to the immigrant question, along with their relationship to the reproductive agenda of pronatalist politics and the Third Republic. The state's desire to safeguard the quality and quantity of its population justified its intervention in the private life of citizens.²³ Reproductive practices and proclivities became subject to the scrutiny of the state, and a variety of experts, institutions, and technologies proliferated, with the aim of assessing the biopower of the population.²⁴ I therefore insist that histories of immigration, like national and imperial histories, must be understood in an overtly biopolitical framework.²⁵ As we will see, the Foucauldian touchstones of demography, eugenic science, prostitution, disease, and procreative duties to the body politic surfaced again and again in the immigration debate, while the foreigner's intimate life, bodily constitution, and quotidian deeds heavily influenced the state's perception of his or her assimilability.

By focusing on what I have termed the *embodiment* of the "French race," I am engaging two interrelated strains of analysis. First, I call attention to the intimate bodily practices which came to signify national and racial membership: the sexual acts of citizens and subjects, eugenically sound modes of heterosexual coupling, the affective labor of the domestic sphere, and a national narrative, formulated by reproduction, which envisioned France's past as well as its future. In this regard, embodiment may be defined as a "process of making and doing the work of bodies," as well as an exploration of how bodies are sites of inscription and intervention subject to the influence of language.²⁶

But "embodiment" is also a useful analytical category because it is the antithesis of the *abstract individualism* upon which modern French political theory is based. By abstracting individuals from their differentiated social statuses, abstract individualism posited an "essence of human commonality," which, taken to its logical conclusion, dictated that all people were equal and therefore entitled to natural rights.²⁷ But such a radically inclusive universalism had never existed for either women or colonial subjects. Thus embodiment becomes a way to investigate the exclusions necessary to and created by Republican citizenship, exclusions which at the outset were

neither “accidental nor . . . inconsistent with the ideal of universal citizenship” as it was understood by its original theorists.²⁸

By definition, the embodied person cannot function as the abstract individual of Republican universalism, because that person is infused with her or his particularist identity—whether gender, race, class, religion, or ethnicity—and is therefore informed by the distinctive experiences said to emanate from these subject-positions. For this reason, Nancy Leys Stepan has argued that the “history of embodiment must be seen as part of the story of citizenship and its limits.”²⁹ She writes: “The historical counterpart to the disembodiment of the individual citizen of modernity—an individual imagined stripped of all substantiation—was the ontologizing via embodiment of sex and racial difference, a rendering of groups as distinct in their biology and differentiated from an implicitly, white male norm.”³⁰

The notion of embodiment therefore highlights what Joan Wallach Scott has called the “paradox” of French Republicanism, which posited a universal, rights-bearing individual who was simultaneously coded as male. This tension in Republican discourse between the purported universality of citizenship and the particularity of the female body structured modern French feminist interventions on behalf of women’s equality. Scott contends that because feminists have argued from within the framework of Republicanism, they have variously affirmed and denied the significance of sexual difference, thereby frustrating their efforts to achieve formal equality.³¹ In a similar vein, Gary Wilder has described the “antimony” of universalism and particularism within French Republican discourse. His work underscores how Republican sovereignty *simultaneously* universalizes and particularizes, and is therefore compelled to both include and exclude those over whom it reigns:³² “A more integrated treatment of universality and particularity as interrelated dimensions of republican, national, and colonial politics would address the way universalizing practices have had particularizing effects and particularizing practices have served republican objectives over the long term history of modern France.”³³ Taken together, Scott’s and Wilder’s accounts draw our attention to two perturbing categories generated by the hybrid logic of French Republicanism: the female citizen who lacked voting rights, and the colonial subject who possessed French nationality but without access to citizenship status. Thus a primary concern of this book is the elaboration of gendered and racialized subjectivities within the Republican narrative,

as well as their relationship to national identity, social circulation, and the reproduction of the citizenry.

