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THE TROUPES COLONIALES: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF
AFRICAN AMERICAN AND FRENCH COLONIAL SOLDIERS
IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

By

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B.A. University of Central Florida, 2014

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of History
in the College of Arts and Humanities
at the University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida

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2020

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the service of African American soldiers during World War I in comparison with the service of French Colonial soldiers from Africa. This thesis argues that African Americans existed as colonial subjects of the American Empire and served as the colonial army of the United States just as soldiers from Africa did for France. The scope of this thesis covers ideologies of race in the United States and France, as well as racial policy and the implementation of racial hierarchy within the French and American armies during World War I. Through comparative analysis, this research reveals the relationship between white supremacy and imperialism in addition to the tensions between the statuses of citizen and subject for African Americans and Africans in the United States and the French Colonial Empire. By understanding white supremacy as a vehicle of imperialism, this thesis reveals that, though citizens in name, African American soldiers shared many of the same experiences as the *Tirailleurs Sénégalais* and colonial laborers from across France's African colonies. The United States and France shared a rhetoric and ideology of democracy, republicanism, and egalitarianism. Through Jim Crow laws and the *indigénat* code respectively, the United States and France drew clear distinctions between citizens and subjects within their societies, and each nation implemented a racial hierarchy within the ranks of its military. Building on the methods of internal colonialism and global imperialism, this thesis uses comparative analysis to place the United States within the broader context of western imperialism, similar to the other 'great powers' that subjugated non-white people around the globe.

Dedicated to my mother, Lois.
I would never have succeeded without your unending support.

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**INTRODUCTION:
EMPIRE TODAY: BOUNDARIES BETWEEN CITIZEN AND SUBJECT IN
THE UNITED STATES ONE HUNDRED YEARS AFTER WORLD WAR I**

People swear they woke, but they walkin' in their sleep
I pray the Lord their souls to keep
Because wolves disguised as sheep patrol our streets...

No, it aint fair
Looking for justice and it's just us
It ain't fair
There's a riot going on out there
And it ain't fair
When your protector is your predator
It ain't fair
No, it ain't fair...

"It ain't fair," *The Roots*¹

Introduction: An Enduring Imperial Dynamic

In the wake of George Floyd's murder and the subsequent wave of protests that followed, Jon Stewart, the longtime host of *The Daily Show*, commented that, "the police are, in some respects, a border patrol, and they patrol the border between the two Americas."² In a way that mirrors the sentiment expressed by *The Roots* in the quote preceding this introduction, Stewart is saying that there are distinct boundaries between black and white in American society that are enforced by police agencies. The continuance of tension between Stewart's border patrol and the two Americas is a hangover from a historical era that many Americans seem to believe has passed. Floyd's death serves as a recent example of the American tradition of lynching, as a

¹ The Roots, "It ain't fair," from the "Detroit" Original Motion Picture Soundtrack/Audio, July 27, 2017. Song, 6:41, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3uXV62u9odY>.

² John Haltiwanger, "Jon Stewart says police are basically a 'border patrol' between '2 Americas' who exist to perpetuate segregation," Business Insider, published June 15, 2020, <https://www.businessinsider.com/jon-stewart-police-are-a-border-patrol-who-perpetuate-segregation-2020-6>.

black man accused of spending counterfeit money was killed in a way not so dissimilar from black people accused of transgressing white boundaries in previous centuries. His death is a reminder of the inequity inherent in American society, a society where the rights and protections afforded by citizenship do not apply to everyone and can be subverted for the mere suspicion of a crime, where the right to a fair trial and due process no longer apply, and where the perception of guilt or resistance to authority can be met with lethal consequences. In both past and present, to have black skin in the United States is to be subject to a different set of laws, to be a subject rather than a citizen with inalienable rights. These boundaries, the boundaries between citizen and subject, are the borders that Stewart refers to. For those that have studied imperialism, these American borders bear a striking resemblance to the boundaries drawn between citizens and subjects in the colonial spaces of the nineteenth and twentieth century European empires. While the legally codified physical borders of Jim Crow have dissolved in the United States, the more insidious borders of imperialism, colonialism, and the differentiation between citizen and subject remain.

During the period of the new imperialism, western powers, most notably, Britain and France, expanded their hegemony across ever-increasing swaths of territory. At the peak of the new imperialism, their formal empires subjugated many indigenous peoples across Asia and Africa. In 1914, the imperial order established by Britain, France, Russia, and Germany experienced a great strain, when the international tension between these empires ultimately escalated into the First World War. A truly imperial conflict, World War I not only saw the so-called 'great powers' fighting for imperial supremacy, but also saw the indigenous subjects of empire serve in the militaries and labor forces of these western imperialist powers. Though deep

racism and oppressive colonial policies precluded indigenous subjects from becoming citizens of the French national community, France relied on soldiers and laborers from across its colonies to defend against the German Army on the Western Front. Facing critical manpower shortages after years of gruesome conflict, France survived World War I and emerged victorious because of the contributions and sacrifices of its diverse colonial subjects.³

While the ‘great’ western powers have been the subject of significant historical analysis, the United States role as an imperialist power has avoided the same degree of analytical scrutiny, particularly regarding the subjects of race, racism, and African American soldiers during the war. This thesis posits that the United States operated in a manner consistent with other global imperialist powers during the First World War and argues that African Americans functioned in a role similar to the colonial subjects that labored and fought in defense of France.⁴ Using the theoretical frameworks of global imperialism and internal colonialism, this thesis examines the ideologies, the racial policies, and the ways in which France and the United States implemented racial hierarchies on their respective non-white soldiers during World War I. This thesis examines the key similarities and differences in the French and American manifestations of these three components, arguing that despite their many differences, these two self-proclaimed liberal democracies practiced an imperialism based upon white supremacy.

France serves as a foil to the United States throughout the present work because of the strong ideological similarities present between the two powers. Tyler Stovall said it best:

³ Charles Mangin, *La Force Noire* (Paris: Hachette, 1910).

⁴ When discussing African Americans in the United States military, this thesis refers exclusively to the army unless otherwise stated. Of the greater than 400,000 African Americans that served in the United States armed forces during World War I, almost all were in the army. While the navy allowed African Americans to serve in menial positions, the marines banned African Americans completely. See: Tyler Stovall, *Paris Noir: African Americans in the City of Light* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1996) 5.

France in particular offers a useful point of comparison for those whose experience with questions of race has been primarily American. It resembles the United States not only in its level of socioeconomic development, but also in possessing a strong universalist tradition in its politics and culture, as well as persistent contradictions between republican ideology and racially discriminatory practices.⁵

The universalist traditions of the two nations, coupled with the “persistent contradictions” referred to by Stovall are the primary reasons for this comparative analysis. Each nation has a history of exploiting the labor of black people under their dominions. For the United States, this manifest in slavery and continued with sharecropping, while in France this existed in the form of forced labor in African colonies. During World War I, the height of the new imperialism, these histories are most pronounced. In that specific moment, both nations relied on black subjects to defend democratic nations that did not afford those same subjects any of the benefits of citizenship. Stovall again said it best, “although in theory full citizens of the United States, African Americans dared not exercise their Constitutional right to vote, so that the Southern states remained a racial oligarchy in the midst of a supposedly democratic nation.”⁶ The contradictions inherent in France and the United States were abundantly clear when African Americans died to make the world “safe for democracy” and France conscripted African subjects with promises of citizenship that never came.⁷

This thesis does not reveal that the conditions African Americans faced were somehow better or worse than historians have previously understood. This thesis interprets these

⁵ Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall, “Introduction: Race, France, Histories,” in *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France*, eds. Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003) 3.

⁶ Stovall, *Paris Noir*, 2.

⁷ Address of President Wilson to Joint Session of Congress, April 2, 1917. Woodrow Wilson Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/exhibitions/world-war-i-american-experiences/about-this-exhibition/arguing-over-war/for-or-against-war/wilson-before-congress/> ; Myron Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts: The Tirailleurs Sénégalais in French West Africa, 1857-1960* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1991).

conditions – racism, white supremacy, segregation, and Jim Crow – through the lens of empire and argues that African Americans were treated as subjects of an American empire rather than citizens of a liberal democracy. However, this idea is not unique to this thesis. Scholars of internal colonialism have argued this same idea since the 1960s. What differentiates the present work from previous scholarship is its methodology. Through a comparative analysis of the French Empire during World War I, and specifically the French colonial army, this thesis argues that African American soldiers in World War I formed a colonial army of the United States, just as soldiers from Africa and the rest of the French Colonial Empire did for France. This thesis argues that historians *must* reinterpret the histories of race relations in the United States, of segregation, of Jim Crow, slavery, the failure of reconstruction, of white supremacy, of police brutality, and fundamentally, the history of structural racism through the lens of imperialism. White supremacy is imperialism. Structural racism in the United States is the continued imposition of imperial hegemony and defines the borders between Stewart's two Americas.⁸

This assertion stands on a comparative analysis with the French Colonial Empire of the Third Republic. Historians do not question that France was an empire. Yet, when one examines the ideology, policy, and impact that France had on its imperial subjects, it is very clear that there is a fundamental connection to United States history and the history of American subjugation of African American people. Reading the histories of African Americans, of slavery, of Jim Crow, and of African Americans in World War I, it is abundantly clear that historians – when describing the social conditions faced by African Americans, and the extent to which structural racism shaped the world surrounding their day-to-day lives – are describing an imperial

⁸ Haltiwanger, “Jon Stewart.”

phenomenon. Yet, for whatever reasons – whether American exceptionalism, or the broader notion that the United States, somehow, is not an empire – historians have developed a vocabulary to describe the history of American race relations that does not include the words imperialism or colonialism. This thesis argues that those two words – imperialism and colonialism – *must* be brought into the vocabulary of the history of American racism.

In *Torchbearers of Democracy*, Chad Williams notes of Barbeau and Henri's *Unknown Soldiers* that it “focused on military discrimination to the exclusion of the black soldiers’ experience. As a result, white supremacy appears triumphant, and black soldiers emerge primarily as victims.”⁹ This thesis also examines military policy but does not aim to portray African Americans or Africans as victims nor white supremacy as triumphant. The battle between white supremacy and racial equity continues to this very day. However, this is a comparative analysis of imperialism and colonialist behaviors, and as such, this thesis places greater analytical emphasis on the manifestations of imperialism rather than resistance to it simply because the goal of this work is to demonstrate that the United States was part of the imperialist continuum of the early 20th century. This thesis argues that African Americans were the subject of American imperial interests and examines how the United States realized that empire. Nevertheless, because of the limited scope of this study, it does not include a comprehensive discussion of several aspects of the African American reactions to official policy. Within the scope of an MA thesis, it is difficult to address all aspects of black agency under

⁹ Chad L. Williams, *Torchbearers of Democracy: African American Soldiers in the World War I Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010) 354 (FN 11) ; Arthur E. Barbeau and Florette Henri, *The Unknown Soldiers: Black American Troops in World War I* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1974).

imperial regimes when the main objective is to unveil an empire that has otherwise eluded proper scrutiny.

Historiography

Much has been written about the United States involvement in World War I. Less has been written about the role of African Americans in the conflict, though there are several excellent works on the subject. Yet, there are no monographs or even articles that examine the imperial relationship between the United States and African American soldiers during World War I. The historiography of American involvement in World War I generally lacks the critical eye of post-colonial analysis. This work argues that the broader historiography of African American service during the war needs reevaluation, with a greater emphasis on questions that elucidate new aspects of the United States' behavior as a global imperialist power. While historians of race and empire have done excellent work adding to the historiography of World War I, this thesis contends that historians of the United States and of African Americans in the war must reevaluate these historiographies in the context of empire.

The 2011 collection of essays, *Race, Empire and First World War Writing*, edited by Santanu Das, articulates several new avenues and shortcomings in the historiography of empires and their colonial soldiers in the First World War.¹⁰ Das does an excellent job outlining the need for more nuanced scholarship, noting that the historiography of World War I has been disproportionately Eurocentric, and generally neglectful toward the non-European imperial subjects that contributed to the war. While I agree with Das' assessment that the historiography

¹⁰ Santanu Das, *Race, Empire and First World War Writing* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

needs review and expansion, this thesis challenges his assessment of African Americans' place in this historiography.

Furthermore, Das notes that there has been consistent growth in the body of recent scholarship examining “colonial and African American experiences of the conflict,” stating that his collection of works “seeks to recover and analyze the war experience of the combatants and non-combatants from the former colonies and dominions, as well as of particular ethnic and racial groups from outside the colonial empires, such as the Chinese and the African Americans.”¹¹ Again, although I agree with Das and his contributors in believing that the experiences of African Americans require greater recovery and analysis; however, in writing this, Das is continuing the historiographical trend of placing the United States outside of the context of an imperial power. This thesis challenges this narrative and offers a re-examination of the United States in the context of a global imperialist power, using the framework of global imperialism offered by Heather Streets and Trevor Getz in *Modern Imperialism and Colonialism*.¹²

As Das indicated, the historiography of colonial soldiers in the First World War is extensive. In his 1997 work, *Memoirs of the Maelstrom*, Joe Lunn highlighted the recruitment, pre-war colonial experience, and military service of the *Tirailleurs Sénégalais* in World War I

¹¹ Das, *Race, Empire and First World War Writing*, 3.

¹² Getz and Streets-Salter explain global imperialism by saying that “many of the defining cultural features of modernity are at least partly products of imperialism and colonialism” noting that “these include the globalization not only of products but also ideas: notions of race, gender, self, and “otherness” that seem to have homogenized what were previously a wide diversity of conceptualizations” of how the world worked. This conceptual framework is useful for the present thesis, as the interpretations and ideologies of race, otherness, and democracy were at the heart of the French and American empires during World War I. See: Trevor R. Getz and Heather Streets-Salter, *Modern Imperialism and Colonialism: A Global Perspective* (Prentice Hall, 2011).

through the use of oral histories.¹³ Similarly, Myron Echenberg's *Colonial Conscripts* represents an early effort and use of new oral history methodologies to bring attention to the West African soldiers that fought for France in the first half of the twentieth century.¹⁴ Gregory Mann further elaborated on the complexity of the role of French West African veterans through the use of oral history, drawing attention to the cultural context of Malian soldiers and the lasting impact of their cultural understanding of the perceived 'blood debt' that they had accrued with the French Empire after their military service in the World Wars¹⁵. In 2008, Richard Fogarty's *Race and War in France* analyzed the dynamics of French racism towards colonial soldiers during the war, noting the ways in which racist ideology determined which ethnicity of soldier was best suited for specific military tasks, while also examining how colonial soldiers experienced discrimination on multiple levels while serving in the military.¹⁶

In the British context, David Killingray and David Omissi's 1999 collection, *Guardian's of Empire* contains a variety of essays examining the colonial soldiers of Britain, Germany, and France.¹⁷ While not singularly focused on World War I, this collection demonstrates an important step in the historiography of colonial soldiers, as the contributing authors began analyzing questions of culture and gender regarding the mostly African colonial soldiers. Heather Streets' *Martial Races* contributed an analysis of British recruitment and racial ideology

¹³ Joe Lunn, *Memoirs of the Maelstrom: A Senegalese Oral History of the First World War* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1999).

¹⁴ Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts*.

¹⁵ Gregory Mann, *Native Sons: West African Veterans and France in the Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

¹⁶ Richard Fogarty, *Race and War in France: Colonial Subjects in the French Army, 1914-1918* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

¹⁷ David Killingray and David Omissi, eds., *Guardians of Empire: The Armed Forces of the Colonial Powers c. 1700-1964* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1999).

of colonized subjects, and the foundations of these colonial empires in the late Victorian and early Edwardian periods.¹⁸ Between these works, and the analysis mentioned above of French colonial soldiers, historians have done an admirable job of understanding colonial soldiers in the context of their respective cultures, while simultaneously bringing their stories to light in the broader narratives of European warfare.

Similarly, a significant amount of scholarly attention has been devoted to the study of African Americans during World War I. Gerald Shenk's analysis of the U.S. draft in "*Work or Fight!*" examined notions of race and masculinity across the United States, and demonstrated that African Americans were subjugated to positions of inferiority by draft board members seeking to preserve their white supremacy.¹⁹ Jennifer Keene's *World War I, The American Soldier Experience* examined several categories of life for the common U.S. soldier during the war, from recruitment, through training, into the post-war period. Keene details the ways in which African Americans served, particularly their use as laborers, porters, and the general reluctance of white draft boards and officers to arm these men, an ideology steeped in white supremacy and fear of a race war.²⁰ In *Torchbearers of Democracy: African American Soldiers in the World War I Era*, Chad Williams explores both the life and service of African Americans during the war and their perceptions of patriotism, citizenship, and racial violence at home. Of particular importance in this work is the way in which Williams places the war, and African Americans role within it, in a global context, noting that the importance of African American experiences abroad, interactions with other African soldiers in Europe, and the influence of

¹⁸ Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race, and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857-1914* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2004).

¹⁹ Gerald Shenk, "*Work or Fight!*": *Race, Gender, and the Draft in World War One* (New York: Palgrave, 2006).

²⁰ Jennifer Keene, *World War I: The American Soldier Experience* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011.)

major intellectuals like W.E.B. Du Bois all contributed to a growing sense of black internationalism.²¹

John Morrow's *The Great War: An Imperial History* notes the importance of understanding World War I both as a global phenomenon and as a result of European imperialism, effectively moving away from the traditionally Eurocentric view of the war while placing colonial soldiers in the broader narrative of the conflict.²² Morrow notes in the preface to his book, that his work could serve as a potential guide to the United States, as it embarks on the path of imperialism in the twenty-first century in the wake of the September 11 attacks. As recent scholarship has argued, the United States has long acted in an imperialist fashion, dating back to Andrew Jackson's brand of settler colonialism and a civilizing mission under the Indian Removal Act of 1830, or to the invasion and occupation of Haiti in 1915.²³

Fiona Ngô's *Imperial Blues: Geographies of Race and Sex in Jazz Age New York* represents an important work in the developing historiography of American imperialism.²⁴ Ngô frames Jazz Age New York City through the lens of empire, arguing that an "imperial logic" was present in the segregation of space that allowed white Americans to indulge their colonial impulses by partaking in the art and culture of the Harlem Renaissance.²⁵ That Harlem represented an exotic danger where one could enjoy 'the orient,' demonstrates the "imperial

²¹ Williams, *Torchbearers of Democracy*.

²² John H. Morrow, *The Great War: An Imperial History* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

²³ Jason E. Black, *American Indians and the Rhetoric of Removal and Allotment* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2015); Black's work situates the relationship between the U.S. and Native Americans in the context of 19th century imperialism, using post-colonial and subaltern methodologies to elucidate new aspects of Native American rhetoric and resistance to colonization. This work is representative of newer historiography that attempts to view the U.S. within the framework of a colonial empire.

