



Racism in Higher Education and Research in France: a Blindspot in a Colorblind Context ?

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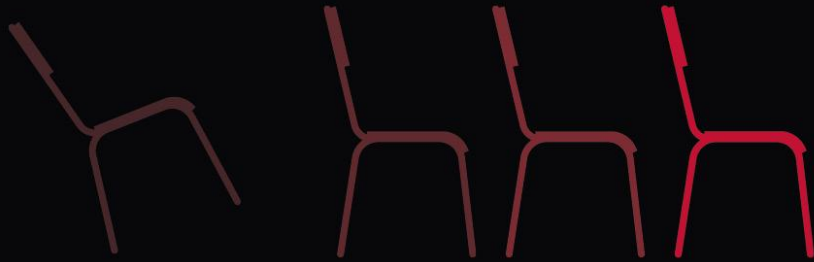
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FORTHEM-Lab "Diversity and Migration"

Lecture Series: *White Privilege and Structural Discrimination in Higher Education: Perspectives from Research, Strategies for Change*

March 22nd, 2022

Racism in Higher Education and Research in France: a Blindspot in a Colorblind Context ?

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Racism in Higher Education and Research in France: a Blindspot in a Colorblind Context?

Outline

1. Discrimination in Higher Education: elements of context
2. Discrimination in French Higher Education
3. ACADISCRI research project: goal, methodology and preliminary results

Discrimination in Higher Education: insights from the international literature

US and UK (for instance)

- Systemic discrimination (K. Bhopal)
- Direct discrimination (P. Essed)
- Staff and students
- Gender/class/race inequalities
- Accessibility of data on race/ethnicity

Migration lense in France

- Legal category: nationality
- Demographic category: immigrant (descent) : 1989
- "color-blindness", "republican discourse"
- Refusal of systematic self-identification categories on race/ethnicity

Discrimination in French Higher Education: class and gender focus

Specificities of the French Context: a Colorblind Context ?

The field of French higher education and research : analyzed under the prism of **social inequalities and their evolution** in general (Jaoul, 2004; Duru-Bellat et al., 2011; Benninghoff et al., 2012; Jaoul-Grammare, 2016).

- The **subjective perception of inequalities** and their **internalization** by individuals / on a **critique of "equality of opportunity" / social differences** in access to higher education.
- **Structural Social inequalities** : orientation based on **social background** (Beaud, Convert, 2010 ; Benninghoff et al., 2012 ; Chauvel et al., 2020 ; Duru-Bellat, Kieffer, Reimer, 2010 ; Zanten, 2015).
- **Gender inequalities**: in **orientation** (students) and in **academic careers** in France (Musselin, Pigeyre, 2008; Rogers, Molinier, 2016; Pochic, 2018) for the implementation of public policies in favor of gender equality in the civil service (Marry et al., 2017) and the fight against sexual harassment (OVSS, 2020, Cromer & Guillopé, 2018).
- But, **resistance** exists (Hamel, 2008; Delzangles, 2017; CLASCHES, 2018) and mask part of the problem.

Racism, a tense issue in French Education (1/2)

- Processes racial discrimination or experience of racialized within Higher Education, as well as the students and staff: **just few data** (Dhume & Cognet, 2020).
- **A French difficulty is the national political imagination** : "the contradictions specific to the French model prevent the recognition of discriminatory facts, tending to dissolve them in the traditional analysis grid of social inequalities" (Simon, 2000).
- **Another obstacle**: a reading that favors the paradigms of integration (since the 1980s) and diversity (since the 2000s).
- The fight against discrimination has been transformed into the promotion of diversity (Noël, 2008; Bereni, 2009).
 1. **meritocratic ideology** has taken precedence over a transformation of selection processes (Ghouati, 2011; Nguyen Van Yen, 2015).
 2. These schemes have relied on social and especially territorial criteria: **the ethno-racial dimension of segregation and inequality is masked** (Chupin et al., 2016).

Racism, a tense issue in French Education (2/2)

- The terms "race" or even "intersectionality" in the French university space is sometimes **controversial** (Hajjat & Larcher, 2019), with the idea that investigations of racial discrimination would be unwelcome by students (Acadie 2004, p. 29).
- But, exploratory surveys in universities around Paris (Greri, 2018; RACUNIV-ETU survey) show a **favorable reception by the student population**.
- This **assumption is another barrier** to scientific knowledge about racial discrimination in higher education (Dhume, 2010).
- These issues are categorized as: "**sensitive issues**."

A scientific interest in working on these issues

The weight of ethnic origin (1/2)

- First investigations: students and staff (Blassel, 2018) **experience racism daily and repeatedly** (Quintero, 2013; Druez, 2016).
- Other studies conclude: **Arab or Muslim names and surnames** influence university orientation and hinder access in selective university tracks (Grivillers, 2005; Decharne & Liedts, 2007).
- Analyses that focus mainly on the situation of international students: reception policies and exposure to discrimination in work and housing (Foegle, 2014; Terrier, 2009).
- Example at the French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS): **differences by nationality in recruitment and promotion to research positions** (17% of CNRS researchers, 3% of engineers and technicians, and 38% of CNRS-funded doctoral students are foreign; foreign students are more numerous in doctoral (41%) and master's (33%) programs than in bachelor's programs (11%) (EESR-10, 2017).