In theory, Republican universalism professed a hostility to particularism, or those interests which contradict the general will and mediate the relationship between citizen and state. But in practice universalism generated difference and facilitated exclusion without ever abandoning its contractarian and assimilationist logic. This tension is rooted in the simultaneous grounding of rights in one's humanity (a universalist category) and one's nationality (a particularist category).³⁴ French women, colonial subjects, and foreign immigrants were all subject to the paradoxical play of universalism and particularism. In the case of immigration, the uneasy incorporation of the Enlightenment concept of Man into a national and hence particularist system necessitated a distinction between citizens and foreigners which was, strictly speaking, antithetical to its universalizing project. Because the nation—a bounded entity composed of like people—required citizens and laborers from outside its realm, their particular nature had to be transformed into one which was unitary, homogenous, and French. In imagining the transition from foreigner to potential citizen, the immigrant's proximity to a biocultural and essentialized notion of Frenchness became the standard by which assimilability was measured.

Faith in this universalist vision has propagated the myth of a “colorblind France” which enthusiastically welcomed foreigners from any nation. Instead, this book challenges the universalist claims of French national belonging, as well as some French national histories, by demonstrating how social critics employed racial hierarchies to judge the quality of foreign labor, and its prospects for citizenship. The predominance of white European immigrants to France in the period before the Second World War—namely Italians, Belgians, Spaniards, and Poles—has led scholars and popular commentators to assume that race played no role in constructing French national identity at this time.³⁵ On the contrary, I suggest that in the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth, racial discourses were elaborated and deployed with reference to both immigration and colonization.

Of course, racial hierarchy did play a prominent role in the early French empire in the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean.³⁶ But by turning instead to modern examples, I will show how race articulated with class, nation, culture, and color in a mutually constitutive and discursively productive man-

ner. For example, before the mid-nineteenth century the concept of race was primarily used to differentiate populations *within* France itself. Since about the sixteenth century, race had functioned as a marker for class, assigning members of the aristocracy to the Germanic, Teutonic, and Nordic races, and those of the Third Estate to the Gallo-Roman.³⁷ In the second half of the nineteenth century, however, the doctrines of racism and nationalism fused, and an understanding of race as nation became increasingly prevalent all across Europe.³⁸ Individual nation-states fabricated discourses of origin to explain the transmission of national essences from one generation to the next; this served to concretize the boundaries between European nations while simultaneously distinguishing the metropole from its colonies. In France the elaboration of the “French race” was the product of a particular historical moment, coinciding with the onset of mass immigration, preparation for revenge against Germany, and the expansion of the colonial empire.³⁹

Imperial politics in particular generated a supranational European identity which, without displacing distinct national identities, was made coherent and intelligible through its reference to white authority, civilized culture, and superior military might. Despite the potency of modern nationalisms, the social theorist Étienne Balibar explains, “the colonial castes of the various nationalities . . . *worked together* to forge the idea of ‘White’ superiority, of civilization as an interest that has to be defended against savages.”⁴⁰ Mass immigration, like colonialism, generated a variety of discourses distinguishing white Europeans from their colonial subjects. According to these discourses, European immigration upheld the purity of the white race while assuring the homogeneity of the French national body.

In this period the attempt to create or maintain a white polity through immigration was not a French project alone. Similar efforts occurred in the United States, Latin America, Australia, and elsewhere. For example, David Roediger has argued that the entire legal and social history of immigration in the United States has been framed by the question “Who is white?”⁴¹ The Naturalization Law of 1792 defined Americans as “free *white* citizens,” thus permitting the massive European migrations of the nineteenth century. More than a century later, restrictive legislation passed in the early 1920s, informed by eugenic nativism, overwhelmingly favored the entry of Anglo-Saxons.⁴² Meanwhile, in Latin American nations such as Brazil, Argentina,

and Cuba, social critics argued that European immigrants could “whiten” the nation by mixing with indigenous and mestizo people. Brazilian proponents of immigration favored the settlement of European workers in the hope of creating a white citizen body.⁴³ Similarly, Argentine racial theorists claimed that European immigration could whiten a population already “degraded” by a long history of crossings between Spanish colonizers and indigenous people. In Cuba the Immigration Laws of 1902 and 1906 prohibited Chinese immigration, restricted the entry of other nonwhite people, and yet encouraged the settlement of European families, especially Spaniards and Canary Islanders.⁴⁴ Finally, in Australia the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 was essentially a literacy test which required immigrants to write out a dictation in a specified *European* language.⁴⁵