²⁴ Fiona Ngô, *Imperial Blues: Geographies of Race and Sex in Jazz Age New York* (Duke University Press, 2014).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

logic” at work. Ngô’s book is an important contribution to the historiography of American Empire because, through her framing of an iconic American city in an iconic period of American art and culture through the lens of empire, Ngô demonstrates one complicated facet of the intersection of race and empire within the United States.

Edward Baptist’s *The Half Has Never Been Told* is another intriguing work that subtly connects American history to European imperialism in the nineteenth century.²⁶ Baptist examines chattel slavery in the United States as a driving force in the development of American capitalism during the nineteenth century. Baptist convincingly argues that White subjugation of enslaved Africans served as the backbone of the American economic empire that came to fruition during the twentieth century, just as European exploitation of unfree labor in Africa served as a driving force of empire building during the New Imperialism. Further, Baptist acknowledges that the white desire for land in the west was driven in large part by the profitability of slavery. While his book does not directly deal with questions of empire and imperialism, Baptist’s analysis does demonstrate that slavery served as an imperial foundation for the United States, both in its acquisition of the American south and west, and in its subjugation of African Americans.

Even more recently, A.G. Hopkins has argued through comparison with European empires that the United States participated in the new imperialism. Hopkins states that “the first half of the twentieth century provides a unique opportunity to compare imperial principles and practices because it was the only time when the U.S. and British empires coexisted as territorial entities.” He continues by noting that “in its role as an imperial power, the United States shared

²⁶ Edward Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2014).

the same assumptions and methods of rule as Britain and France,” demonstrating a more recent imperial turn in American historiography.²⁷ Ultimately, the present work engages with this trend in the historiography and demonstrates a new aspect of United States imperialism by examining and comparing French and American racist ideology, racial policy, and the role of African and African American soldiers of World War I.

In his brilliantly named article “Those Who Forget Historiography Are Doomed to Republish It,” Paul MacDonald articulates several critiques of the growing body of literature surrounding questions of American empire in the field of International Studies.²⁸ MacDonald’s article draws comparisons with the historiography of the British Empire, and looks specifically at recent literature examining contemporary American imperialism. His work reveals that much of the literature discussing American empire does not focus on historical questions, as the present work does, but instead has examined contemporary issues surrounding American imperialism. While A.G. Hopkins and others represent a much-needed imperial turn in American historiography, MacDonald reminds us that questions of American empire in the historical past are still a relatively new historiographical phenomenon, though Ngô, Hopkins, and others demonstrate important strides in this historiography.²⁹ MacDonald raises salient points in his work, namely that many writers have failed to adequately define ‘empire’ with any historiographical backing, something he identifies as a major problem in the literature. As such, this work offers clear definitions of this term in the following section.

²⁷ A. G. Hopkins, *American Empire: A Global History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018) 492.

²⁸ Paul K. MacDonald, “Those Who Forget Historiography Are Doomed to Republish It: Empire, Imperialism and Contemporary Debates about American Power,” *Review of International Studies* 35, no. 1 (January, 2009) 45-67.

²⁹ Ann Laura Stoler’s edited collection, *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*, provides a series of essays that place American history in a comparative colonial lens. See: Ann Laura Stoler, ed., *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

Empire, Imperialism, and Colonialism: Definitions and Methodological Overview

At the heart of this work are questions of imperialism and colonialism. However, as MacDonald's essay suggests, these terms are vague and possess different meanings in different historical contexts. Thus, this section defines these terms as they appear throughout this thesis, while also situating the thesis within its broader analytical and methodological framework – that of global imperialism, as well as post-colonial and subaltern studies.

This thesis relies on the analytical framework of global imperialism as defined by Heather Streets-Salter and Trevor R. Getz in *Modern Imperialism and Colonialism: A Global Perspective*.³⁰ Streets-Salter and Getz argue that, while it is possible to study a given empire as an individual entity, it is more useful to understand various temporally connected empires in a global context, “in which the actions of and transformations within each society impacted others.”³¹ Streets-Salter and Getz highlight the utility of examining empires in comparative groupings, citing twentieth century Britain, France, and Germany as being vastly different, yet still useful since understanding them in the global context allows for the explanation of significant commonalities between these groups.³² This methodological framework of interpreting empire in a broad, ideologically interconnected, yet socially unique context underpins the methodological approach to this thesis, which relies on comparative analysis between the colonial soldiers of the United States and France. Thus, this thesis examines the phenomenon of empire through the lens of global imperialism to understand the key similarities and differences between French colonial soldiers and African Americans.

³⁰ Trevor R. Getz and Heather Streets-Salter, *Modern Imperialism and Colonialism: A Global Perspective* (Prentice Hall, 2011).

³¹ Streets-Salter and Getz, 12.

³² Streets-Salter and Getz, 12.

The term ‘empire,’ where it appears throughout this text, relies on the definition offered by Streets-Salter and Getz. They define empire as an “agglomeration of multiple polities and diverse populations bound together in an uneven relationship in which one polity exercises significant control over the others” noting that an empire is born when “disparate polities or peoples become subordinated to a dominant polity.”³³ This work argues that the term is appropriate when applied to both France and the United States. Historians have long understood France as a traditionally imperialist power during the late 19th and early 20th century, since it clearly participated in the ‘great game’ of the new imperialism, subjugating parts of Africa, Asia, and Polynesia under the French flag. The French Colonial Empire demonstrates many of the tell-tale indicators of imperial rule. The colony metropole dynamic is evident in this context, as Paris clearly had a direct and important impact on Dakar, Algiers, and Saigon, just as the colonies had important impacts on the French homeland.³⁴

When used in the American context, the term ‘empire’ carries the same meaning, though its use is part of a more recent historiographical trend.³⁵ The United States has long resisted the historiographical scrutiny of post-colonial scholars, avoiding definitive claims of American imperialism. With the September 11 attacks and the subsequent global war on terror, this resistance has withered as a new wave of scholars are now examining the various manifestations

³³ Getz and Streets-Salter, *Modern Imperialism*, 5-6.

³⁴ The historiography of the French Empire is vast. While this is not an exhaustive list, see, among others: Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*; Alice Conklin, *In the Museum of Man: Race, Anthropology, and Empire in France, 1850-1950* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013); Robert Aldrich, *Greater France: A History of French Overseas Expansion* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996); Raymond F. Betts, *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory, 1890-1914* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2005) Originally published in 1960 by Columbia University Press; Tyler Stovall and Georges Van Den Abbeele, *French Civilization and its Discontents: Nationalism, Colonialism, Race* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2003).

³⁵ Two excellent examples of an imperial turn in United States historiography are: A. G. Hopkins, *American Empire: A Global History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018); Alyosha Goldstein, ed., *Formations of United States Colonialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

of American imperialism.³⁶ The present work adds to this growing historiographical trend, and examines the ways in which the United States, in the definition of Getz and Streets-Salter, subordinated disparate peoples under a hegemonic American polity. This definition though, does not apply in the same territorial sense as the French Colonial Empire. Through a codified racial caste system, the United States subordinated African Americans to an outwardly white supremacist polity. Jim Crow segregated all aspects of American life, creating colonies of black space across a metropole of whiteness. African Americans did not receive the guaranteed rights or protections of citizenship, and thus were classified as different – and subjugated by the white metropolitan order. Under Jim Crow, and arguably still today, the United States government treated African Americans as subjects rather than citizens. Thus, this thesis argues that African Americans existed as colonial subjects of the American Empire. This line of analysis draws heavily on theories of internal colonialism.

The methodological lens of internal colonialism is also important to this study, as it further allows for interpretation of the United States as an imperial actor. This term refers to the theoretical framework that arose during the 1960s and 1970s, which, as Ramón Gutiérrez explains, “grew out of the brutal urban conditions minorities faced in the United States.”³⁷ Settler colonialism was the foundation of the United States. These colonial tendencies did not end with the American Revolution and the formal end of the colonial period, but lived on through the institution of slavery, displacement of indigenous peoples, and Jim Crow. Harold Cruse, an early

³⁶ In the preface to *American Empire*, A. G. Hopkins cites the September 11 attacks and the subsequent invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan as the impetus for his inquest into American Imperialism. Similarly, John Morrow cites the US invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan as “imperial initiatives” that warrant further study in the preface to *The Great War: An Imperial History*. See: Hopkins, *American Empire*, xv; Morrow, *The Great War: An Imperial History*, xv.

³⁷ Ramón Gutiérrez, “Internal Colonialism: An American Theory of Race” *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 1, no. 2 (2004), 284.

proponent of the theory of internal colonialism argues that “the so-called ‘democratic heritage’ of the American tradition has served as historical camouflage to hide the fact that America participated in colonialism through its peculiar institution of slavery. Although a very special kind of colonialism... slavery was an organic offshoot of European subjugation of Africa and the New World.”³⁸

This thesis adopts Cruse’s interpretation of African Americans as a colonized people. Viewing the African American experience through the lens of internal colonialism allows us to better understand the extension of white American settler colonialism beyond the colonial period, and even beyond the abolition of slavery in 1865. This methodological framework also allows for stronger comparison between African Americans and European colonial subjects, as white imperialists saw both as sources of exploitable labor, and neither had the rights and protections associated with citizenship. Through this framework, this thesis views African Americans as colonial subjects and argues that during the First World War, they functioned in the same military and racialized capacity as France’s colonial subjects.

While arguing that the United States treated African Americans as colonial subjects, this thesis does not assume any overtly imperialist or colonialist attitudes on behalf of the white American colonizer. As Frederick Cooper states in *Tensions of Empire*, “colonizers brought with them not so much ‘colonialism’ – a coherent set of practices and discourses intended to dominate conquered people while maintaining their distinctiveness – as a series of hegemonic projects.”³⁹ While Cooper is discussing the European colonial phenomenon in Africa, the fundamental idea

³⁸ Harold Cruse, *Rebellion or Revolution?* (William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1968,) 105.

³⁹ Frederick Cooper, “The Dialectics of Decolonization: Nationalism and Labor Movements in Postwar French Algeria,” in *Tensions of Empire*, 409.

of his statement merits consideration in the American context as well. Getz and Streets-Salter elaborate on this idea, explaining that each of the various colonial projects changes over time and space according to the “instigators and participants,” and that these constituent parts make up a greater array of colonialism when viewed from afar.⁴⁰ The failures of reconstruction did not equal an American domestic imperial agenda on their own. Yet, the systematic disenfranchisement of African Americans, relegation to slave-like labor as sharecroppers, and the creation of black and white spaces under Jim Crow that was reinforced by *Plessy v. Ferguson* can all be understood as individual projects within a larger series of hegemonic projects undertaken by the United States.

Finally, Edward Said’s landmark work *Culture and Imperialism* serves as a useful guide for the analysis of this thesis. Said understands culture as complicit with imperialism, and notes that it, for some reason, was “somehow excused” for its participation in imperialism. There was a culture of racism within the United States that perpetuated imperialism, just as culture did in European empires. While this thesis does not focus on cultural ephemera in its analysis, the cultural context of the United States as a place where Jim Crow and black minstrelsy informed the worldviews of so many Americans cannot be ignored. The American culture of racism, of lynching, and of perceived black inferiority and servility served as a form of white hegemony over African Americans. Said states that “the metropolis gets its authority to a considerable extent from the devaluation as well as the exploitation of outlying colonial possessions,” and that “the authority of the observer, and of European geographical centrality, is buttressed by a cultural discourse relegating and confirming the non-European to a secondary racial, cultural,

⁴⁰ Getz and Streets-Salter, *Modern Imperialism*, 11.

and ontological status.”⁴¹ Throughout, this thesis explores how white Americans and Frenchmen drew on understandings of black subjects as possessing a “secondary racial, cultural, and ontological status” and thus imposed an imperial dynamic on non-white, non-Europeans. As such, Said’s post-colonial methodology is tremendously useful throughout this work.

Chapter Outline

This thesis consists of three chapters and follows a general pattern in its comparative analysis. In each chapter France is examined first to establish an imperial baseline and demonstrate the behaviors of a nation that historians agree was a proper empire. Sections discussing France are followed by examinations of the United States, building from the established understanding of French imperialism to better understand the breadth of imperialist ideologies, policies, and behaviors implemented by the United States.

Chapter one begins with the broadest analysis of this work, examining the shared ideologies of republicanism, democracy, and imperialism in France and the United States. This chapter argues that in spite of the republican universalist rhetoric espoused by both nations, the United States and France each embarked on a geo-political agenda of empire underpinned by conceptions of racial difference and white supremacy. In their own unique ways, and despite egalitarian and universalist rhetoric, both nations actively subjugated non-white peoples to a white metropolitan authority in the years preceding and later during World War I.

Chapter two examines the French *indigénat* code and the United States’ Jim Crow laws in comparative perspective. This thesis argues that these specific sets of policy clearly represent the

⁴¹ Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1993) 59.

ways in which each power drew distinctions between citizens and subjects within the empire. While there were exceptions to the *indigénat* that allowed one to become a citizen, and subject status was not singularly determined by one's skin color, it articulated a clear legal status that applied only to subjects of the French empire. While wholly different in its origins and applications, Jim Crow accomplished the same fundamental goal. By limiting the freedoms of African Americans, Jim Crow laws enforced the same colonial dynamic where certain laws restricted the freedoms of African Americans, while white citizens were totally exempt from these laws.

Finally, chapter three examines the implementation of a racial hierarchy within the ranks of the French and American militaries. French leaders viewed their subjects as possessing biologically determined racial traits and assigned specific military tasks to members of different races because of their perceived aptitude for those tasks as determined by their race. While the United States did not differentiate between black people of different regions of the United States, American officials clearly dictate what tasks African Americans could and could not perform. Racism was critical to the American understanding of military service and the division of military labor during this time, and as such, African Americans faced great opposition to becoming officers, lived in inferior barracks with poor sanitation, and were generally relegated to the most undesirable tasks in the army. Racism defined the hierarchies of the French and American militaries, and as such serves as a useful means of understanding the nature of imperialism between the two.

**CHAPTER 1:
“THE REAL SOUL OF WHITE CULTURE”: FRENCH AND AMERICAN
IDEAS OF RACE AND EMPIRE IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH
CENTURY⁴²**

It is curious to see America, the United States, looking on herself as a sort of natural peacemaker in this terrible time. No nation is less fitted. For two or more centuries she has marched proudly in the van of human hatred. She makes bonfires of human flesh and laughs at it hideously... America, land of democracy, wanted to believe in the failure of democracy so far as darker peoples were concerned. Absolutely without excuse she established a caste system, rushed into preparation for war and conquered tropical colonies. She stands today shoulder to shoulder with Europe in Europe's worst sins against civilization.⁴³

- W. E. B. Du Bois

Introduction

In April 1917, the same month that the United States formally entered World War I, W. E. B. Du Bois published “Of the Culture of White Folk,” an essay discussing the impact of European colonization on the black and brown skinned peoples of the world. Du Bois argued that “this world war is primarily the jealous avaricious struggle for the largest share in exploiting darker races,” citing a litany of white abuses of colonized people, including the atrocities of the Belgian Congo, slave-like labor and exploitation across Africa, and the repeated rape and murder of non-white people across the colonized world. Du Bois understood clearly, as the quote prefacing this chapter demonstrates, that the United States indulged in the same imperial projects as the European great powers, and, just as its European counterparts, had reaped great wealth from the exploitation of non-white peoples. Du Bois also understood that regardless of the

⁴² W. E. B. Du Bois, “Of the Culture of White Folk,” *The Journal of Race Development*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (Apr., 1917) 437.

⁴³ Du Bois, “Of the Culture of White Folk,” 445-446.

nationality of state actors, be they French or American, white supremacy pervaded the colonizing ethos of the New Imperialism. The New Imperialism was the geo-political manifestation of white supremacy, and two of the greatest perpetrators of these white supremacist projects were the United States of America and France.⁴⁴

Dissonance defined the imperial projects of the United States and France. While Grover Cleveland presided over the dedication ceremony for the Statue of Liberty on October 28, 1886, African Americans experienced disenfranchisement and lynching while the French Third Republic expanded its colonial empire across Asia and Africa. This gift to the United States on behalf of the French people symbolized the fundamental ideals of the two nations that saw themselves as the beacons of liberty in the world, while the reality of life under the hegemony and racial subjugation of these two nations punctuated their hypocrisy. The United States and France shared similar sentiments of democratic tradition and heritage. Born of eighteenth-century revolution, each saw themselves as children of the enlightenment, imbued with progressive ideals of liberty and the inalienable rights of man. Yet, for all of their rhetoric and ideology surrounding life, liberty, and happiness, or liberty, equality, and fraternity, there was a fundamental tension between the ideology they espoused and the white supremacy their political agendas practiced.

How is it that the two nations that saw themselves as the children of the Enlightenment, of freedom, democracy, and republican virtue, came to dominate and subjugate so many people

⁴⁴ This assessment is my own. However, Robert Blauner similarly argues that racism is a “final fundament of colonization,” and that “except for the marginal case of Japanese imperialism, the major examples of colonialism have involved the subjugation of non-white Asian, African and Latin American peoples by white European powers.” See: Robert Blauner, “Internal Colonialism and Ghetto Revolt,” *Social Problems* 16, no. 4 (Spring, 1969) 393-408; quote from p. 396.

that did not share their complexion? This chapter explores this question by examining the imperial ideologies of the United States and France and argues that despite the vast differences in French and American imperialism during the New Imperialism, each nation undertook a geo-political agenda of white supremacy.

This chapter begins first by situating the French *mission civilisatrice* within the historical context of French racialism, examining French racial ideology in the Early Modern Period through the Enlightenment. Second, this chapter examines the *mission civilisatrice*, a landmark of French imperialism, arguing that it was the geo-political manifestation of French white supremacy. Historians have argued that the French civilizing mission exemplified the French culture of imperialism across the colonial empire.⁴⁵ This thesis builds on that interpretation, but uses comparative analysis to demonstrate a fundamental connection to America's white supremacist ideology. Third, this thesis examines the historical context of America's segregationist policies of Jim Crow, arguing in favor of the internal colonial thesis that views the African American experience under Jim Crow as fundamentally colonial in its manifestation. As a whole, this thesis compares the imperial tendencies of the United States and France. This chapter demonstrates that this comparison of the United States to France is a worthy one, since each nation resembled the other, as Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall say, in their "level of socioeconomic development, but also in possessing a strong universalist tradition in [their] politics and culture, as well as persistent contradictions between republican ideology and racially

⁴⁵ Getz and Streets-Salter, *Modern Imperialism and Colonialism*, 219; Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*,

discriminatory practices.”⁴⁶ This chapter highlights these tensions and contradictions, in order to better frame the arguments of the subsequent chapters.