Despite the ideal of whiteness that inspired these immigration policies, the “white race” that they invoked was only sometimes viewed as a monolithic grouping of individuals with a common identity distinct from people of color. At other junctures of the immigration debate the various members of the Latin, Slavic, Nordic, and Germanic races, to use the parlance of the time, were considered relationally, with each group assigned a particular capacity for assimilation. In France all participants in the immigration debate agreed that the integration of Italians and Spaniards, fellow members of the “Latin race,” would occur by the second generation. According to Georges Mauco, one of the foremost authorities on immigration to France in this period, although these “Mediterranean elements” were products of a “less evolved civilization,” their assimilation was seen as ultimately possible. This is because Italians and Spaniards belonged to the same race as the French, and thus had a similar language, culture, and mores.⁴⁶

This racial hierarchy also included an intermediate category of more distant white populations: Slavs, Eastern European Jews, non-Arab residents of North Africa (i.e. Berbers, also referred to as Kabyles), and Levantines. In the French context, the last may have referred to the inhabitants of present-day Syria and Lebanon, or Western European minorities, usually of French or Italian origin, who had migrated to the Ottoman lands and could not be classified as either Turks or Arabs. Although racial theorists described these populations as fundamentally white, they were said to differ physically, intellectually, and morally from other whites, and to have less aptitude for productive labor. While they would require several generations to as-

similate, the goal was nevertheless considered attainable. This middle group demonstrates what Matthew Frye Jacobson has called the “untidiness of the contest over whiteness.” According to his analysis, phenotypical whiteness and European origin do not always guarantee a place within that category, and the “rules can be rewritten” at any historical moment to allow full membership within it to “borderline Europeans.”⁴⁷

Categories such as “Latin race,” “Nordic race,” and “Slavic race” occur freely in French writings on immigration; they express a notion of cultural *and* biological sameness which did not necessarily overlap with the boundaries of the nation-state. But these categories did not denote “ethnicity” as it is employed in contemporary America, where it signifies differences among whites. On the whole, French immigration discourse rarely employed the language of ethnicity, and words such as *ethnicité* and *ethnique* were not consistently applied to indicate cultural rather than biological difference.⁴⁸ The political scientist Pierre Birnbaum goes as far as to argue that the equivalent of the word “ethnic” does not exist in the French political vocabulary, and furthermore that the rhetoric of ethnicity is “alien to the French political tradition.”⁴⁹

In this light, critiques of the “ethnicity paradigm” which have been put forth by historians and sociologists of the United States can help us to analyze the French case, as well as call into question our desire to project ethnicity onto these deeply contextual categories.⁵⁰ To begin, we must ask why whites are marked by ethnicity when nonwhites are coded through race. Moreover, we need to think through our resistance to viewing white populations as racialized, and thus our unwillingness to refuse to whiteness the status of the unmarked category from which other groups supposedly differ. And finally, we must ask whether it is possible that in early-twentieth-century France there existed a system of difference in which one was both white and racially distinct from other whites.

I have made eclectic use of immigration studies from the United States and elsewhere because of ample evidence that racial ideologies were constructed and concretized in a world-system rather than confined to the boundaries of one nation. For this reason, the American experience of race need not be cordoned off as somehow exceptional, and the use of non-French methodologies to elucidate a study of immigration to France is not necessarily ahistorical or decontextualized.⁵¹ Instead, I would argue that a more complete

understanding of the way racial ideologies passed *between* Europe and the Americas is essential, echoing Tyler Stovall's conviction that "if the Empire provided [France with] one model of race relations, the United States furnished another."⁵² For example, the eugenics movement was international in scope, linking like-minded thinkers in Europe, Latin America, and the United States.⁵³ And French observers were keenly aware of the American experience of immigration, its restrictive legislation and quota system, and the trials of a post-Emancipation society.⁵⁴ Thus in a study in 1930 of race and immigration in France, Jean Pluyette resoundingly praised American immigration laws, which he claimed were "founded on the basis of the fundamental inequality of the human races."⁵⁵