No two imperialisms are alike, and in comparing the *mission civilisatrice* to Jim Crow, this chapter does not intend to portray the two as interconnected events with similar trajectories, but rather as separate expressions of the same ideology. To be sure, there are vast differences between French and American interpretations of race and between the *mission civilisatrice* and Jim Crow. France placed great emphasis on racial hierarchies and on culture as a component of race, while Americans saw race as a bipolar duality of black and white.⁴⁷ These differences manifest in the various policies and agendas of each nation. However, the goal of this chapter is to demonstrate that, in spite of these differences, both the United States and France embarked on imperial missions to subjugate the non-white peoples of the world, and felt justified in doing so by virtue of their whiteness. Whiteness justified subjugation and affirmed superiority. Veiled behind the belief in a colorblind society, white supremacy pervaded the *mission civilisatrice*, validating animalization of racial ‘Others’ in the spectacle of the human zoo, and subordinating non-white peoples to white cultural and political hegemony.⁴⁸ White supremacy disenfranchised African Americans, kept black people separate and treated them as unequal, indulged in the spectacle of black murder, and created an all encompassing environment that perpetuated a narrative of African American inferiority reinforced by police violence and terrorism. Whiteness,

⁴⁶ Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall, “Introduction: Race, France, Histories,” in *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France*, 3.

⁴⁷ Richard Fogarty and Michael A. Osborne, “Constructions and Functions of Race in French Military Medicine, 1830-1920,” in *The Color of Liberty*, eds. Peabody and Stovall, 206-236; Peabody and Stovall, “Introduction,” *The Color of Liberty*, 4.

⁴⁸ Françoise Vergès, “Colonizing, Educating, Guiding: A Republican Duty” in *Colonial Culture in France Since the Revolution*, eds. Pascal Blanchard, Sandrine Lemaire, Nicolas Bancel, and Dominic Thomas, trans. Alexis Pernsteiner (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014) 253.

and all the perceived indicators of white cultural, technological, and moral superiority defined French and American imperialism from in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

France: Race, Empire, and the *Mission Civilisatrice*

The acquisition of colonies was fundamentally at odds with the Third Republic's republican ideals of "liberty, equality, and fraternity," as it created categories of people that were codified as subjects rather than citizens.⁴⁹ By 1895, the *mission civilisatrice* was the official ideology underpinning the French Colonial Empire of the Third Republic, and this ideology was fraught with tension between republican universalism and colonial subjugation.⁵⁰ Yet, the racialism that reinforced the civilizing mission and eased the tension between republican universalism and colonial oppression did not simply appear from nothing as France began expanding its colonial holdings. It was a part of the long historical process of the formation of French, and more broadly European, racial thought. This section focuses primarily on the French civilizing mission and the inherent tension between French republican universalism and the forced acquisition of empire that it sought to reconcile. This section begins first by providing an overview of the *mission civilisatrice*, drawing heavily on the work of Alice Conklin, before explaining some of the historical formations of French racialist and universality thought, as they related to the civilizing mission.

⁴⁹ Alice Conklin, "Colonialism and Human Rights: A Contradiction in Terms? The Case of France and West Africa, 1895-1914," *The American Historical Review* 103, no. 2 (April, 1998) 419-442.

⁵⁰ Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1865-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 11; Robert Aldrich, *Greater France: A History of French Overseas Expansion* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 92, 98, 104, 154.

As Frederick Cooper states in *Tensions of Empire*, “colonizers brought with them not so much ‘colonialism’ – a coherent set of practices and discourses intended to dominate conquered people while maintaining their distinctiveness – as a series of hegemonic projects.”⁵¹ The *mission civilisatrice* was exactly that – a series of hegemonic projects rather than a coherent set of practices or policies. Alice Conklin explains that the French civilizing mission served to ease the fundamental paradox between the Third Republic’s acquisition of empire and the ideology of universalism that theoretically espoused equality among all people.⁵² She explains that the idea of a civilizing mission was not new in the *fin-de-siècle*, but that it acquired greater currency as the ruling elites of France sought to differentiate themselves from the more conservative monarchies in Europe also engaged in colonial conquest.⁵³ While in practice, French colonial policy acted wholly against the rhetoric of 1789 that claimed all people had a right to basic freedoms, Conklin shows that French liberal ideals placed limits on the amount of coercion that the colonial administration could use in the colonies, which did enough, as in the case of the codification of forced labor, to assuage concerns and to leave colonial oppression unquestioned.⁵⁴

France legitimately believed that it was justified in subjugating its colonial subjects so long as it uplifted them morally, culturally, economically, and technologically, all categories in which France was, to their minds, demonstrably superior. The goals of the civilizing mission as mandated by the colonial administration in Dakar were to end slavery and the slave trade in

⁵¹ Frederick Cooper, “The Dialectics of Decolonization: Nationalism and Labor Movements in Postwar French Algeria,” in *Tensions of Empire*, 409.

⁵² Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*, 45 ; Conklin, “Colonialism and Human Rights,” 420.

⁵³ Conklin, “Colonialism and Human Rights,” 420.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 420, 437.

Africa; to end “feudal vestiges” and classist tyranny; to promote education in the colonies and to provide general knowledge of the French language; and to liberate the indigenous Africans from the tyranny of nature.⁵⁵ The idea of mastery was of critical importance to both the civilizing mission and to larger ideas of civilization in the French imperial mind. However, this notion of mastery was not necessarily intended as domination of peoples, though that is how it manifest, but rather in regards to mastery of nature, the human body, social behavior, geography, and a litany of other natural processes.⁵⁶

The reasons for French subjugation of Africans are varied. At its most core level, French notions of racial difference justified colonial domination. Yet, as Alice Conklin states, it was not merely that Africans were maintained as Others that oppression and subjugation were legitimated in the eyes of the French, though she does note that this Othering was “certainly critical to the West’s easy conscience.”⁵⁷ Colonial actors measured difference and legitimated their expansion and subjugation via a broad series of categories, including moral, economic, and technological superiority.⁵⁸ The *mission civilisatrice* served as the primary means through which the Third Republic reconciled the fundamental dissonance between republican universalism and oppression of colonial subjects, because from the French perspective, it provided a means through which to spread the ideals of republicanism and equality. Only through colonization could France liberate African slaves and emancipate them from the tyrannies of the old feudalist systems of chieftaincies.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 423-429.

⁵⁶ Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*, 6-7.

⁵⁷ Conklin, “Colonialism and Human Rights,” 423.

⁵⁸ Conklin, “Colonialism and Human Rights,” 421 ; Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Man Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).

The idea of assimilation featured prominently in French colonial thought. Visible in the Four Communes of Senegal, this idea held that subjects, through their contact with French culture and civilization could eventually assimilate into French society and become French, becoming full members of the republic and creating a unified colonial-metropolitan culture. By the outbreak of World War I, a shift toward a policy of association occurred. Association stood in opposition to assimilation, as Raymond Betts explains that it “emphasized the need for variation in colonial practice” with one essential tenet being “the idea that the determining factors in all colonial policy should be the geographic and ethnic characteristics and the state of social development of the particular region submitted to foreign control. Evolution of native groups along their own lines was the key.”⁵⁹ This variety of indirect rule removed most chances that the colonized subject had to eventually join the French overseas community and placed a greater emphasis on racial difference, creating ethnic and racial boundaries between French and Other.⁶⁰

France has a long history of racism. Though many deny this history, even to this day, notions of racial difference that manifest as part of the nineteenth century colonial empire had its roots in the Early Modern period, when France began measuring ‘Others’ by various categories of difference, and ultimately codified difference in skin color and social status into law.⁶¹ Yet, Europeans, broadly speaking, have not always associated black skin with racial difference, but rather as a consequence of geographic location. Tom Meisenhelder notes in his article “African

⁵⁹ Raymond F. Betts, *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory, 1890-1914* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2005) 106. Originally published in 1960 by Columbia University Press.

⁶⁰ Fogarty, *Race and War in France*, 11.

⁶¹ Vergés, “Colonizing, Educating, Guiding,” 253 ; Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall, “Introduction: Race, France, Histories,” in *The Color of Liberty*, 5; Peabody, *There are no Slaves in France*; William B. Cohen, *The French Encounter with Africans: White Response to Blacks, 1530-1880* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003).

Bodies: ‘Othering’ the African in Pre-colonial Europe” that Classical Mediterranean civilizations perceived the reason for the blackness of African bodies simply to be a factor of being “burnt” by the sun, as they understood Africa to have a different climate than Europe.⁶² Dorinda Outram notes that, as late as the French Enlightenment, this idea of climate affecting skin tone was still viable, citing the work of Georges-Louis Buffon.⁶³ William Cohen differs slightly, explaining that while classical interpretations of Africans were not so overtly motivated by concepts of racial superiority, they still carried negative connotations towards Africans, citing Herodotus’ description of Africa being a land inhabited by wild animals where the people spoke in bat-like screeches.⁶⁴ Conversely, Roger Bastide notes that these developments towards seeing color and race as a mutual phenomenon began during the Medieval period, citing Medieval art, with their interpretations and uses of color as evidence that the association of black skin with evil occurred during this time.⁶⁵ Further, each of these historians seems to agree that skin color as a category of difference stemmed from one general cultural point of reference, which was the biblical story of Ham.⁶⁶ Thus, the blackness of Africans, coupled with their perceived nakedness by the clothed European contributed to an early understanding of racial difference, defining blackness and nakedness as non-European and a distinctly negative Other.

⁶² Tom Meisenhelder, “African Bodies: ‘Othering’ the African in Precolonial Europe,” *Race, Gender & Class* 10, no. 3, Interdisciplinary Topics in Race, Gender, and Class, (2003,) 110-113.

⁶³ Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd Edition, 2005), 55.

⁶⁴ Cohen, *The French Encounter with Africans*, 1.

⁶⁵ Roger Bastide, “Color, Racism, and Christianity” *Daedalus* 96, No. 2, Color and Race (Spring, 1967), 312-327.

⁶⁶ Ham was seen as a sinner for viewing Noah’s nakedness, and was thus punished by God, by having all of his offspring blackened by his sin. Cohen and Meisenhelder explain how this biblical story represented an important discourse in the European mind for understanding race, as it intersects two prominent aspects of “other” that Europeans perceived in Africans: nakedness and blackness. See:

Eventually, notions of racial difference were codified into French law. Sue Peabody describes this process in *There are no Slaves in France*, in which she argues that it was in the eighteenth century, through a series of court cases and legal proceedings surrounding the question of freedom for slaves from the French colonies, that France codified notions of race into law.⁶⁷ Peabody's analysis reveals that these court proceedings often revolved around the language that described race, particularly the term *négre*, which was used to both refer to people of African descent or slaves. Peabody notes that this was of particular significance because, prior to the codification of race into law in 1758, the distinction between color and slave status had not always been assumed.⁶⁸ Pierre Boule articulates this point clearly, noting that through the 1550s, the term "race" had an entirely different meaning in French thought, as it described the superiority of lineage and inherited traits, rather than through physically defined characteristics like skin color.⁶⁹ Thus, we can see in Early Modern France a general trend toward codified notions of racial difference.

In the nineteenth century, these racist ideas coupled with the egalitarian ideas of 1789 to form the ideological foundation of the civilizing mission, and it is clear that these ideas were fundamentally at odds with each other. With the outbreak of World War I, the tension between the ideologies of republican universalism and egalitarianism, as Richard Fogarty states, pushed France to incorporate *troupes indigènes* into the army and to rely on them as republican subjects

⁶⁷ Peabody, *There are no Slaves in France, The Political Culture of race and Slavery in the Ancien Régime* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

⁶⁸ Peabody, *No Slaves in France*, 70.

⁶⁹ Pierre H. Boule, "François Bernier and the Origins of the Modern Concept of Race" in *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France*, eds. Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003) 12.

with an obligation to defend France.⁷⁰ Yet, the racism inherent in the very nature of universalist ideologies and in the ideas of association prevented France from incorporating its African colonial soldiers into the national community with all the rights, privileges, and protections of citizenship.⁷¹ Through a rhetoric of republican idealism and ‘civilizing’ their colonial subjects, the Third Republic placated concerns of fundamental contradiction in their behavior through a sincere belief that they were making the world a better place through the civilizing mission.⁷²

The United States: Jim Crow and Internal Colonialism

The United States experienced much of the same tension between the rhetoric of liberal democratic ideology and the realities of racial oppression. This tension began in the early days of colonization and the slave trade. The legal process of oppression continued in the earliest days of the independent United States of America when slavery was tacitly endorsed in the constitution. Despite the enlightenment rhetoric that espoused the self-evident truth that “all men are created equal,” the United States constitution ensured that black people were not equal to whites but were measured as only three fifths of a person. When slavery finally met its end in 1865, the Reconstruction Amendments theoretically granted emancipated African Americans new rights and protections as citizens of the United States to ensure greater equality within society.⁷³ These protections existed in theory, but with the ultimate failure of Reconstruction, white supremacy

⁷⁰ Fogarty, *Race and War in France*, 12.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁷² Conklin, “Colonialism and Human Rights,” 433.

⁷³ The Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery and involuntary servitude (except as punishment for a crime); the Fourteenth Amendment redefined the qualifications for citizenship, stripping race as a component of attain citizenship; the Fifteenth Amendment granted the ability to vote to all citizens regardless of race (though initially dependent on property ownership and gender.)

remained the status quo in post-bellum South. Jim Crow became the new order, and African Americans entered a new colonial landscape where social and spatial boundaries were legally tied to one's race. The tension between democratic idealism and the colonial reality of racial oppression became most clear to African Americans in 1917, when President Woodrow Wilson asked Congress for a declaration of war, stating that "the world must be made safe for democracy," when African Americans did not experience democracy in the United States, but were conscripted to fight for it abroad.⁷⁴

As previously stated, this thesis interprets imperialism as the geo-political manifestation of white supremacy. In this interpretation then, white subjugation of African Americans under Jim Crow defines the United States as an imperial actor. This section analyzes Jim Crow through the lens of internal colonialism and global imperialism, situating the experience of African Americans from 1870-1918 firmly within the context of a colonial experience. This chapter argues that the theory of internal colonialism can be applied to understand the legal framework of Jim Crow segregation, and thus to understand the people, in this case African Americans, that lived within that framework. This section relies on Charles Pinderhughes' definition of internal colonialism, which he defines as "being closely related to external colonialism based on features of subordination and oppression, not on majority / minority numbers ratios, geographic distance, capital export, foreignness, legal distinctions, or even voluntary vs. involuntary migration. Internal colonialism is a *system* of inequality, not just an aspect or device or component of inequality."⁷⁵ Thus, this thesis interprets the United States as a colonial actor, and African

⁷⁴ President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, *War Message to Congress, 1917*, Address delivered at Joint Session of the Two Houses of Congress, April 2, 1917, U.S. 65th Congress, 1st Session, Senate Document 5;

⁷⁵ Charles Pinderhughes, "Toward a New Theory of Internal Colonialism," *Socialism and Democracy* 25, vol. 1, (Jun., 2011) 235-256; definition on page 236.

Americans as colonial subjects. Further, the obligation many African Americans felt to serve in the military, and the obligation of conscription placed upon them by the state warrants an interpretation of African Americans as colonial soldiers of the United States.

If colonialism is about the power dynamic that exists between two disparate peoples, between colonizer and colonized (or between metropole and colony,) then it is clear that Jim Crow was a form of colonialism within the United States. Historians have revealed the pervasive nature of colonial hegemony during the Jim Crow era in all aspects of life, as hegemony influenced, and continues to influence, notions of class, culture, memory, and physical space.

David Roediger has demonstrated the ways in which notions of racial difference manifest among the late nineteenth and early twentieth century American working class, as with the emancipation of slaves, white working class members redefined their superiority in terms of racial difference, not being black, as opposed to not being a slave.⁷⁶ Fiona Ngô argues that New York City was an imperial city during the Jazz age, stating that the exoticism presented in Harlem's jazz clubs functioned as a source of an exotic intrigue, enabling the imperial gaze of white Americans looking to indulge their fascination with the 'oriental' cultures of Western colonial spaces.⁷⁷ W. Fitzhugh Brundage shows that in the wake of the civil war, white southerners cultivated (or in this interpretation, colonized) memory in such a way as to perpetuate early notions of the 'lost cause' myth.⁷⁸ White southerners used post-bellum

⁷⁶ David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 2007); originally published in 1991.

⁷⁷ Fiona Ngô, *Imperial Blues: Geographies of Race and Sex in Jazz Age New York* (Duke University Press, 2014), 8.

⁷⁸ W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005) ; The term "lost cause" refers to the idea that ; The reinforcement of racial hierarchy via memory is one of the legacies of Jim Crow in the United States, and is thus a legacy of a colonial past. Tiya Miles discusses racism in the ghost stories of the South, and how they continue to make a spectacle of black violence while ignoring the history of slavery in any meaningful way. See: Tiya Miles, *Tales from the The Haunted*

portrayals of the South as a place that was benevolent and refined, and as a place in which tourists only saw African Americans performing servile tasks, to further solidify notions of white supremacy and to maintain the ante-bellum racial hierarchy.⁷⁹

The spatial component of American segregation was perhaps the most glaring, as it pervaded all aspects of life. White supremacy and the omnipresent threat of violence that accompanied it affected one's ability to experience space, dictating such seemingly mundane activities as using the bathroom, driving an automobile, or enjoying leisure time. Black tourism and segregated leisure spaces in particular offer telling examples of the colonial nature of the United States under Jim Crow. Myra Armstead argues that African Americans resisted segregation of leisure space by taking photos of themselves on vacation or by naming locations after African Americans.⁸⁰ Armstead demonstrates that these small acts of resistance form an important part of African American history during Jim Crow, but also makes clear that African Americans were relegated to the periphery of society.⁸¹ Similarly, Mark Foster discusses the experiences, dangers, and difficulties faced by African American tourists under Jim Crow, noting in particular the importance of the "green book," which served as a guide to the African American motorist navigating the racial tension of the South. Foster makes clear that unexpected interactions with white people in segregated areas such as a "sundown town" could quickly end in violence for an African American.⁸² Thus, the colonial nature of Jim Crow is again made

South: Dark Tourism and Memories of Slavery from the Civil War Era (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

⁷⁹ Brundage, *The Southern Past*, 218.

⁸⁰ Myra B. Young Armstead, "Revisiting Hotels and Other Lodgings: American Tourist Spaces through the Lens of Black Pleasure-Travelers, 1880-1950," *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* 25, (2005) 136-159.

⁸¹ Armstead, "Revisiting Hotels," 145-151.

⁸² Mark Foster, "In the Face of 'Jim Crow': Prosperous Blacks and Vacations, Travel and Outdoor Leisure, 1890-1945," *The Journal of Negro History* 84, no. 2 (Spring 1999) 130-149.

clear. Both Armstead and Foster reveal that through Jim Crow, African Americans were barred from entering imagined white touristic spaces, since the dominant white supremacist conception of the world refused to see black people as equal to whites, and reinforced notions of racial difference through geographic separation where any perceived transgression could be met with violence. *Plessy v. Ferguson* ensured that African Americans were not equal partners in American democracy, but rather were subjects of a white supremacist colonial system built on inequity, in which African Americans were not protected from white violence, and were relegated to certain peripheral spaces within society.