By assigning race to white foreigners, I am not equating their experience in France with that of immigrants of color. A pervasive discourse of hierarchy clearly favored white Europeans while situating Africans and Asians in the least desirable position. Nevertheless, European immigrants were also the victims of discrimination, and their integration into the national body was an uneven and often turbulent process. This must be underscored because even though contemporary rhetoric on immigration has cynically juxtaposed the easy assimilation of white foreigners with the supposed recalcitrance of immigrants of color, many themes invoked by the "New Racism" in France, including the impossibility of assimilation, were previously applied to European immigrants whose racialization has since been effaced.⁵⁶ However, while Jews, colonized people, and white immigrants were all racialized in early-twentieth-century France, the weight assigned to this racialization was far from the same. We will see that in the decades which preceded the Vichy state, it was a color-based racism which commanded the most authority.

*International Migrations, Racial Hierarchies,
and Gender Complementarity*

The experience of mass immigration provided politicians, jurists, industrialists, racial theorists, feminists, and others with ample opportunity to explore the question of French racial belonging, its relationship to the colonial empire and the rest of Europe, and the means by which race articulated with national anxieties of depopulation and degeneration. Rather than provide a linear narrative, I link a series of interconnected stories about the movement

of bodies between nations—and between metropole and colony—accompanied by forms of knowledge which also circulated transnationally. To explore the gendered and intimate politics of these racialized bodies, I focus upon five especially rich moments in the immigration debate: those pertaining to pronatalist politics, industrial production, *métissage*, white slavery, and independent nationality for married women. Namely, I consider the construction of racial categories which situate bodies in the social taxonomy, the unanticipated malleability of these identities, and the various technological discourses—such as demography, work science, eugenics, social hygienic reform, and nationality law—which aided in their propagation.

My starting point is the problem of social reproduction as articulated by pronatalist politics. In early-twentieth-century France, a coalition of politicians, industrialists, social scientists, and Catholics put forth a program for national renewal that included immigration as a remedy for French depopulation. Because pronatalist ideology focused on the body's reproductive potential and the family's obligation to the state, it highlighted the nation's need for new citizens as much as fresh labor power. An immigration policy which reconciled production and assimilation was offered as the solution, ranking immigrants according to their imagined capacity to adapt to both the workplace and family life in France. Pronatalists argued that if immigration were to be a temporary palliative to the demographic crisis, only foreigners with high birthrates should be actively selected. However, the surplus population of Africa and Asia—and the potential labor source of the colonies—first had to be dismissed as a possible solution to demographic decline in the metropole. Pronatalists therefore employed the language of contemporary demography to imagine buffer populations of white Europeans untouched by both the benefits and the dangers of civilization. The Italians, Spaniards, and Poles formed a pool of potential immigrants with “traditional” values that promoted high birthrates, but whose whiteness did not threaten the racial integrity of the French household.

From reproduction I turn to industrial production, since both are essential categories to any permanent migration. I show how the language of labor made use of racialized categories to grapple with concerns about skill, deskilling, and industrial output. With the growing rationalization of the labor process, work scientists, employers, and government agencies began calculating optimum output for racialized bodies. For example, in the 1900s

Jules Amar, an important theoretician of pre-Taylorist *science du travail*, compared levels of energy and fatigue among Italian, North African, and French workers. This new productivist idiom reflected contemporary concerns such as the quantification of output, the physical constitution of the worker's body, and the discrete gestures of which the rationalized labor process was composed. Hence studies performed in the 1920s and 1930s rated foreigners according to categories like physical fitness, discipline, regularity, and output on timework and piecework. While employers argued that these experiments shed light on the physical, technical, and moral value of immigrant workers, in reality they constructed and affirmed a preordained racial hierarchy, and deflected it onto an increasingly rationalized labor process.

Only immigrants who established families in France could contribute to the nation's demographic capital. Critics generally agreed that to combat depopulation, marriages between French women and foreigners were necessary. As a consequence, racial theorists carefully explored the civic and biological fitness of the métis, and how métissage with Europeans and colonial subjects could either revivify or debase the "French race." Métissage was explained in political, medical, and juridical circles in terms of two overlapping and mutually dependent ideologies of the nation. The first was assimilationist and universalist, and therefore summoned the power of the French language, the Republican school system, the soil, and French women to render immigrants culturally similar to the French. The second was a blood-based and particularist model espoused primarily by physicians and anthropologists, many of whom were also affiliated with the eugenics movement in France. Through a close reading of medico-hygienic texts on métissage, I show how both progressive and conservative Republicans combined assimilationist and organicist examples. As a result, they imagined a white polity regenerated by "métissage between whites," yet resolutely incapable of integrating its colonial subjects.