White American colonialism of African Americans existed as pervasive layers of oppression that permeated all aspects of American life. From the early days of the Atlantic Slave Trade through the failure of Reconstruction, white European settlers, and later Americans, built great wealth through the exploitation of black labor, first through slavery and later through unequal labor practice. During the era of Jim Crow, African Americans did not, as Robin Kelley explains, “*experience* a liberal democracy” but rather “lived and struggled in a world that resembled, at least from their vantage point, a fascist or, more appropriately, a colonial situation.”⁸³ Jim Crow emerged first from a set of customs, a de facto segregation that kept white and black separate, but eventually became de jure when it was codified into law.⁸⁴ In

⁸³ Robin D. G. Kelley, “We Are Not What We Seem”: Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South,” in *The Journal of American History* 80, no. 1 (June, 1993), 110.

⁸⁴ The historiography of the origins of Jim Crow is expansive. C. Vann Woodward argued in 1955 that the legal enforcement of segregation began in 1890, while Howard Rabinowitz later revealed that a policy of ‘exclusion’ preceded segregation. See: C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955); Howard Rabinowitz, “More than the Woodward Thesis: Assessing the Strange Career of Jim Crow,” *The Journal of American History* 75, no.3 (Dec., 1988) 842-856. For a discussion of segregation in Florida, see: Jerrell H. Shofner, “Custom, Law, and History: The Enduring Influence of Florida’s ‘Black Code,’” *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 55, no. 3 (Jan.,1977) 277-298.

segregation, white supremacy prevailed, and African Americans were still denied the rights and protections of citizenship theoretically rendered to them by the Reconstruction Amendments.

Conclusion

Returning to the words of Peabody and Stovall, “Race appears as a means to subordinate a conquered or enslaved people; race is used as an exclusionary tool to limit access to privilege.”⁸⁵ The United States and France each used race as a means to subordinate, and as an exclusionary tool within the frameworks of their empires. For France, this imperialism was outward facing, part of the New Imperialism undertaken by the other European “great” powers. Through the *mission civilisatrice*, the French Third Republic conquered vast swaths of Asia and Africa in the name of civilization, subjugating the indigenous inhabitants of these lands to forced labor, integrating them into the global market on unfair terms, and legislating their inequality through race based laws like the *indigénat* code, and generally depriving them the rights and protections of citizenship. In the United States, this imperialism was inward looking. Through Jim Crow, the United States disenfranchised African Americans, denying them the rights and protections of citizenship, and reaffirmed their inequality through the Supreme Court which declared African Americans should be separate but equal. White supremacy created a colonial landscape in the United States that dictated African American’s social and spatial boundaries, punishing transgressions of these boundaries with violence and murder. All of this was done despite the universalist republican idea that all men are created equal.

⁸⁵ Peabody and Stovall, “Introduction,” *The Color of Liberty*, 3.

It is clear then after examining France's civilizing mission in comparison with Jim Crow, that the two phenomena are different expressions of the white supremacist ideology that is, as W. E. B. Du Bois said, "the real soul of white culture."⁸⁶ Tension between republican universalism and racial oppression defined the experiences of the United States and France in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and each nation actively participated in, and benefitted from, the subjugation of non-white peoples. With the outbreak of World War I, the tensions between republican egalitarianism and oppression were only magnified as each nation relied on black soldiers that they viewed as racially inferior subjects. These tensions, these similarities, and these definitively colonial outcomes justify a comparison between the United States and France, and justify a reinterpretation of the United States as a colonial empire.

⁸⁶ Du Bois, "Of the Culture of White Folk," 445-446.

CHAPTER 2: 'STAY IN YOUR PLACE': RACIAL POLICY AS A MEANS OF ENFORCING COLONIALITY IN THE FRENCH AND AMERICAN MILITARIES

The military commander who carried out that order was guilty of military lynching. It was done to appease the people of Houston. In order to appease them, the commander took advantage of the state-of-war situation which made their execution possible without a report to Washington. If this thing had been reported to Washington, we in this country would have had a chance to plead for mercy. Thirteen men in the United States army were denied the right of appeal, which is accorded to any criminal.

We want the entire country to know that we of the negro race feel we have been seriously wronged, not because the thirteen were killed, but because they were denied the right of appeal to appease Houston.

The these thirteen were sacrificed on the infamous altar of Southern prejudice. Yet we are still expected to glorify in patriotism. That deed is not calculated to enhance patriotism of American negroes, but to destroy it.⁸⁷

Rev. George Frazier Miller

Introduction: The Riot (or "Mutiny") in Houston

A riot erupted in Houston, Texas, on August 23, 1917, when a month's worth of racial tension between African American soldiers of the 24th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Battalion, and the white residents of Houston boiled over into violence. The men of the 3rd Battalion arrived on the outskirts of Houston on July 28, during a period of already heightened racial tension resulting from the East St. Louis massacre two months early, during which approximately 100 African Americans were murdered by white mobs over a four-day period.⁸⁸ In the month preceding the

⁸⁷ Rev. George Frazier Miller, "Soldiers Hanged in Texas 'Lynched,' Says Negro Pastor," *New York Tribune*, December 17, 1917, cited in *Correspondence of the Military Intelligence Division Relating to "Negro Subversion," 1917-1941*, (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1440, roll 3); War Department General & Special Staffs, Record Group 165; National Archives Building II, College Park, MD. Hereafter referred to as NARA.

⁸⁸ Chad Williams, *Torchbearers of Democracy*, 33 ; Barbeau and Henri, *Unknown Soldiers*, 25.

riot, tensions mounted between the men of the 3rd Battalion and the white police and civilian population of Houston, as the black regular soldiers were seen not only as a threat for physical violence, but as a threat to the established racial hierarchy.⁸⁹ The presence of the black soldiers empowered the African American population of Houston to test the boundaries of Jim Crow, and the soldiers themselves not only defied segregation laws, but directly quarreled with the Houston police department that employed only two black police officers and refused to acknowledge the authority of black Military Police. The tension in Houston reached its breaking point after local police assaulted two soldiers, Private Edwards and Corporal Baltimore, for trying to defend a black woman that the police had harassed in connection with another event. After the assault on the two soldiers, members of the 3rd Battalion decided to take up arms and march on Houston. Violence ensued as the soldiers descended on the city. Fifteen people died, including four Houston police officers and two black soldiers.⁹⁰

In December 1917, sixty-three African American soldiers were court-martialed for their participation in the Houston riot. Thirteen were sentenced to death, forty-one received life sentences, and the remaining five received shorter prison sentences.⁹¹ As the quote from Rev. George Frazier Miller at the beginning of the chapter indicates, the United States Army executed the thirteen soldiers without allowing them their right to appeal.⁹² To Miller, this looked like an

⁸⁹ Williams, *Torchbearers of Democracy*, 33.

⁹⁰ Jennifer Keene, *World War I: The American Soldier Experience*, 95-96; Williams, *Torchbearers of Democracy*, 33.

⁹¹ Barbeau and Henri, *Unknown Soldiers*, 29.

⁹² Miller was an African American reverend who spoke out against the court martial and execution of the African American soldiers in Houston. His article in the *New York Tribune* was mentioned in the MID files on "Negro Subversion." See: "Soldiers Hanged in Texas 'Lynched,' Says Negro Pastor," *New York Tribune*, December 17, 1917, NARA, *Correspondence of the Military Intelligence Division Relating to "Negro Subversion," 1917-1941*, (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1440, roll 2); RG 165.

act of vengeance to appease the white people of Houston. Just as whites practiced lynching in civilian life, the Army, in Miller's words "was guilty of military lynching." White leaders denied African American soldiers their rights and killed black soldiers to satisfy racial vengeance, all while they were expected to "glorify in patriotism."⁹³ By defying Jim Crow, the men of the 3rd Battalion failed to 'stay in their place,' and thus transgressed the boundary between citizen and subject, or colonizer and colonized.⁹⁴ This chapter argues that Jim Crow segregation was an act of American imperialism, and that the very existence of the racial dynamic that caused the Houston riot exemplify the consequences for African Americans that violated white space, even when they were respectable members of the military.

Historians agree that the Houston Riot of 1917 was part of a continuum of racial violence against African Americans that escalated during the World War I years and ultimately reached its crescendo in the summer of 1919. Arthur Barbeau and Florette Henri attribute the war-time escalation of racial violence not only to the daily exposure of the American citizen to the brutal pictures and stories from the European war, but also to white resentment of African Americans for their advancement.⁹⁵ They cite the Great Migration, as a key source of increasing racial tensions. As African Americans took jobs in the industrial and urban centers of the North and West, their absence in the South disrupted the Southern economy while they simultaneously took

⁹³ Rev. George Frazier Miller, "Soldiers Hanged in Texas 'Lynched,' Says Negro Pastor," *New York Tribune*, December 17, 1917, NARA, *Correspondence of the Military Intelligence Division Relating to "Negro Subversion," 1917-1941*, (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1440, roll 2); RG 165.

⁹⁴ The breaking point occurred when a member of the 3rd Battalion, Private Edwards, intervened when two white police officers demeaned and attempted to arrest a black woman for allegedly hiding children whom the police had previously shot at and chased for playing dice. Edwards' intervention was met with violence by the white police, who pistol-whipped and then arrested him. Another soldier, Corporal Baltimore, was later assaulted when he asked for Edwards' whereabouts. After these two events, some of the 3rd Battalion decided to march on Houston, precipitating the events of the riot. For more, see: Williams, *Torchbearers of Democracy*, 33-35.

⁹⁵ Arthur E. Barbeau and Florette Henri, *The Unknown Soldiers: Black American Troops in World War I* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1974), 22.

“white men’s jobs” and made “unheard-of money.”⁹⁶ The perceived economic improvement of African Americans, coupled with their inclusion in the ranks of the military, both as draftees and officers as potential causes for the increase in lynchings in 1916 and 1917, according to Barbeau and Henri “must have been intolerable and terrifying to many whites, especially in the South, and the mutilation and bestial murder of black individuals would have provided a fearsome lesson to black peoples as a whole to stay ‘in their place.’”⁹⁷

At the time the 3rd Battalion arrived in Houston, the spike in reported lynchings and recent pain of East St. Louis, according to Barbeau and Henri, loomed large in the soldiers minds.⁹⁸ Chad Williams elaborates on this, saying that what happened in Houston “was a rebellion, a desperate revolt against a racial order, which had for too long degraded the manhood and dignity of black soldiers,” and was an understandable reaction to building tensions faced by African Americans.⁹⁹ The men of the 3rd Battalion retaliated against the broad systemic racism and violence carried out against African Americans in the United States. They rebelled against the structures and individuals that sought to subjugate them to white supremacy.

The racial violence of 1917, from East St. Louis to Houston, underscores the imperialist nature of race relations in the United States. White mobs murdered hundreds of African Americans for transgressing perceived racial boundaries, and African Americans, at least in Houston, retaliated. The colonizer impacted the colonized in a reciprocal yet unequal

⁹⁶ Barbeau and Henri, *Unknown Soldiers*, 22 ; For a brief overview of the Great Migration, see: Joe William Trotter Jr., “The Great Migration,” *OAH Magazine of History* 17, no. 1, World War I, (October 2002): 31-33.

⁹⁷ Barbeau and Henri, *Unknown Soldiers*, 21-22 ; In discussing the escalation of violence towards African Americans, Barbeau and Henri state that there were fifty-four lynchings in 1916, and seventy in 1917. Quote on p. 22, statistics found on p. 21.

⁹⁸ Barbeau and Henri, *Unknown Soldiers*, 27.

⁹⁹ Williams, *Torchbearers of Democracy*, 35.

relationship. Barbeau and Henri capture the essence of the imperial relationship beautifully, when they conclude that the message sent by white violence was clear. “To survive,” they say, “the black man would have to agree that he was an inferior brute; that he must not defend himself; that he could not lead and must not follow other black men; and that, above all, he could not advance except under the guidance of white men.”¹⁰⁰ To survive, then, was to submit to the empire and yield to the American civilizing mission; to ‘know one’s place’ and to ‘stay’ there was to accept one’s status as a subject of empire, rather than a citizen of a liberal democracy.

The distinction between citizens and subjects is a key feature of imperialism. Citizens reside in the metropole, where subjects are kept in the colony. Citizens receive rights and protections that are not extended to subjects. Yet, these dynamics are not self-enforcing. Mass subjugation of entire races does not simply occur without guiding policies, without certain principles adhered to by the metropole when cultivating a colonial space. Where the previous chapter examined the overarching ideologies of the United States and France, and how those ideologies guided the cultivation of colony and metropole, this chapter examines the means through which these respective imperial dynamics were enforced; the various French and American policies through which African and African American people were made subjects of an empire, rather than citizens of liberal democracies.

The previous chapter argues that the United States and France shared an ideological underpinning of white supremacy. For France, the white supremacist ideology was on display in the various incarnations of the civilizing mission, and ultimately manifest as a legal entity under the *indigénat* code. The *indigénat* was, as historian Gregory Mann states, not only “a set of

¹⁰⁰ Barbeau and Henri, *Unknown Soldiers*, 32.

sanctions central to the day-to-day operations of colonial rule but, more abstractly, it also marked the boundary between the statuses of subject and citizen that provided its logic.”¹⁰¹ For the US, that ideology was blatantly obvious from the earliest days of colonization and the importation of African slaves, through the Civil War and the failure of reconstruction, and then further into the legal manifestations of white supremacist policy during the Jim Crow era. White supremacy is not foreign to American thought, nor is empire foreign to France. Yet the inverse is also true, where America thinks little about empire and France of white supremacy.

Paraphrasing Said, this chapter is a very Gramscian one, as it focuses on how the United States and France maintained hegemony over their colonized subjects.¹⁰² Important to this chapter’s analysis is the manifestation of that hegemony and the idea of staying in ones ‘place.’ Whether the ‘places’ that black people were supposed to stay were physical or imagined, the idea that ‘places’ existed that were not to be transgressed is fundamental to the imperial projects of white empires. The goal of this chapter is to demonstrate that the segregationist policies enforced by the US military reflected the imperial dynamics of a relationship between colonizer and colonized, or between colony and metropole that was present in the French Colonial Empire, and that each empire sought to keep black people ‘in their place.’ The United States and France both feared that the First World War, and the participation of black soldiers within the conflict, could potentially empower black subjects to advance their civil rights. Each empire took measures to limit that power in an effort to maintain the racial status quo.¹⁰³ This chapter examines the ways

¹⁰¹ Gregory Mann, “What was the ‘Indigénat’? The ‘Empire of Law’ in French West Africa,” *The Journal of African History* 50, no. 3 (2009) 343.

¹⁰² Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 50.

¹⁰³ Jennifer Keene, “French and American Racial Stereotypes During the First World War,” in *National Stereotypes in Perspective: Americans in France, Frenchmen in America*, edited by William L. Chew III (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001) 261-281.

in which each nation enacted policies that subjugated their respective black populaces. We begin with an examination of French West Africa, looking specifically at the *indigénat* code and the ways in which it created a boundary between citizens and subjects. This chapter next examines the ways in which the United States Army subjugated African American soldiers, focusing on the ways in which Jim Crow segregation was enforced, rights were denied, and racial preconceptions were prevalent at all levels of the army during World War I.

Citizens and *Indigènes*: The *Indigénat* Code

At the heart of the French and American imperialist experiments lay a set of policies that drew a legal line between citizens and subjects, granting certain groups of individuals a set of rights and protections that were unavailable to others by virtue of their status. This section examines how France drew the boundary between citizen and subject, examining a set of laws known as the *indigénat* (or Native) code.¹⁰⁴ This thesis contends that the *indigénat* serves as a useful analytical counterpart to America's Jim Crow laws, and allows one to understand the ways in which France drew boundaries between French citizens and subjects. As Gregory Mann explains, the *indigénat* was not only "a set of sanctions central to the day-to-day operations of colonial rule but, more abstractly, it also marked the boundary between the statuses of subject and citizen that provided its logic."¹⁰⁵ This distinction as the means through which individuals were subjugated by the French Empire is the very reason that the *indigénat* warrants discussion in this thesis. Though the *indigénat* differed greatly from Jim Crow in its goals, what it accomplished, and how it was implemented, each set of policies – however loose or coherent

¹⁰⁴ Mann, "What was the '*indigénat*'?", 335

¹⁰⁵ Mann, "What was the '*indigénat*'?", 343.

they were – reflects an official apparatus through which a government implemented white supremacist ideology onto populations of dark skinned people. In doing so, these policies were the means through which the imperial relationship, and the separation of colony and metropole was imposed on those people, whether African or African American.¹⁰⁶

This section contemplates the fundamental similarities between the *indigénat* and Jim Crow, arguing that those similarities demonstrate that the United States enacted a set of imperialist policies that, while very different in practice from the French *indigénat*, ultimately achieved the same goal of subjugating black bodies to a white supremacist empire. The *indigénat* was an apparatus through which the French colonial administration assured compliance with French demands on the colonies through coercion. Joe Lunn writes that “beatings, followed by fines or imprisonment” were meted out “for comparatively minor infractions – such as failure to pay taxes or perform labor services as scheduled.”¹⁰⁷ Just as de facto and de jure segregation did in the United States, the *indigénat* empowered the French colonial administration to brutally subjugate *indigènes* for minor offenses that white people could not commit.¹⁰⁸

Similarly, the *indigénat* and Jim Crow embodied much of the same ideological undertones as each sought to enforce a type of hegemony on a group of would-be subjects. Mann writes that the *indigénat* embodied the spirit of conquest, a reminder of the French victory and

¹⁰⁶ It is important to note that the *indigénat* existed in other parts of the French Empire. For reasons of scope, analysis of the *indigénat code* is limited to French West Africa, though the literature on the subject is vast.

¹⁰⁷ Joe Lunn, *Memoires of the Maelstrom*, 14.

¹⁰⁸ The *indigénat* code applied to a specific group of individuals – *indigènes* – and thus was not applicable to any individuals that did not hold that status. As such, white French colonists were exempted from the same expectations imposed by the *indigénat*. Similarly, white Americans were exempted from the punishments of transgressing racial boundaries, while black Americans were met with violent retribution. See: Mann, “What was the ‘indigénat’?”, pp 345 ; For a brief discussion on the difference between de facto and de jure segregation in the US, and the historiographic significance of these terms, see: Gene Andrew Jarrett, “What is Jim Crow?,” *PMLA* 128, no. 2 (March 2013): 389.

perceived superiority over the native peoples of Africa where the code was in effect.¹⁰⁹ In its own way, Jim Crow also embodied that spirit of conquest. It hearkened back to a time when African Americans were enslaved by white Americans and sought to keep African Americans “in their place,” instilling a social hierarchy within society that assured white supremacy. The dominant-submissive, or master-slave relationship that enriched so many white Americans, or at least allowed poor whites to view themselves as superior to blacks while slavery existed, continued through Jim Crow in much the same way that the ideology of conquest lived on within the *indigénat* code.¹¹⁰ The *indigénat* code and Jim Crow segregation, while different in the scope of what they did and what they meant, were distorted reflections of the same imperialist ideology that accomplished the same fundamental goal. Each created a boundary between citizen and subject within their respective colony/metropole dynamics, and each allowed for white people to meet transgressions of white expectations with violent retribution.

There were important differences between Jim Crow and the *indigénat*. First, the *indigénat* did not focus as strictly on racial boundaries as Jim Crow. Africans born in one of the Four Communes of Senegal (Dakar, Rufisque, St. Louis, and Gorée) were designated as *originaires* rather than *indigènes*. This distinction from their rural counterparts differentiated Africans born in any of the Four Communes, as *originaires* possessed the right to vote, were allowed access to French courts, and were exempted from corvee labor, amongst other things.¹¹¹ After 1916, *originaires* were granted full French citizenship as a result of the efforts of Blaise

¹⁰⁹ Mann, “What was the ‘*indigénat*’?”, 341.

¹¹⁰ David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 2007). Originally published in 1991.

¹¹¹ Lunn, *Memoirs of the Maelstrom*, 17.

Diagne.¹¹² While Mann notes that the citizenship status granted to Africans born in the communes was something of “an imperial anomaly,” their status bears mentioning in comparison to Jim Crow because it illustrates one of the ways in which the *indigénat* was less rigid than Jim Crow in the boundaries it drew between citizens and subjects.¹¹³ While African Americans certainly could succeed under Jim Crow segregation, the boundaries created by de facto and de jure segregation in the United States were more rigidly drawn along the color line than in France’s African colonies. Further, the *indigénat* offered exceptions to Africans for a variety of reasons, including military service of *tirailleurs*, where individuals were exempted from the rules and punishments of the code.¹¹⁴ Unlike their African counterparts, African Americans could not gain exemption from being black. American racial prejudice did not exempt people from Jim Crow based on any status they may have possessed, particularly, as the Houston riot shows, for soldiers.

A second important distinction is that the *indigénat* often empowered certain black African men (known as *chefs* or *chefs de canton*) as agents of empire, and tasked them with implementing the various sanctions provided by the *indigénat* upon the local populations.¹¹⁵ Unlike the United States, which sought to differentiate African Americans from their white counterparts either by practicing or by codifying spatial boundaries between white and black spaces, thus subjugating African Americans and denying them freedom to move safely through American space, the *indigénat* empowered a privileged group of Africans to enforce the will of

¹¹² Mann, *Native Sons*, 69.

¹¹³ Lunn notes that contact between white French colonizers and black Africans was mostly limited to the Four Communes, as 85 percent of Senegal’s European population lived in one of the Four Communes in the pre-war period. See: Lunn, *Memoirs of the Maelstrom*, 17-18.

¹¹⁴ Mann, *Native Sons*, 70.

¹¹⁵ Mann, “What Was the ‘*indigénat*’?”, 335.

France upon other Africans. Yet, the various *chefs* and other agents of empire were not immune from the sanctions of the *indigénat*, as Mann makes clear. However, this status as an agent of French will and colonial oppression extended to the *tirailleurs*, as Frantz Fanon noted when discussing the role of the *tirailleurs* in “[annihilating] the attempts at liberation by other ‘peoples of color,’” noting that their presence in Madagascar reminded Malagasies to “keep quiet, remain in your place.”¹¹⁶

The *indigénat* code provides an intriguing French counterpoint to the American Jim Crow. While the *indigénat* mirrored its American counterpart in that enabled white subjugation of black people through violence and intimidation, it differed by empowering African subjects as agents of empire. For the *tirailleurs*, they were at once exempted from the coercive apparatus of the French colonial administration, but as noted by Fanon, still functioned as agents of empire in that the French colonial regime relied on the *tirailleurs* for the conquest of the interior of French West Africa, and had long since used the *tirailleurs* to suppress *indigènes* and to keep them ‘in their place.’¹¹⁷

Uncle Sam and Jim Crow: Subjugation in the US Army

At the core of what this thesis views to be the American imperialist agenda is the consistent effort to reduce African Americans to subjects of the United States, rather than

¹¹⁶ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008) 83-86. Originally published in 1952. First quote, 83, second, 86; Willard B. Gatewood argues that African American soldiers did function as agents of empire during the Spanish-American war and in the Philippines. However, their role as imperial agents was different, as African American soldiers in these conflicts were not exempted from segregation laws or granted special status like *tirailleurs* were under the *indigénat*. See: Willard B. Gatewood Jr., “Black Americans and the Quest for Empire, 1898-1903,” *The Journal of Southern History* 38, no. 4 (1972), 545-566.

¹¹⁷ Myron Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts: The Tirailleurs Sénégalais in French West Africa, 1857-1960* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1991) 1-6.

securing for them the rights and privileges of citizenship. Through a variety of policies, the United States enforced the colonial dynamic of colony and metropole, relegating African Americans to the periphery of society while ensuring the continuation of the white supremacist policies that the nation was founded upon. As subjects of the United States, African Americans experienced a similar relationship to white Americans and to the American government that many of the subjugated peoples of the French empire experienced with their colonial overlords. Just as the *tirailleurs sénégalais* were conscripted to fight and die for a nation that offered them little in the way of rights or protections, so too were African Americans. Further, conscription affected African Americans more acutely than their white counterparts, as black Americans were conscripted at a higher rate than white Americans, largely because of racist draft boards.¹¹⁸ After the Reconstruction Era, segregation was first de facto, then de jure, as the practice of segregation transformed from a common practice to a legally codified reality.¹¹⁹ As this section examines, the US Army played an important role in enforcing the imperial dynamic inherent within segregationist policy.

The US Army's imperialist policies towards African American soldiers are perceptible at all levels of military leadership. At the macro level, the mere existence of the Military Intelligence Division's (MID) program monitoring Negro Subversion demonstrates that the US government feared African Americans, particularly after the Houston riot, and thus implemented a broad sweeping government program to monitor any activity perceived through the eyes of the white imperial metropole as subversive.¹²⁰ The MID singled out African Americans for extensive

¹¹⁸ Gerald Shenk, "Work or fight!", 133-34, 119 ; Keene, World War 1, *The American Soldier Experience*, 36.

¹¹⁹ Rabinowitz, *Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865-1890* ; Jerrell Schoffner, "Custom, Law, History."

¹²⁰ Mark Ellis, *Race, War, and Surveillance: African Americans and the United States Government During World War I* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001) 48-49. Ellis notes that the first report filed under the heading

surveillance because of their race and because the US government viewed African Americans as subject to German influence and subterfuge, and ultimately as a liability.¹²¹ France also monitored its colonial subjects, yet, the American perception of subversion differed somewhat from that of the French. While the French Empire's idea of subversive behavior focused on issues of gender, where miscegenation and questions of filiality posed greater threats to the notions of metropolitan superiority, the United States imperial structure was more informed by the hard segregationist ideologies of Jim Crow.¹²² Jim Crow guided the surveillance of African American citizens, soldiers, and workers, as it was the goal of the US military, in service of the American Empire more broadly, to reinforce the segregation of white space from black space and to further engrain the white supremacy of the New Imperialism within American social institutions like the Army.¹²³

One metaphorical layer beneath the largest level that is MID surveillance, US imperialist policy is visible in the military prosecution of African American soldiers. The court martial and execution of the thirteen African American soldiers in the wake of the Houston riot was, in the words of Rev. George Frazier Miller, a "military lynching" in which African American soldiers

"Negro Subversion" was in response to suspicion that Germany and Mexico were influencing African Americans in Harlem. Further, he notes that the MIB viewed combating "Negro subversion" as a main component of counterintelligence after the Houston riot.

¹²¹ Throughout the MID files on "Negro Subversion," a common thread of suspected German espionage appears official correspondences. MID officials usually commented on the ways that any perceived subversive behavior by African Americans may have related to the German Army, and how the Germans were attempting (whether real or perceived) to show African Americans that they were fighting against their own best interests by fighting for the United States; See: NARA, *Correspondence of the Military Intelligence Division Relating to "Negro Subversion," 1917-1941*, (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1440, rolls 1-6); RG 165.

¹²² Fogarty, *Race and War in France*, 278; Saada, *Empires Children*, 13-42.

¹²³ As this chapter shows, another common thread of perceived subversion appears in the MID files. The MID archives contain frequent reports of African Americans defying Jim Crow, which resulted in a report of "negro subversion" being filed with the MID. While explanations for the reports varied on a case-by-case basis, whether it was part of a German plot or not, defiance of Jim Crow was often reported to the military as subversive behavior. Further, reports from African Americans of unfair segregationist practices appeared in the MID files, indicating that even speaking out against illegal segregation could be perceived as subversive.

were denied their right to appeal.¹²⁴ In order for one to become a colonial subject, they must be denied the same rights and privileges afforded to a citizen in the metropole. The military's denial of rights to the African American soldiers as a reaction to the Houston riot was an act of subjugation. It differentiated the African American soldiers from their white counterparts by imposing an undue punishment upon them prescribed according to their racial complexion. In much the same way that African subjects of the French empire experienced harsh punishments under the *indigénat* as an official arm of the metropole, so too did African Americans experience unequal treatment through the arms of the American metropole through the United States Army. Lynching has historically been the primary instrument of white terror used to subjugate African Americans within the United States. In this instance, the US Army used lynching as a tool of subjugation to satiate Houston's desire for retribution against the soldiers that actively defied their white supremacist worldviews. In doing so, the Army validated and legitimized violence against African Americans. By executing the thirteen soldiers without granting them their rights to appeal, the US Army demonstrated that African Americans were subjects of a different code of laws, and demonstrated that lynching was both legal and acceptable since it had been carried out by an official organ of the state.

Lynching was not the only tool the Army used to impose a colonial hegemony upon African Americans. Continuing to travel deeper into the metaphorical layers of military leadership, and transitioning now from institutions of military leadership to individuals, we can see that at least one specific general in the US Army enacted what this thesis views as imperialist

¹²⁴ Rev. George Frazier Miller, "Soldiers Hanged in Texas," in NARA, *Correspondence of the Military Intelligence Division Relating to "Negro Subversion," 1917-1941*, (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1440, roll 3); RG 165.

policies that attempted to subjugate African Americans to white supremacy via their military service. One incident that clearly demonstrates the depth of white supremacy within the US Army revolves around the actions of Major General Charles Clarendon Ballou, the commanding officer of the US 92nd Infantry Division, one of two predominantly African American combat divisions.¹²⁵ On March 28, 1918, while stationed at Camp Funston, Kansas, the Headquarters of the 92nd Division posted “Bulletin No. 35” on order of General Ballou, stating that “no useful purpose will be served by any action upon [African American soldiers] part that will cause the color question to be raised.”¹²⁶ Ballou issued “Bulletin No. 35” in response to an altercation between one African American sergeant, part of the medical department, under Ballou’s command and a local theater owner in Kansas. According to the official bulletin, “this sergeant entered a theater as he undoubtedly had a legal right to do, and precipitated trouble by making it possible to allege race discrimination in the seat he was given.” The official bulletin noted that the sergeant was “strictly right within his legal rights in this matter, and the theater manager is legally wrong” but decried the actions of the Sergeant because he “called on the Division Commander to take sides in a row that should never have occurred, and would not have occurred had the Sergeant placed the general good above his personal pleasure and convenience.”¹²⁷ Ballou simultaneously acknowledged the sergeant’s legal right to enter the theater while castigating the soldier for defying the de facto practice of segregation. His words in the bulletin show that the Army chose to placate white Americans at the expense of African Americans. The

¹²⁵ For a brief discussion of General Ballou and the 92nd Infantry Division, see: Keene, *World War I, The American Soldier Experience*, pp. 101-102.

¹²⁶ Lt. Col. Allen J. Greer, “Bulletin No. 35,” Camp Funston, Kansas, March 28, 1918, NARA, *Correspondence of the Military Intelligence Division Relating to “Negro Subversion,” 1917-1941*, (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1440, roll 2); RG 165.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

army recognized that African American's rights as citizens under the Fourteenth Amendment could be ignored.

In essence, Ballou's General Order 35 clearly articulates the tension between citizen and subject, between colonizer and colonized, that connects the US Army to the imperialism of the French Colonial Empire. While acknowledging that the African American sergeant legally had the right to enter the movie theatre, Ballou emphasized the importance, in his opinion, of not fanning racial tensions at the expense of the honor and dignity of the black soldiers under his command. In Ballou's own words, "the sergeant is guilty of the greater wrong in doing anything, no matter how legally correct, that will provoke race animosity," and further instructed the African American men of the 92nd Division to "refrain from going where their presence will be resented" and to "avoid every situation that can give rise to racial ill-will."¹²⁸ In saying this, Ballou explicitly tapped the white supremacist power engrained within American society to enforce a policy that relegated the African American soldiers under his command to the status of subjects rather than citizens, and ultimately a colonial army.

African Americans, as discussed in the previous chapter, did not receive the rights, privileges, and protections guaranteed to citizens of the United States. They were subjects of the American Empire, not citizens of a liberal democracy. Ballou's general order 35 further reinforced their status as subjects by recognizing that, while African Americans may have theoretically possessed legal rights, as the sergeant did when entering the movie theatre, those rights were null and void in the face of white power, since it was their supreme duty to avoid upsetting the white power establishment. Ballou crystallized this point to the 92nd Division when

¹²⁸ Ibid.

he reminded them that “the success of the Division with all that that success implies, is dependent upon the good will of the public. That public is nine-tenths white. White men made the Division, and they can break it just as easily if it becomes a trouble maker.”¹²⁹ Borrowing Ibram X. Kendi’s interpretation of the dueling forces of racial progress and racist progress within American society, Ballou clearly rose as a racist force to quash the rights of African American soldiers in search of racial progress.¹³⁰

Without explicitly saying it, Ballou’s words reveal that in the opinion of at least one high ranking Army officer, African Americans soldiers were expected to yield to the will of white Americans. The colonized African Americans had certain privileges that extended only as far as was convenient for white America, and that those privileges could be revoked by the white metropole with little or no question. Just as with the thirteen soldiers in the Houston riot, though without the fatal consequences, the United States army denied African American soldiers their rights when those very rights became inconvenient for the white establishment.

African Americans in the military spoke out against Ballou. As Chad Williams notes, the bulletin had a devastating effect on the morale of the men of the 92nd Division, stating that the soldiers of the 367th Infantry Regiment “responded with pure anger” and “repeatedly tore down the directive whenever it was posted.”¹³¹ The MID officer in charge of this case, Major W. H. Loving, indicated in his report that “several colored officers informed me that the Battalion commanders did not approve of the Bulletin and reluctantly gave instructions for it to be posted.” Loving further stated that Ballou’s comments were exceptional, stating that “I dare say that there

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (New York, NY: Bold Type Books, 2016) x.

¹³¹ Williams, *Torchbearers of Democracy*, 87.

is not another General in the whole American Army, whether he be or is not in favor of colored troops, who would have made a similar remark,” specifically referring to Ballou’s assertion that white men can “break” the division if it became a “trouble maker.”¹³²

Similarly, the African American press rallied against Ballou. A *New York News* article titled “REMOVE BALLOU, MR. PRESIDENT” called on Woodrow Wilson to revoke Bulletin 35 and to remove Ballou from command of the 92nd Division. The author of the article argued against Ballou’s subjugation and in favor of African American’s rights as citizens, stating that President Wilson had to make the “fateful decision now as to whether he shall send these thousands of black soldiers to fight for freedom ‘over there,’ but submit to serfdom ‘over here.’” The author also turned Ballou’s words to sardonically note that, if African Americans were not to go “where your presence is not desired,” then “by this same logic, the Germans, too are white men. The presence of black Yankees will not be desired by the white men of Berlin. Black soldiers should avoid going to Berlin, according to the Ballou Bulletin.”¹³³

The *New York Age*, one of the most prominent African American newspapers of the early 20th century published an article that placed the Ballou incident in an imperial context. The *Age* published an article by Ferdinand Q. Morton, titled “UNJUST TO NEGRO TROOPS,” citing the relationship between Great Britain and Ireland, stating “Great Britain has the Irish problem to handicap her in this great struggle. Will America deliberately aggravate the negro problem here likewise to handicap us? The ideals which we have entered this war to vindicate are liberty,

¹³² “Major W. H. Loving to Chief, Military Intelligence Branch, New York, April 16, 1918” NARA, *Correspondence of the Military Intelligence Division Relating to “Negro Subversion,” 1917-1941*, (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1440, roll 2); RG 165.

¹³³ “Remove Ballou, Mr. President,” *New York News*, April 17, 1917, NARA, *Correspondence of the Military Intelligence Division Relating to “Negro Subversion,” 1917-1941*, (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1440, roll 2); RG 165.

justice and equality, and unless we are faithful to those ideals we shall not win the war and ought not to win it.”¹³⁴ Morton preceded these comments by saying that “One can conceive of nothing more un-American and undemocratic than the spirit and purpose of this order, and its promulgation is almost treasonable,” but it was his concluding sentiment that the US “ought not to win” the war that caught the attention of the MID. Yet, the fundamental point raised by Morton in the *Age*, and more specifically his comparison to the relationship between Britain and Ireland, demonstrates that he understood the imperial relationship between white Americans and black Americans. His publication in the *Age*, and the wide readership that it likely drew shows that this imperial framing was likely understood by many African American readers. Ballou’s general order 35 and the discourse surrounding it is a clear instance in which the United States military subjugated African Americans in an imperial relationship. African Americans at the time understood this, and contemporary historiography should adapt to better reflect this understanding.¹³⁵

Two months after Ballou’s bulletin 35, an incident in Peru, Indiana caught the attention of MID, and reflects many of the same imperial overtones present in Ballou’s order. On June 11, 1918, George W. Jackson wrote to Secretary of War Newton D. Baker explaining a situation in which the Wayne Hotel and Ballard Johnson lunch counter refused African American officers

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ In *Black Shame*, Dick van Galen Last states that “According to some, it was precisely the virulent racism of the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century that stood in the way of an imperialistic colonizing policy” without providing citation or specific sources. Van Galen Last qualifies that statement, indicating that it was American fear of augmenting the “population of colour by millions and the race problem along with it.” While this may have been true, he notes that American racism developed to end black emancipation. I argue that these things were not mutually exclusive. I argue that by standing as a bulwark to black emancipation, American racism enforced the same colonial agenda that van Galen Last says European empires used to justify racism abroad. See: Dick van Galen Last, *Black Shame: African Soldiers in Europe, 1914-1922*, trans. Marjolin de Jager (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 28-29.

and soldiers service at while awaiting a railway transfer. Jackson protested the “unpatriotic and unamerican act that was accorded” to these soldiers, further noting that “the matter should be looked into because it is a disgrace to the U.S.A. and our city.”¹³⁶ In response to the complaint issued by Jackson, Marlborough Churchill, the Chief of the Military Intelligence Branch, asked William Herod to investigate the matter, noting that “if the facts set forth in the enclosed letter [from Jackson] are true, and if this is a violation of the statutes of Indiana, as I presume it is, it is requested that steps be taken to prosecute the offender,” indicating that there was at least some desire in the higher ranks of the military to defend African American soldiers.¹³⁷ Yet, despite Churchill’s desire to prosecute if necessary, Herod seemed more concerned with discrediting Jackson and with blaming the African American community, rather than pursuing justice for an illegal act of discrimination.