I then situate scientific and popular discussions of métissage in the context of commercial sex, analyzing the crusade against state-regulated prostitution in France, along with the related campaign to abolish "white slavery," or the alleged entrapment of (white) women, and their sale into prostitution abroad. Feminists relied on racialized metaphors of dependency to argue that regulated prostitution deprived women of key universal rights. However, the only alternative that feminists offered to the medico-hygienic and

police surveillance of women in brothels was the repatriation of wayward female migrants, and their safe return to French husbands or fathers. By relocating women in domestic space and reestablishing paternalistic control, opponents of prostitution enabled a gendered notion of dependency which undermined feminist demands for equality. In addition, social reformers were deeply troubled by the traffic in European women to the colonies, for this particular migration fueled French anxieties about sexual respectability and the nation's fitness for imperial rule. According to both army officials and opponents of sex trafficking, the availability of French prostitutes to colonial subjects undermined France's prestige and tarnished its "civilizing mission." For this reason, the army actively discouraged interracial relationships with French women, whether or not they were prostitutes, and sought to provide prostitutes of color to colonial soldiers.

Finally, I link pronatalism, hybridity, and national identity by exploring the debate on the Law on French Nationality of 1927. Before its promulgation, French women who married foreigners were automatically divested of their nationality and forced to assume that of their husbands. While feminists had called for an independent nationality for married women as early as 1869, only with the death of nearly 1.5 million French men in the trenches of the First World War did the debate gain momentum in parliament. Employing universalistic language and laying claim to a capacious human identity, feminists argued that because women were endowed with duties and rights equal to those of men, they too should be permitted to choose their nationality. This line of reasoning privileged the individual rights of women above the collective interests of the family and the nation. Thus when pronatalist jurists and Radical politicians came to the defense of independent nationality, they framed it as a populationist measure designed to increase the number of French nationals. Insisting that it was illogical to surrender French women and their future children during a demographic crisis, they argued that French women should be permitted to keep their nationality, raise children who were legally French, and employ their particularly feminine influence to assimilate foreign husbands. That is, the overtly populationist concerns of the law of 1927 privileged the reproductive capital of French women over the radically egalitarian promise of individual rights. It thereby affirmed gender complementarity and women's particularism within a universalist vision of the nation.

The conspicuous linking of race and reproduction in immigration discourse was carried out in a national and imperial framework. As a consequence, this book focuses on fields of contact shared by European migrants, French citizens, and colonized subjects, contacts which occurred in both public and intimate space. Moreover, it underscores the importance of hierarchy to the social taxonomy of early-twentieth-century France, the potential hybridities created by immigration, emigration, and colonization, and the compound identities of historical subjects fragmented by gender, race, and nation. The synergism of this approach corresponds well with the French case for a number of important reasons. First, a language of hierarchy permeated the immigration debate, in which each foreign group was tirelessly evaluated according to its economic and reproductive utility. The context of demographic decline both enabled and sustained a discussion of hybridity and its limits, along with the related questions of race mixing, intermarriage, and the French woman's role in generating national identity. Finally, the idea of "Greater France," or a nation affiliated with its empire, must serve as our frame of reference because of how explicitly the assimilability of white foreigners was defined in opposition to immigrants from the colonies.

The vicissitudes of the immigration debate were galvanized by problems particular to this moment in modernity, such as the movement of embodied subjects across national and imperial borders; the question of how freely workers, goods, and other forms of capital should circulate in an increasingly global economy; depopulation; rationalization; a perceived crisis in the gender system; and finally, the patterns of domination characteristic of a society ordered by the social fiction of race. The Third Republic's impulse to hierarchize immigrants with reference to their economic and procreative value would provide the ideological and practical foundations for the Vichy regime, whose policies also heralded the rationalizing of production and reproduction as the path to national regeneration.