Herod offered a nine-point report to Churchill, stating that “from time to time there has been a fluctuating population of colored people in this City of rather tough characters and some of these persons together with their kind that live here have caused some trouble about the public eating places near Union Depot.” Herod blames the “touch characters” of the local African American community and uses it as a justification for segregation. Further, Herod claims that “some of the first colored troop trains, the individual soldiers, on making application at the local counters named, failed to get the proper accommodations due to misunderstanding and previous

¹³⁶ “George Jackson to Secretary of War Newton Baker, June 11, 1918” NARA, *Correspondence of the Military Intelligence Division Relating to “Negro Subversion,” 1917-1941*, (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1440, roll 3); RG 165.

¹³⁷ “Marlborough Churchill to W. P. Herod, July 16, 1918” NARA, *Correspondence of the Military Intelligence Division Relating to “Negro Subversion,” 1917-1941*, (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1440, roll 2); RG 165 ; The Military Intelligence Branch (MIB) later became the Military Intelligence Division. At the time of the letter cited in this footnote, it was the MIB, yet the National Archives and Records Administration refers to this general collection as belonging to the MID. This is the cause of this naming discrepancy.

difficulty with resident characters,” before noting that it was the local African American residents that issued the complaints (including the letter from Jackson) rather than the African American soldiers. In a subtext similar to that issued by Ballou, Herod’s report makes clear that the rights and privileges of black Americans extended only as far as white Americans were willing to allow them, reinforcing a relationship resembling that between a European colonizer and an African subject. Herod concluded that “there will be no discrimination in the future, and that the loyalty of the Wayne Hotel and the Ballard & Johnson proprietorship is 100%.”¹³⁸ In an official letter from a Captain C. B. Perkins, George Jackson was informed of the decision that no prosecution would follow Herod’s investigation, as there “was some misunderstanding at the time the first colored troops passed through Peru” and that they weren’t accommodated “partly to the fact that the proprietors received no request in advance to make provisions for them and in part to previous difficulty with some of the colored residents of Peru.”¹³⁹ While it is unclear whether or not the Wayne Hotel and the Ballard & Johnson counter were willing to accommodate white soldiers, the subtext of Herod’s investigation and official ruling seems clear. Black Americans operated under a different set of rules than a white American citizen. White transgressions of black rights could be chalked up to a misunderstanding, where black transgressions of white expectations were punishable by death.

Ballou’s bulletin and the Indiana incident reflect a top-down colonial imposition on African American soldiers that reinforced notions of racial hierarchy in the US military,

¹³⁸ “William P. Herod to Chief, Military Intelligence Branch, August 2, 1918” NARA, *Correspondence of the Military Intelligence Division Relating to “Negro Subversion,” 1917-1941*, (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1440, roll 3); RG 165.

¹³⁹ “C. B. Perkins to George W. Jackson, August 12, 1918” NARA, *Correspondence of the Military Intelligence Division Relating to “Negro Subversion,” 1917-1941*, (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1440, roll 3); RG 165.

demonstrating that policies emanated from largest levels of institutional leadership and from influential leaders within the US military. Notions of racial difference pervaded American society at this time and informed the worldview of the individuals that lived within it.

Concluding the analogy of deepening layers of imperialist ideology and subjugation, it is clear that these same colonialist notions of white supremacy and racial hierarchy appeared not only in the upper echelons of American military leadership, but in the lowest ranks of the Army's officer corps. Examination of the MID files reveals that the same racial justifications of colonialism used by French imperialists existed in the correspondences of lower-ranking white officers that encountered African American soldiers. This is evident in the correspondences of Frederick W. Haeger, a white 1st Lieutenant and Camp Intelligence Officer at Camp Knox, Kentucky.¹⁴⁰ Haeger's December 12, 1918 report to the Director of Military Intelligence reflected many of the racist tropes visible in French descriptions of West African soldiers.¹⁴¹ Haeger indicates that the black soldiers of Camp Knox complained about the conditions they faced, stating that "many of the letters written by the colored men here have been provoked by the fact that they have been working with civilians drawing four to six dollars a day."¹⁴² The African American soldiers at

¹⁴⁰ "Letter from Frederick W. Haeger to Director of Military Intelligence, December 12, 1918" NARA, *Correspondence of the Military Intelligence Division Relating to "Negro Subversion," 1917-1941*, (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1440, roll 3); RG 165.

¹⁴¹ France viewed its relationship with colonial subjects as a paternal one, where the civilized fatherly figure of the metropole taught and uplifted the childlike, uncivilized savage. The scholarly discussion of the "childlike" stereotype in the French Colonial Empire is extensive. For a few examples, see: Fogarty, *Race and War in France*, 96; Dana S. Hale, *Races on Display: French Representations of Colonized Peoples, 1886-1940* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008) 43; Jennifer Keene, "French and American Racial Stereotypes during the First World War", in *National Stereotypes in Perspective: Americans in France, Frenchmen in America*, ed. William L. Chew III (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001) 270.

¹⁴² Unfortunately, the letters of complaint written by the African American soldiers do not appear in archives. This summation of events is based entirely on the correspondence between Haeger and the Director of Military Intelligence, as well as an additional letter to Emmett J. Scott by Colonel K.C. Masteller, that corroborates Haeger's letter, and insures that steps are being taken to assuage the situation at Camp Knox.

Camp Knox were working side by side with white civilian contractors on various construction projects but were dissatisfied when the white contractors earned greater wages than the soldiers. In detailing the complaints of the soldiers, Haeger invokes imperialist rhetoric in saying that the African American soldiers “are childlike in mentality,” a phrase commonly used to describe both African Americans and Africans encountered by European imperialists.¹⁴³

In his examination of the *tirailleurs*, Myron Echenberg paraphrases an idea expressed by Teodor Shanin that “an army is a copy of the society it serves, with elements in it from all sectors.”¹⁴⁴ Understanding the breadth of the Army’s imperialist policies, Shanin’s conception of an army as a copy of the society it serves is a useful frame for understanding the American Army and the racist agenda it pursued during World War I. It stands to reason that an imperialist nation seeking to assert white supremacy would raise an army that implements white supremacist, and therefore imperialist, policies. It is no accident that the French empire raised a colonial army and viewed their service as something that would fulfill the civilizing mission. The French colonial army reflected the imperialist values of the *mission civilisatrice*, just as the American army reflected the white supremacist values espoused from the nation’s founding through the Jim Crow era.

This section has examined the ways in which the United States Army imposed the imperial dynamic of colonizer and colonized on African American soldiers. The military imposition of Jim Crow segregation practices, the MID’s extensive surveilling and self-appointed mission to combat “negro subversion”, and the American mirroring of French racial

¹⁴³ William B. Cohen, “The Colonized as Child: British and French Colonial Rule,” *African Historical Studies* 3, no.2, (1970) 427-431.

¹⁴⁴ Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts*, 4.

and colonial rhetoric demonstrates that the Army played an significant role in drawing the line between citizens and subjects in American society during World War I. The examples of General Ballou and Peru, Indiana, as well as the meting out of summary judgement in the wake of the Houston mutiny shows that the US Army viewed African Americans as subjects rather than citizens, thus validating an interpretation of their service as that of a colonial army.

Conclusion

A crucial symmetry existed between the United States and France. Each power drew upon a subjugated population for service during the First World War. Yet, within that crucial symmetry existed several key differences. France embraced empire, and openly discussed and debated the question of whether their colonial soldiers should be citizens or subjects.¹⁴⁵ Conversely, and at the heart of the issue this thesis is addressing, the United States did not view itself as an empire and did not consider African Americans to be colonial soldiers. The discourse of racial equality within the United States was loud, but discussion of empire and the citizen/subject dichotomy surrounding African Americans was muted. The subjugation of African Americans in the United States, both in civilian and military life, existed in a different intellectual framework than the subjugation of Africans at the hands of the French. African Americans were not seen as imperial subjects as a Senegalese or Moroccan soldier would have been by the French. Yet, as this chapter has argued, the tension between citizen and subject existed in both the French and American colonial landscapes. While this chapter has focused on a very limited number of American policies, it is clear that this dynamic was present in the

¹⁴⁵ Richard Fogarty offers an excellent examination of the official discourse surrounding the rights of colonial soldiers. See: Fogarty, *Race and War in France*, 231 ; Charles Mangin, *La Force Noire*, 94-96.

overarching structural racism of Jim Crow, which warrants the interpretation of African American Military service in World War I as the service of a colonial army.

For the US and France, the tension between citizen and subject manifest differently. The means through which black soldiers were made subjects by the French and American governments were different, and the military policies that subjugated them varied. For the United States, African Americans were technically citizens according to the 14th amendment, so long as they had been born on American soil. The failure of reconstruction and the lack of protections for the rights and privileges of African Americans negated that truth, as Jim Crow laws and preceding “Black Codes” effectively implemented white supremacy across the United States, subjugating African Americans to the status of a subject rather than a citizen. The military was complicit in this, and while African Americans viewed military service as a potential means of earning equality, this chapter has demonstrated some of the various ways in which the United States Army curtailed African American freedoms in favor of white supremacist reality.

For France, the means of subjugation manifest differently than in the United States. The vast majority of West African subjects were not citizens in any legal sense unless they were one of the few born in the Four Communes of Senegal. Even then, the Four Communes housed only three to six percent of the total indigenous population of Senegal in the prewar period, meaning that *originaires* were comprised a very small section of the African population in French West Africa. For the vast majority of West African soldiers that served for France, they did not enjoy any of the rights and privileges of citizenship, yet were expected to fight and die for France, and were compelled to do so through compulsory conscription. The ensuing debate surrounding the question of their rights, whether or not France could compel African subjects to die for France,

and whether or not it was necessary compensate the *troupes indigènes* with naturalization highlighted the tension inherent in French republican universalist ideology, and will be explored further in the following chapter. Thus, while the examples of French and American use of black soldiers during the First World War highlight two very different manifestations of white supremacist ideology, and two wholly different means of imperial subjugation, the ideas undergirding that subjugation were fundamentally the same. By examining France's use of colonial policy, and the various means through which that policy ultimately relegated people in French West Africa to the status of subject rather than citizen, we can understand better the depth of United States imperialism. By examining the policies of France and the United States in a comparative context, and applying that analysis to the military of the United States and the service of African Americans, we can reinterpret the role of African Americans within American society as the role of subjects, and their role in World War I as the role of a colonial army rather than an army of citizens that enjoyed all privileges of membership within the nation-state.

CHAPTER 3: TWO COLONIAL ARMIES: RACIAL HIERARCHY IN THE ARMIES OF THE UNITED STATES AND FRANCE

The significance of the assignment of white noncommissioned officers to colored labor battalions can be viewed only in the light that, in the opinion of the war Department, white men can get more work out of colored men than members of their own race. If this be the reason for such assignments, I wish to state that it is based on a mistaken idea and a misconception of the character of the Negro. That most of these white noncommissioned officers view themselves in the light of the overseer of antebellum days is shown by their practice of carrying revolvers when they take details of men out to work. In all camps I found that there were colored men far better qualified to be noncommissioned officers than the white men under whom they were serving.¹⁴⁶

- Walter Loving

Here are the main elements of training the black soldier: a harsh and rough nature, the necessities of portage, a warlike heritage, contempt of pain, fruit of a not very nervous temperament and of education... These native qualities are complemented by others: his devotion to the leader who knows and loves him is absolute, without limits; he frankly recognizes the superiority of whites, since whites have presented themselves to him in the guise of brave and just leaders...¹⁴⁷

- Charles Mangin

Introduction

During World War I, colonial subjects – whether African or African American – shared many experiences. Among these experiences was the existence of a racial hierarchies within the ranks of the French and American militaries. The previous chapter demonstrated that the United States and France, through Jim Crow and the *indigénat* code, enforced the colonial dynamic of making black soldiers subjects rather than citizens. This chapter builds on that analysis and

¹⁴⁶ Major W. H. Loving to Chief, Military Morale Section, MID, "Recapitulation of investigation of military camps," New York City, New York, November 24, 1918, NARA, *Correspondence of the Military Intelligence Division Relating to "Negro Subversion," 1917-1941*, (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1440, roll 5); RG 165.

¹⁴⁷ Charles Mangin, "L'utilisation des troupes noires," *Bulletins et Mémoires de la Société d'anthropologie de Paris*, VI, tome 2 (1911) 80-100, quote from p. 90. Translation mine.

examines the imposition of racial hierarchy on the ranks of the French and American armies to illustrate yet another shared imperial quality of the two western empires. Just as Jim Crow and the *indigénat* embodied the spirit of conquest, this chapter argues, as the two quotes preceding the chapter show, that the imposition of racial hierarchy within the ranks of each military represented another facet of this colonial dynamic and another aspect of the spirit of conquest. Although the French colonial army and the United States Army had slightly different command structures and institutions, they both practiced the stratification of races. While each practiced racial stratification differently, we can see that the United States clearly valued white lives and white service more than African American lives, and that the US Army and US Government held certain underlying assumptions about African American capability in military service, just as French officials made assumptions about the capabilities of the various subjects that served France during the Great War. While those assumptions differed between the two, a theme that is clear throughout this thesis, this chapter argues that white assumptions of black ability in both the French and American empires dictated the service of black soldiers under each power and thus demonstrate another aspect of their shared coloniality.

The existence, definition, and implementation of racial hierarchy in the armies of the United States and France is the focal point of this chapter. As the preceding chapters show, there were vast differences in the manifestations of military racial hierarchy in the United States and France. Both empires stratified race differently and ascribed different military roles predicated on their differing racial preconceptions. However, in examining both the similarities and differences between these two empires, we can again see instances of the same imperial phenomenon, just as we have already seen in examining French and American ideology and

racial policy. Both empires used republican rhetoric to mask an imperial ethos, and both empires drew strict lines between citizens and subjects in their respective militaries. This chapter reveals the ways in which both empires implemented racial hierarchy in the ranks of their respective militaries, stratifying colonial subjects below citizens of the metropole, and ultimately revealing another facet of the colonial dynamic that was present in both the United States and France.

Edward Said provides a useful frame for the difference in behavior between the United States and France. As Said noted in *Culture and Imperialism* when discussing the writings of Roderick Murchison, “whether in Britain itself, Russia, Europe, or the Antipodes, Africa, or India, Murchison’s work *was* empire.”¹⁴⁸ Regardless of the specific location of his writings, it is the themes in Murchison’s work that *was* empire. Following this model of analysis, whether performed in the United States or France, Britain, or the colonies of Senegal, Chad, or India, the imposition of a racial hierarchy by one group onto another *was* and *is* empire. The United States’ imposition of a hierarchy predicated on the perceived traits of African Americans *was* empire and must be understood as such. The stratification of military service according to that hierarchy defines the United States not only as an empire but shows that African Americans in the US army served as colonial soldiers. This chapter examines this racial hierarchy in both the United States and France and situates it firmly as an act of empire.

This chapter begins by examining the service of African soldiers in the French colonial army, focusing on the assignment of duties based on French notions of racial capability. Next, this chapter examines how racism impacted African Americans, exploring the ways in which notions of racial difference dictated the roles of African Americans in the US Army. This chapter

¹⁴⁸ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 165.

frames the American understanding of racial capability as an act of empire, further placing the United States and its treatment of African American soldiers within the context of imperialism.

Racism, Hierarchy, and Military Service in the French Colonial Army

In conscripting, training, deploying, and ultimately relying on colonial soldiers for the defense of France during World War I, France grappled with the contradictions of French egalitarianism and the civilizing mission. In his seminal book, *Race and War in France*, Richard Fogarty discusses the ways in which France categorized and stratified colonial soldiers.¹⁴⁹ As Fogarty makes clear, race played an important role in these classifications, and is one of the ways in which French racism manifest in the imperial conflict of World War I. While chapter one of this thesis examines French universalist ideology and the fundamental tension between egalitarianism and the civilizing mission and chapter two examines French policy in the colonies themselves, this section examines the French practice of racism and the implementation of a racial hierarchy within the ranks of the French colonial army during World War I.

French racial stratification materialized in several different ways. First, aspects of martial race theory and racial stereotyping appeared in the leadership of the French colonial army.¹⁵⁰ French officials believed that different races possessed different inherent racial attributes that made them more suitable for certain roles within the army. For instance, French military leaders viewed sub-Saharan Africans as the most barbaric, savage, and warlike of France's colonial

¹⁴⁹ Fogarty, *Race and War*. Chapter 3 deals with this topic most directly, though it is a theme throughout the entire work.

¹⁵⁰ Fogarty, *Race and War*, 83-87 ; Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts*, 33 ; Mann, *Native Sons*, 16 ; Van Galen Last, *Black Shame*, 40 ; Joe Lunn, "Les Races Guerrieres': Racial Preconceptions in the French Military about West African Soldiers during the First World War," *Journal of Contemporary History* 34, no. 4 (October, 1999) 517-536.

subjects.¹⁵¹ The opinions of Colonel Charles Mangin, architect of the French colonial army and author of *La Force Noire*, reflect the deep-seated racism of French colonial society.¹⁵² Mangin argued that Senegalese men were well suited for use as shock troopers because, in his opinion, they had less developed nervous systems and were less susceptible to the trauma of artillery fire. Evoking the racist pseudo-science typical of his era, Mangin said that “the black nervous system is much less developed than the white’s” stating further that “every surgeon has remarked on the impassivity of blacks under the knife.”¹⁵³ Mangin’s words not only demonstrate his belief in biological racial difference, but also reveals the racist and white supremacist ideologies that informed the creation of the French colonial army. This deep racism existed throughout the ranks of the French high command, and not only dictated the roles to be performed by black soldiers, but also how French commanders valued the lives of colonial soldiers as well. Dick Van Galen Last quotes Robert Nivelle, commander-in-chief of the French armies on the Western Front from 1916-1917 as saying “Spare not the black blood so that white blood be saved.”¹⁵⁴ Mangin and Nivelle’s words clearly show that a racial hierarchy existed within the ranks of the French army and that French commanders valued white French lives more than black African lives.

Racial stereotyping thus dictated the service of all soldiers from France’s colonies. Fogarty and Van Galen Last both explain how the stereotype of the *tirailleurs* as warlike, violent, and brutal savages spread between the various European powers during the war. Fogarty cites one French officer as saying that Germans had an “irrational fear” of the *tirailleurs*, and

¹⁵¹ Echenberg explains that *Tirailleurs* were seen as the “terror out of Africa” and were notorious for their perceived “barbarian ruthlessness” and brutality. See: Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts*, 32-38.

¹⁵² *La Force Noire* (1910) was Mangin’s treatise calling for the creation of a “black force” to defend France in a future conflict. He is widely regarded as the architect of French colonial army.

¹⁵³ Mangin, *Force Noire*, 252. Translation mine.

¹⁵⁴ Van Galen Last, *Black Shame*, 41.

cites a West African soldier as recalling a crowd of French civilians cheering for the African soldiers to “cut off the Germans’ heads!” upon the arrival of his unit in France.¹⁵⁵ Because of their perceived prowess as warriors, French commanders used sub-Saharan soldiers (collectively referred to as the *Tirailleurs Sénégalais*) as shock troopers, deploying them to fight in near suicidal conditions.¹⁵⁶ Van Galen Last explains that French commanders praised the *tirailleurs* for their qualities as shock troopers, but notes that they were also deployed as *nettoyeurs de tranchées* (‘trench cleaners’) and were instructed not to take prisoners of war, perhaps to prey upon the German imagination of the ‘savage’ African.¹⁵⁷ Savagery was seen as a core component of the *Tirailleurs* and was understood as a truth by both Entente and Central powers, despite the reliance of each on colonial soldiers, thus illustrating how widespread these assumptions were amongst Western powers that participated in empire building.

Though a racial hierarchy existed, not all French subjects served in the same capacity. Fogarty describes a predominant stereotype applied to Madagascans and Indochinese subjects who were supposedly weak, intelligent but lacking initiative, and lacking a warrior’s spirit. Fogarty explains that despite their supposed lack of initiative and warrior spirit, Madagascans and Indochinese could serve in a variety of capacities, including as nurses, *tirailleurs*, administrative clerks, artillerymen, drivers, or as telephone and telegraph operators. Exposing another aspect of this hierarchy, Fogarty notes that because of their perceived racial ineptitude, no West Africans served as administrative clerks and very few served in any role other than as

¹⁵⁵ Fogarty, *Race and War*, 85.

¹⁵⁶ Members of the *Tirailleurs Sénégalais* were not explicitly Senegalese as the name implies. The *Tirailleurs* were composed sub-Saharan peoples from across West Africa, including Senegal and Mali. For more, see: Echenberg, *Colonial Conscriptps*.

¹⁵⁷ Van Galen Last, *Black Shame*, 40. Author’s translation.

tirailleurs. Essentially, Madagascans and Indochinese subjects could serve as *tirailleurs*, but because of their racial attributes, they were not considered ideal candidates for combat service. Conversely, the supposedly ‘barbaric’ sub-Saharan African conscripts could not serve in any role other than as a *tirailleur*, because the French racial hierarchy dictated that they were too unintelligent, too barbaric, and too warlike to be used in any other way.¹⁵⁸

France’s racial hierarchy as outlined by Mangin measured not only assumed biologically determined racial attributes, but also applied a subjective scale that gauged African peoples according to their level of civilization.¹⁵⁹ By this logic, not only were some races better suited to labor rather than combat duty, but in Mangin’s estimate, some African populations were too uncivilized for recruitment altogether. In reviewing number of potential conscripts from France’s colonies, Mangin explained some of the different perceived attributes of France’s subject peoples. He stated that “we will first neglect the eight million inhabitants of our Equatorial Africa, because this group of colonies (Gabon-Congo-Oubanghi-Chad) is hardly organized and the populations of equatorial Africa, are still too primitive in all respects” but noted that equatorial Africans could serve as a “future precious reserve.” Mangin’s willingness to delay raising an army of Equatorial Africans reflects another important aspect of the French racial hierarchy. To Mangin, Congolese, Chadian, and Gabonese subjects were unsuitable for military service not because of their racial attributes, but because of their lack of civilization. As Mangin

¹⁵⁸ Fogarty, *Race and War*, 65.

¹⁵⁹ Joe Lunn, “‘Les Races Guerrieres’: Racial Preconceptions in the French Military about West African Soldiers during the First World War,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 34, no. 4 (October, 1999) 517-536, 523 ; Charles Mangin, “L’utilisation des troupes noires,” 81.

notes, these colonies could provide useful soldiers after they had been properly uplifted by the French civilizing mission.¹⁶⁰

In *La Force Noire*, Mangin offers another example in contrast to his assessment of equatorial Africans, stating of North African Moors that “in future battles, these primitives for whom life counts so little and whose young blood boils with so much ardor as if eager to be spilled, will certainly reach the old “French fury” and would reinvigorate it if it were needed.”¹⁶¹ Both excerpts of Mangin’s writings reflect the underlying assumption of racial capability and degrees of civilization as an important factor in the capability of colonized subjects to serve adequately in the French military. While equatorial Africans were, in Mangin’s assessment, “too primitive” but could potentially be useful once uplifted, he viewed North Africans as more civilized and thus capable of fighting with the fury of a Frenchmen immediately.¹⁶² As was typical of the civilizing mission, Frenchmen were the model of civilization, and even though the lives of African subjects “count for so little,” Mangin believed that African subjects could attain certain qualities associated with French civilization.

Thus, as biological capability and degrees of civilization were the metrics of France’s racial hierarchy, this hierarchy naturally included white soldiers, who, by virtue of their status as the progenitors of French civilization and their self-ascribed positive racial attributes, sat atop the hierarchy. As Fogarty makes clear, French military authorities considered the presence of white officers in command of *troupes indigènes* to be of critical importance not only for their perceived

¹⁶⁰ Mangin, “L’utilisation des troupes noires,” 81. Translation mine.

¹⁶¹ Mangin, *La Force Noire*, 258. Translation mine.

¹⁶² Patricia Lorcin discusses the Kabyle myth – the idea that Algerians were the hardest-working North Africans – in her book *Imperial Identities*. See Patricia Lorcin, *Imperial Identities: Stereotyping, Prejudice and Race in Colonial Algeria* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 1995).

qualities of stoicism, honor, and dignity in the face of danger, but because French notions of masculinity and gender required it.¹⁶³ In the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian war, Frenchmen felt emasculated after failing to defend France on the battlefield. By ascribing ‘inferior’ qualities to the *troupes indigènes* and more positive leadership traits to Frenchmen, white French soldiers were not only elevated above the colonial soldier but were simultaneously assured that of their own necessity in the defense of France.¹⁶⁴

Mangin’s ideas were not universally accepted before World War I, when the book was published. Joe Lunn has shown that his ideas were hotly contested within French society and that various members of French military leadership opposed the use of African soldiers, citing similarly racist beliefs in the limited intellectual capability of the Senegalese.¹⁶⁵ Even though French leaders debated the utility of African soldiers, the ways in which they made their arguments reflect their deeply racist beliefs. In this way, it is abundantly clear that France created a racial hierarchy within the ranks of its military and deliberately assigned men of specific ethnicities to perform specific duties in the ranks of the colonial army. The French *Armée coloniale* then serves as a useful blueprint for understanding the application of imperialist ideologies and behaviors to the conscription and deployment of an army composed of colonial subjects. This serves as an important baseline when considering the service of African Americans in the United States Army during World War I.

¹⁶³ Fogarty, *Race and War in France*, 60-61, 98.

¹⁶⁴ Fogarty 60-61

¹⁶⁵ Lunn, “Les Races Guerrieres,” 528.

Racism, Hierarchy, and Military Service in the US Army

Racial hierarchy limited the ways in which African Americans served in the US Army during World War I. While African Americans met this hierarchy and the limitations it posed with resistance, these limitations did exist, and in the interpretation of this thesis, were not only an act to racially stratify the military but were consistent with the imperialist behavior examined throughout this thesis. This section examines the various ways that the United States Military imposed racial hierarchy on African Americans, interpreting these acts as the connective tissue that binds the United States to imperialism, and ultimately that justifies the interpretation of African American service in World War I as the service of a colonial army. As such, this section focuses less on the acts of resistance mentioned above and more on the actions of the colonizer. This is done not to dismiss African American agency or to downplay the significance of African American resistance to white supremacy and imperialism, but because the imperial nature of race relations in the United States during World War I has not been studied.¹⁶⁶

This section begins by examining the limitations placed on African American service and advancement in the army, paying particular attention to the Army's reluctance to arm African Americans, to send them into combat, and its readiness to relegate them to the most undesirable tasks. Similarly, military leaders viewed African Americans as less capable of leading other men as officers, and as such, the army disproportionately placed white commissioned and noncommissioned officers as the commanders of predominantly African American units. It is important to note that the themes examined in this section were not absolute. There were

¹⁶⁶ Chad Williams has criticized the work of Barbeau and Henri in *Unknown Soldiers* for focusing "on military discrimination to the exclusion of the totality of black soldiers' experience. This thesis acknowledges that criticism and has attempted to adequately frame the scope of this study to avoid that same shortcoming in the present work. Chad Williams, *Torchbearers of Democracy*, 354.

exceptions to every rule, as African Americans did serve in combat units and did become officers. However, the examples provided represent the dominant trends in the army and thus serve as a useful point of analysis. This section argues that these acts are largely consistent with the examples provided by the French colonial army, and thus serves as a useful means of understanding the US army's treatment of African Americans during World War I as consistent with the treatment of a colonial army. To this end, this section will highlight the key themes that connect this racial stratification to the French empire to further validate the assertion that the United States used African Americans as a colonial army during World War I.

This section relies heavily on a report filed to the MID by Walter H. Loving. As both an African American man and a Major in the US Army, Loving stood at an intersection of worlds where he was at once a second-class citizen, a subject of empire, but also a high-ranking agent of a repressive organ of empire. He was uniquely qualified to observe, criticize, and challenge the workings of the US Army from within. Thus, Loving's report provides a useful lens through which we can understand some of the frustrations of African American soldiers in Army training camps during World War I. In his official report, Loving discusses some of the major issues of systemic racism facing the common African American soldier in military camps and does so in straightforward manner. In the conclusion to his report, Loving states that "I have always considered it my duty to report facts as I find them, even though it be necessary to express unpleasant truths, which, in the long run, is more advantageous to the government than would be an attempt to smoothe (sic) over unsatisfactory conditions by misrepresentation of facts."¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ Walter Loving, "Recapitulation of investigation of military camps," NARA, *Correspondence of the Military Intelligence Division Relating to "Negro Subversion," 1917-1941*, (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1440, roll 5) RG 165.

Compared with the presumably white Lt. Haeger cited in the previous chapter, who evoked the colonial and racist trope when he referred to African Americans as “child-like in mentality” before listing their grievances with a sense of simplicity, Loving offers a more discerning eye into the anxieties, desires, and frustrations of the common African American soldier.¹⁶⁸ As such, he stands as a central figure in this analysis.

Racism existed in all phases of the military experience for African American soldiers, beginning with the draft. With the passing of the Selective Service Act of 1917, draft boards formed and possessed the power to issue deferments for potential conscripts. Men often made claims to have their conscription deferred, and these boards generally issued deferment to men that were the sole providers for their families. As Jennifer Keene states, white draft boards in the south became yet another vehicle of white supremacy, as white landowners serving on these boards, the descendants of slave owning planters, viewed black deferment claims with little sympathy and had few qualms conscripting black sharecroppers, thus forcing their wives to work in the fields.¹⁶⁹ Keene punctuates her description of the disparate treatment faced by African Americans in the draft by stating that “nationwide, over one-third of all black registrants were drafted, compared to one-fourth of all white registrants.”¹⁷⁰

Racism persisted beyond the draft within the ranks of the military, and it is here that the formation of a racial hierarchy becomes clearer. The US army displayed a readiness to subjugate and reluctance to promote African Americans that was based on notions of racism and ultimately

¹⁶⁸ Frederick W. Haeger, “Negro Subversion at Camp Knox, KY” NARA, *Correspondence of the Military Intelligence Division Relating to “Negro Subversion,” 1917-1941*, (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1440, roll 4) RG 165; Though there is no clear reference to Haeger’s race, he states that he has “handled colored men for a period of almost a year in a depot brigade,” indicating that he was white.

¹⁶⁹ Keene, *World War I*, 36-37.

¹⁷⁰ Keene, *World War I*, 37.

manifest as a racial hierarchy within the military, wherein certain tasks such as hard labor were deemed more suitable for African Americans while other tasks – mainly combat and leadership roles – were best performed by white men. Beliefs of racial capability or inability manifest into reality in the military, as roughly eighty percent, or about 160,000 of the 200,000 total African American soldiers deployed to France during the war worked as laborers rather than combat soldiers.¹⁷¹ Further illustrating this disparity, one-third of all army labor units were black, despite African Americans providing almost ten percent of the nation’s potential draftees at the time of registration.¹⁷²

To begin, American racism manifest differently in the US Army than in the French colonial army. American military leaders and government officials did not view African Americans as possessing the wide berth of racial traits that their French counterparts accorded to France’s colonial subjects. African Americans generally received uniform treatment based on the color of their skin rather than their ethnicity or place of origin. Also dissimilar from France, notions of civilization, assimilation, and association were not an important factor in the American racial hierarchy. In the United States, one was either white or black, citizen or subject, and there was little room for the ethnic difference between Senegalese, Madagascan, or Moroccan that was an important part of French racial thinking. Where French racial thinking imposed a hierarchy on Africans of different ethnicities and from different regions of Africa, American racial thinking was more binary, though racist customs did differ between north and south.

¹⁷¹ Stovall, *Paris Noir*, 7.

¹⁷² For the “one third” figure, see: Stovall, *Paris Noir*, 7 ; For the percentage of potential draftees, see: Chad Williams, *Torchbearers of Democracy*, 53.

Racism was not uniform across the United States. In general, African Americans were more likely to be treated poorly by white Southerners than by white Northerners owing largely to the legacies of slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction. However, segregation was uniform across the United States in the early twentieth century. Massey et al. argue that black and white Americans were highly segregated “at all geographic levels at the dawn of the twentieth century.”¹⁷³ Massey et al. indicate that prior to the Great Migration, most African Americans lived in rural southern counties, meaning that by default, African Americans were highly segregated from white northerners. Segregation continued even after the Great Migration, as Massey et al. show that segregation within cities “rose from high to rather extreme levels” as African Americans moved to urban centers in the north and south.¹⁷⁴

Thus, while France possessed a geographic component within its racial hierarchy predicated on the ethnicity of the subject, the geographic component of American racism was more dependent on the regional orientation of the metropole rather than the colony. This is evident in the more aggressive customs of lynching and racial violence in the south. Walter Loving attested to this in his report on conditions in military training camps, stating that “in units composed of northern Negroes, white officers from the south should not be assigned, unless the commanding officer and the majority of the commissioned personnel are northern men.” Loving noted that “most satisfactory relations existed in camps where colored soldiers, whether from the north or south, were commanded by white officers from the north or west” while also stating that “where white officers from the south are assigned to colored units, they should be assigned to

¹⁷³ Douglas S. Massey, Jonathan Rothwell, and Thurston Domina, “The Changing Bases of Segregation in the United States,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 626 (November, 2009): 74-90; quote on page 77.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 78.

units composed of southern negroes” in order to assure the least amount of friction between African American soldiers and white officers.¹⁷⁵ Social upbringing is an important factor in this example and illustrates the geography of American racism as northerners were generally, though not always, more sympathetic to African Americans than southerners.¹⁷⁶

Even though northerners were generally more sympathetic to African Americans, regional differences did not prevent the implementation of racial hierarchy within the ranks of the military. In a fashion closely resembling French racism, Loving’s report reveals the ways in which white supremacy restricted African American attainment of desirable jobs and promotion. Though the United States lacked the ethnic distinctions drawn by French officials between perceived *races guerrières* and *races non-guerrières*, Loving clearly notes that the military relegated educated and talented African Americans to servile roles under the command of white commissioned and noncommissioned officers. Loving’s wrote that “at all camps” he found “a sufficient number of colored soldiers qualified to be noncommissioned officers in all grades,” but noted that they served beneath white commanders. Loving specifically cited one camp where he “found forty students from Howard University, a few of whom were serving as corporals, but most of them as privates,” and further hinted at this inequality by saying “these men were better qualified mentally to be sergeants than the white men under whom they were serving.” Loving elaborated on the quality of white officers placed in charge of African American units, saying that “there is general resentment in colored labor battalions because it seems that these

¹⁷⁵ Walter Loving, “Recapitulation of investigation of military camps,” NARA, *Correspondence of the Military Intelligence Division Relating to “Negro Subversion,” 1917-1941*, (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1440, roll 5); RG 165.

¹⁷⁶ Tyler Stovall summarizes the differences in the treatment of African Americans between the north and south. See: Stovall, *Paris Noir*, 3.

organizations have been made the dumping ground for unfit white men who have been rejected for service in white units.”¹⁷⁷ Thus, not only does Loving’s report reveal that the War Department felt that “white men can get more work out of colored men than members of their own race” as the quote preceding the chapter indicates, but his testimony also reveals the official view that even the most incapable white man was better suited for leadership than a well-educated, highly qualified black man.¹⁷⁸ This same quote also touches on a deeper aspect of imperialism discussed in chapter two, resembling the ‘spirit of conquest’ as white officers carried guns while overseeing black laborers, just as slave owners had done in the ante-bellum era.¹⁷⁹ In a way that mirrors the example of the French empire, the US Army prioritized the maintenance of white pride rather than allowing black soldiers to serve in leadership roles, even when white officers were inept.

Loving’s critique of the Army’s failure to promote talented and educated African Americans did not end there. His investigation into training camps revealed not only that African Americans received inferior, if any, medical care in camps, but that the army used African American doctors as laborers rather than as medical professionals. Loving criticized this aspect of racial hierarchy when saying “there are colored physicians now serving as enlisted men in the army, notwithstanding the fact that they are holding commissions in the Medical Reserve Corps” and recommended that “action be taken to remedy this anomalous condition and relieve these men from such humiliating circumstances.” That the army preferred to use trained African

¹⁷⁷ Walter Loving, “Recapitulation of investigation of military camps,” NARA, *Correspondence of the Military Intelligence Division Relating to “Negro Subversion,” 1917-1941*, (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1440, roll 5); RG 165.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Mann, “What was the *indigénat*?”, 341.

American doctors as enlisted laborers rather than in the medical service reflects the depth of these racist beliefs. Loving's statement regarding black doctors is important because it reveals the extent to which the US Army devalued the skills and abilities of African American in the service, preferring instead to follow the dominant trend of the hierarchy by subjugating those doctors to a role more in line with their perceived capability.

Both the United States and France viewed black soldiers as less capable of performing intellectually demanding duties, and less capable of succeeding as leaders than white soldiers. Though the racisms of France and the United States differed in their geographic and ethnic components, as previously discussed, the racisms of each nation led to the stratification of military service of black soldiers during World War I. The United States and France each shared racist ideology of egalitarianism and republicanism, and each nation implemented policies that subjugated black people within their respective colonial landscapes. The implementation of racial hierarchy within the ranks of the military was yet another component of the white supremacist imperialism practiced by both nations. Borrowing again from Said, this *was* empire. While historians acknowledge French racism as a component of their imperialist policies, this analysis shows that American racism fits the same imperialist mold as France, and warrants this interpretation of the United States as an imperialist power, and African Americans as a colonial army in World War I.

Second, African Americans, because of their race, were often barred from training with firearms. This stemmed from the fear of local whites, particularly in the south, that arming African American soldiers would lead to racial violence and, more dramatically, a race war in the south. As a result, African American soldiers did not receive training that was equal to their

white counterparts, and were often unprepared for service in Europe.¹⁸⁰ As a result of, and in conjunction with their inferior training, African Americans were generally relegated to the least appealing jobs in the military. While white men served in all manners of positions across the military, black men were generally barred from combat duty, as the Army organized only two African American combat infantry divisions, one of which was assigned to the French army.¹⁸¹ Rather than serving in combat, African Americans were generally assigned to perform tasks that mirrored their perceived servile role within society, and that hearkened back to their time spent in the bondage of slavery.¹⁸² As previously stated, most African American soldiers that served in Europe did so as laborers, either as stevedores, engineers, grave diggers, or as pioneer infantry. Pioneer infantrymen bridged the gap between combat service and laborers, as they were exposed to the dangers of combat, performing hard labor near the front lines – building bridges, repairing trenches or laying barbed wire – but were not explicitly used as combat troops.¹⁸³ As such, serving in the pioneer infantry lacked the same prestige as general infantry units.

That African Americans were generally barred from serving in combat units is no accident and indicates yet another facet of the United States government practicing an imperialist policy. African Americans felt that combat duty was one of the ideal means of serving their country, and the prospect of serving and the military, and especially fighting for the United

¹⁸⁰ Chad Williams, *Torchbearers of Democracy*, 63-105 ; Keene, *World War I*, 101-102.

¹⁸¹ African Americans were organized into two combat units, the 92nd and 93rd Infantry Divisions. For a brief discussion, see: Keene, *World War I*, 101-102.

¹⁸² Brundage, *The Southern Past*.

¹⁸³ Margaret M. McMahon, *A Guide to the U.S. Pioneer Infantry Regiments in WWI* (Margaret M. McMahon Teaching and Training Co., 2018) 4-5 ; Barbeau and Henri state that pioneer infantry units were somewhat more favored than labor battalions, as there were both black and white pioneer units and these units could theoretically be converted to combat infantry. However, they also stated that “for the black units, however, the military does not seem to have seriously contemplated combat service; the pared-down infantry training they were given indicates rather that their true function was work.” See: Barbeau and Henri, *Unknown Soldiers*, 99.

States took a particular significance for African American men that wanted to become full citizens of the United States, rather than second-class subjects. Many African American men felt that military service possessed a transformative quality, that they could demonstrate their worth and fight for equality within the United States if they performed admirably as combat soldiers.¹⁸⁴ Further, African Americans felt that combat service could/would validate their masculinity while simultaneously helping to advance their standing as valorous and masculine members of American society, serving as an important motivation to join the army for many black men.¹⁸⁵

Christopher Capozzola explains that the War Department was wary of this perceived transformative power, describing a situation wherein an African American soldier defied Jim Crow in South Carolina and was defended by white and black soldiers for not breaking military custom and removing his hat in the presence of a white civilian, as Jim Crow custom demanded.¹⁸⁶ The implementation of racial hierarchy in the military can thus be interpreted as a reaction to the challenge to white supremacy posed by black men in uniform. By denying African Americans the means to prove their patriotism and validate their masculinity through combat service, and by reserving the most honorable and masculine duties almost exclusively for white men, the US Army reinforced the message that African Americans occupied a lower tier of the American racial hierarchy.

Third, Racial hierarchy in the US Army materialized as more than barriers to certain duties and services. An overarching theme appears in Loving's report to the MID indicating that,

¹⁸⁴ Jennifer Keene, *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001) 82 ; Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You*, 33; Stovall, *Paris Noir*, 4 ; Chad Williams, *Torchbearers of Democracy*, 8.

¹⁸⁵ Williams, *Torchbearers of Democracy*, 7.

¹⁸⁶ Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You*, 33-34.

not only were the roles applied to African Americans in their military service determined largely by their race, but so too were their living conditions. Loving's report to the MID director reveals that in many ways, African American accommodations and living standards were inferior to those of their white counterparts. As previously stated, Loving observed black doctors being assigned to labor units. He also commented that black soldiers seldom received medical care at all. His report claimed that many soldiers complained "regarding the neglect of colored soldiers by army surgeons," noting that "this condition is no doubt [because] army surgeons from the south, who have not been accustomed to treating Negroes, have been loath to give them the required attention, especially in venereal cases." In his report, Loving proposed the promotion of the laboring black doctors as a solution to this problem.¹⁸⁷

Of white officers commanding black soldiers, Loving said "they pay but scant attention to such important things as sanitation of barracks and personal cleanliness among their men." The poor sanitation Loving observed in some camps affected not only the serviceman stationed in camps, but to their civilian visitors as well. Loving noted that "no provision was made at any of the camps for a rest room for colored women." While he did point out that the YMCA "saw the necessity of such accommodations" and "took it upon themselves to set aside a room," Loving noted that these accommodations "were necessarily inadequate."¹⁸⁸ This is yet another manifestation of the coloniality of African American soldiers is apparent in this correspondence. White officers ignored basic issues of sanitation and hygiene for black soldiers and did not even

¹⁸⁷ Loving, "Recapitulation of investigation of military camps," NARA, *Correspondence of the MID Relating to "Negro Subversion," 1917-1941*, (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1440, roll 5) RG 165.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

care to provide toilets for black women. That the army treated African American civilians and soldiers as inferior in all aspects of their service sent a clear message of racial hierarchy.

Finally, one correspondence from the MID's "Negro Subversion" files demonstrates that African Americans feared experiencing the same racially deterministic fate of their African counterparts. In a note to a Dr. Keppel, Raymond B. Fosdick reported that "In Harlem, New York City, as you know, there is a very large negro colony. It has been reported to us that the colony is tremendously upset at the present time, due to rumors which are going abroad as to the treatment and use of colored troops." Fosdick's report continued, noting that the rumors included "that in the American Expeditionary Force only negroes will be used as 'shock' troops" and that "the Germans have threatened to torture to death any negro soldiers captured in battle."¹⁸⁹ While Fosdick's framing of Harlem as a "very large negro colony" is notable given that he directly uses colonialist rhetoric in his description, it is the African American anxieties that his writing reflects that are particularly insightful into the colonial dynamic at play.

The War Department's response to Fosdick's note had two main objectives. Among the primary functions of the MID's surveillance of African Americans during World War I was to curtail German influence in the United States and to monitor black support for the war effort.¹⁹⁰ As such, the first goal of the War Department's response to Fosdick's letter was to root out the source of the suspected German propaganda that was informing African Americans that they would be used as shock troops. Considering Van Galen Last and Fogarty's discussion of German fears of the *Tirailleurs Sénégalais* and the types of information being spread throughout Harlem,

¹⁸⁹ "Raymond B. Fosdick to Dr. Keppel," March 23, 1918, NARA, *MID "Negro Subversion," 1917-1941*, (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1440, roll 2), RG 165.

¹⁹⁰ Mark Ellis, *Race, War, and Surveillance*, 48.

particularly regarding shock troopers and brutal treatment of African Americans by German soldiers, it seems reasonable that this information was provided by Germany. The War Department's second goal was to embark on a counterpropaganda campaign designed to refute this information. Fosdick suggested a series of lectures as well as a "colored committee, composed of colored doctors, clergymen, and colored nurses" to "dissipate the rumor that existed" in Harlem, while Emmet Scott released an official statement pronouncing the claims as "untrue and ridiculous."¹⁹¹

While Emmet Scott was correct in his denunciation of the reported rumor, the idea the rumor represented was well founded in the precedent of French imperialism. As the previous section discussed, French colonial soldiers served in various roles and capacities according to their perceived racial attributes. That African Americans feared that black soldiers would serve only as shock troopers demonstrates not only that African Americans were aware of the role of France's West African soldiers, but also that they feared the United States Army would impose the same imperial dynamic upon them based on their race.¹⁹² Fosdick's letter shows not only that

¹⁹¹ "Raymond B. Fosdick to Dr. Keppel," March 23, 1918, NARA, *MID "Negro Subversion," 1917-1941*, (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1440, roll 2), RG 165; "Negro Soldiers Well Treated – Official Statement Calls Current Rumors Ridiculous," April 13, 1918, NARA, *MID "Negro Subversion," 1917-1941*, (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1440, roll 2), RG 165.

¹⁹² Between 1914 and 1918, American newspapers mentioned French Colonial Soldiers nearly 800 times. I have determined this number through thorough analysis of The Library of Congress's *Chronicling America* project. While *Chronicling America* is not an exhaustive repository of American newspapers, it does reveal that consumers of American newspapers during World War I were at least exposed to the idea of the *tirailleurs* on the battlefield. My analysis of *Chronicling America* reveals that newspapers published at least 779 articles mentioning French Colonial soldiers across 46 states and territories. While *Chronicling America* lacks many African American newspapers from that time, this number is still indicative of a wide readership across the United States, and presumably a reasonably high readership among African Americans. Further, mentions of colonial soldiers in *The Crisis*, the *Chicago Defender*, and the *New York Age*, some of the most popular African American publications of their time, are not included in this figure. For a few examples of the American newspaper discussion of *tirailleurs* see the following articles: "Colored People's Part in the Great World War," *The Richmond Planet*, Richmond, VA, February 2, 1918 ; "Rare Daring is Shown by Senegalese Blacks," *Evening Star*, Washington, D.C., May 26, 1918 ; "The War of Races," *Evening Journal*, Wilmington, DE, September 26, 1916 ; "Senegalese Blood-Thirsty," *The Washington Herald*, Washington, D.C., October 23, 1914; "Negro Colonials Frighten Huns by their Daring," *The Democratic*

American officials viewed the spatial difference between Harlem and the rest of New York City – and thus between white and black America – as part of a colonial relationship, but that African Americans feared the West African fate of serving as cannon fodder because white officials viewed them as occupying a lower caste within the racial hierarchy. While the American hierarchy of race and military service ultimately proved to be an obstacle for African Americans serving in combat, meaning their fear of serving solely as shock troopers was incorrect, this section has shown that the hierarchy typical of the French colonial dynamic did exist within the ranks of the US Army. African Americans were correct in believing that the army would impose such a hierarchy on them. Even though they were wrong about the way this hierarchy manifested, their fears were well founded.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that racial hierarchy was a critical component of the French understanding of its colonies, just as it was a critical component of the American understanding of life in the United States. With this shared belief in racial hierarchy came the formation of two colonial armies based on white supremacist notions of race and racial difference in which white Frenchmen and white Americans were elevated above all others. Racism was central to the understanding of white authorities from each nation, and as a result, these authorities imposed limitations on what duties black soldiers could and could not perform. No matter how different the United States was from the overtly imperialist France in its implementation of racial

Banner, Mt. Vernon, OH, November 2, 1917 ; “Fight in Bare Feet,” *The Topeka State Journal*, Topeka, KS, August 27, 1914.

hierarchy within the ranks of the military, the United States practiced the same behavior as the French colonial empire, and in so doing was itself an empire.

CONCLUSION: WHITE SUPREMACY AND EMPIRE

This thesis has argued that at its core, white supremacy is imperialism. Whether in the United States or France, racist ideology, oppressive racial policy, and the implementation of racial hierarchy existed as forms of imperialist oppression. Historians have examined many aspects of the relationship between imperialism, race, and racism in France under the Third Republic, drawing clear connections to the ways in which racism in the metropole affected subjects in the colonies. Yet, the history of racism within the United States has generally avoided clear connections to imperialism and colonialism. This thesis has argued that even though the United States did not refer to itself as an empire, and even though the racist ideologies, policies, and hierarchies of the United States were different than those of the French Empire, American racism was still a manifestation of the same imperialist behavior witnessed in France.

A central theme of this study is the white sentiment that African Americans were to ‘stay in their place.’ That there is a specific place in which white people expect African Americans to remain reeks of a colonial segregation of space, where the metropole designates colonial space and holds the colonized subject accountable to a set of laws and ritualistic practices that are not applicable to the metropolitan citizen/colonizer. Chapter two examines this phenomenon as it looks at how the French and American militaries each subjugated black soldiers, either by legally (in the French case) or virtually (in America) designating black soldiers as subjects of empire rather than citizens of a democracy, and ultimately conscripting them into a colonial army. The imposition of racial hierarchy within the ranks of each military served as a further designation of the places black soldiers were supposed to stay. By designating certain roles as fit for black

people but not for whites, or vice versa, French and American military officials were clearly enforcing the idea that the place of black people was beneath that of white people, and that their place was as subjects rather than citizens. This white supremacist notion that African Americans had a place where they were expected to stay has its roots in the ideological foundation of the United States, which, when compared to France, reveals the deeply imperialist nature of American racism.

Though each nation used a rhetoric and ideology of egalitarianism, democracy, and universalism, contradictions were inherent within French and American society. Race and racism prevented the espoused goals of egalitarianism from being realized, as distinctions between citizen and subject formed the basis of each society. The French metropole and white America, which is to say the American metropole, both gained greatly from the oppression of black people. In the military, France gained shock troopers and laborers that helped protect the empire, while the United States gained laborers to perform the least desirable tasks, and reinforced notions of white superiority by largely prohibiting African Americans from combat service. Economically, France gained from the exploitation of Africans in the colonies through forced labor, while the United States had earlier amassed great wealth from slavery. No amount of universalist thinking or egalitarian rhetoric could negate these inequalities. As chapter one shows, this rhetoric served as a dangerous means through which the French carried out their *mission civilisatrice*. Simultaneously, the United States disenfranchised African Americans during the era of Jim Crow, treating them as subjects rather than citizens, despite claiming that all men are created equal and in direct contradiction to fourteenth and fifteenth amendments. The United States and France shrouded their racism in republican ideals, dressing white supremacy as

an imperialism with the power to uplift the less civilized peoples of the world. This was, as W. E. B. Du Bois said, “the real soul of white culture.”¹⁹³

The laws and policies of the two empires further reinforced these notions of white supremacy. Jim Crow and the *indigénat* code both assured the status of black people in the United States and in France’s colonies ‘stayed in their place’ as subjects rather than as equal members and citizens of liberal democracies. Within the military, the United States reinforced the racist ideas of Jim Crow by denying African American soldiers their rights. General Ballou threatened to disband black combat units for questioning the racism of American society, while army officers evoked the same colonialist tropes used by Europeans when describing “childlike” African American soldiers.¹⁹⁴ The Army consistently refused to defend African American rights from white supremacist hegemony. By endorsing, promoting, and proliferating white supremacy, the United States military helped to implement an imperial and colonial dynamic within the United States where a clear boundary between white and black space existed.

The boundaries between white and black America, mirroring the colonial dynamic of France’s colonial empire, existed beyond the legal sphere of Jim Crow too. The American military reflected the colonial boundaries between the two Americas as not only were strict spatial boundaries drawn between white citizens and black subjects, but so too was a racial hierarchy drawn between the two Americas. During World War I, both the US and France drew upon their respective subjects to perform various roles according to their perceived racial

¹⁹³ Du Bois, “Of the Culture of White Folk,” 445-446.

¹⁹⁴ “Letter from Frederick W. Haeger to Director of Military Intelligence, December 12, 1918” NARA, *Correspondence of the Military Intelligence Division Relating to “Negro Subversion,” 1917-1941*, (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1440, roll 3); RG 165 ; Cohen, “The Colonized as Child: British and French Colonial Rule,” 427-431.

capability. In doing so, each power clearly articulated its views of racial subjects, indicating that white citizens possessed privileged stations within these imperial societies, while black subjects existed within a separate and inferior station. For France, this manifested in a clear hierarchy of racial capability, where French military officials like Charles Mangin believed that subjects of different ethnic backgrounds possessed different racial attributes, thus making them more or less suited for certain tasks. West African *tirailleurs*, in his assessment, were excellent shock troopers, while Madagascans and Indochinese were less suitable for combat. In the United States, this hierarchy was different. In the white American opinion, African Americans did not possess the military prowess of West Africans, or the range of racial attributes supposedly evident in France's various subjects. Yet a racial hierarchy still existed. African Americans served the military in ways that reinforced white supremacy. Whether an African American soldier was trained as a doctor or was well educated and qualified to serve as an NCO, the United States military regularly attempted to keep African Americans 'in their place' by allowing them to serve only in the least desirable positions, all while actively assuring that they possessed inferior housing, training, and healthcare. For the United States, the hierarchy was bipolar rather than multifaceted, as the French racial hierarchy was. The American racial hierarchy within the ranks of the military served to reinforce the colonial dynamic between white America and black America, and between citizens and subjects.

This thesis is limited in the scope of its analysis, and there is still much work to be done on this subject. The connective tissue binding the French and American empires extends beyond what can reasonably be covered by an MA thesis. Violence against colonial subjects is mentioned in the present work only briefly, and thus could serve as the basis of an expanded

study. The East St. Louis and Houston riots discussed in this work demonstrates that African Americans experienced racial violence at the hands of white supremacist Americans. However, as Tyler Stovall has revealed, this experience was not unique to the United States. Colonial laborers brought to France during the First World War experienced some of the same racial violence as African Americans.¹⁹⁵ Lethal consequences for the transgression of colonial/metropolitan space existed in both empires. Comparison and analysis of these consequences could serve as a fruitful foundation of future research. Additionally, any expansion of this research at the doctoral level must include a discussion of African American reactions and resistance to racist American policies.

Finally, this work is an attempt to reposition the historiographical understanding of race and racism within the United States. Beginning in 1619 with the arrival of the first African slaves in the New World and continuing to this very day, the legacies of race and racism have proven to be some of the greatest problems in American history. This thesis seeks to broaden our understanding of these difficult legacies by reinterpreting them as part of a global phenomenon of imperialism. Just as racism is not unique to the United States, white supremacy, imperialism, and colonialism are not unique to the European ‘great powers’ and empires. White supremacy is empire. By comparing the United States and France, two empires that share so many ideas and self-proclaimed virtues, this thesis has attempted to illuminate the breadth of white supremacy in France through its imperial projects, while also illuminating the breadth of American imperialism through its projects of racial subjugation.

¹⁹⁵ Tyler Stovall, “The Color Line Behind the Lines: Racial Violence in France During the Great War,” *American Historical Review*, 103, 3 (June 1998): 737-69 ; Tyler Stovall, “Colour-blind France? Colonial Workers During the First World War,” *Race and Class* no. 35, 2 (1993): 35-55.

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