The weight of ethnic origin (2/2)

- French but discriminated against because of their migratory origin: **but few scientific studies**.
 1. The first survey of the National Observatory of Discrimination and Equality in Higher Education (ONDES): shows the inequality of Maghrebi candidates for the master's degree (Chareyron, Erb and L'Horty, 2022).
 2. The Student Living Conditions survey (2016): 15% of students experience discrimination related to "skin color" and their "origin and nationality" (Ferry and Tenret, 2017: 6).
 3. RACUNIV-ETU questionnaire: among 905 minority students, **53% report having experienced racist microaggressions**, 27% racist insults, and 4% racist violence (see Hajjat, Keyhani & Rodrigues, 2019; Poutignat & Streiff-Fénart, 1995; Druez, 2016).
- Declaration of discrimination: **30% of foreign students versus 17% of French students**, (ONVE, 2016). More than being foreign (legal status), it is related to being a **visible minority** (Beauchemin et al, 2016; Brinbaum, Chavel & Tenret, 2013; see also Eberhard & Simon, 2016).

Racist, but also sexist experiences... (intersectionality) (1/2)

- The ethnic criterion, but also other criteria such as sex and gender appear to be determining factors.
- Survey on "student living conditions" (n=46340): **1 out of 3 students felt that they were treated less well than others** (in terms of grades, the way staff or other students spoke to them).
- Women more often report less favorable treatment **by another student**. Men more often talk about grading or orientation.
- Students with two immigrant parents were treated less favourably overall: supposed origins and nationality (17%); religion (4%), health status or disability (3%), having children and being pregnant (1%).

Racist, but also sexist experiences... (intersectionality) (2/2)

- **19% of students were treated less favorably:** in ranking (9%), relations with other students (9%), with teachers (8%) or administrative staff (6%), orientation (5%).

The reasons: 23% **origin or nationality**; 12% **color of their skin**, 11% **sex or gender identity**, 10% **physical appearance**; 7% **religion**.

- **Intersectionality:** "Of the students who identified two criteria, 15% mentioned their skin color and origin or nationality, 9% their origin or nationality and religion, 7% their origin or nationality and age, and 6% gender and age" (Ferry & Tenret, 2017: 6).

An international survey (France/Canada)

- Bergeron, Blanchet & Lebon-Eyquem, 2019 (552 students: Brittany region: 104 participants; Provence: 104; La Reunion: 213 and in Ontario, Canada: 131): one-third (32%) report discrimination in the past three years; one-quarter (24%) report having experienced a difficult situation (discrimination or not).
- **Reasons for discrimination**: sex and gender, skin color, age, religion or last name (Blanchet, 2020; Bergeron, 2020).
- Places reported: **the school environment is in first place**, before the labour market.
- **No difference in France and Canada except the importance of linguistic discrimination** (glottophobia). Canada recognizes linguistic rights (Bergeron, 2020).

Other statistics in France

- Weiss (2021): prevalence of discrimination and victimization at the Aix-Marseille University.
- University of Lorraine: 46% of students report having witnessed at least one discrimination (mainly origin-related) and 19% victims (Mission égalité diversité, 2017).
- At the University: sexual harassment as a common form on women victims. **Perpetrators: other students, teachers, at the internship site.**
- At the University of Bordeaux: 21.7% of students witness discrimination (foreign origin, real or assumed; physical appearance; gender; skin color and disability), 9.5% victims (Collective, 2019: 7).
- Finally, at the University of Angers: 16.1% of students and 32.4% of staff witnessed discrimination or violence, 10.3% of students (plus 12.3% saying they were unsure of the qualification of the facts) and 17.5% of staff (plus 11.2% saying they were unsure) declared themselves victims.

Why ACADISCRI Research project : study of the manifestations of discrimination and effects on people concerned

- Very few data on everyday manifestations of sexism and classism.
- **1 exception:** gender violence (Virage-Universities 2015-2020: Lebugle A., Dupuis J. et al. 2018): 47% of women report sexism; 14% "everyday sexism"; 39% non-victims but practices related to sexism or harassment.
- Importance of a short and easy survey for participation, and to access racist/homophobic discrimination.
- Gender and sexual orientation: very little research University: Barometer 2020 of LGBTphobia in higher education; Collectif des associations étudiantes LGBTQ+ d'Île-de-France (Caélif) = 1 in 10 LGBT+ people have experienced LGBTphobia; over 1/3 have witnessed it.
- **Nothing on university staff.**
- Another conclusion: just few data on racism...

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ACADISCRl (Inequalities of Treatment, Study and Work Conditions in Higher Education and Research)

Research Goals

Scientific goal :

- Analyse different categories of unequal treatments separately and intersectionally
- Measure the extent of these unequal treatments as perceived by people
- Understand the way unequal treatments manifest themselves : form (micro-agressions ; sexual violence ; discrimination ; harassment ; insult ; physical violence) ; context (hierarchical relation ; perpetrator ; victim ; witness and their reaction ;location) ; Effect and consequence ; Appeal to institutions and support services

Social goal :

- Global, precise and systematic knowledge of discriminations and inequalities in academia
- Audit of the situation in Universities in order to improve policies and measures against discrimination

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Team Members

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Methodology

Part 1. Online Survey

- *Limesurvey*: individual invitation + reminders
- Staff and students (all status)
- Communication campaign with university
- Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) by Nanterre's DPO ; Validation from INSERM ethic committee

Part 2. Qualitative interviews

- Voluntaries from the questionnaire
- Semi-structured interviews
- 1st project: People signaling discrimination

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Questionnaire outline

1. **Information and consent**
2. **Personal data** (status, age, sex, level of education, category for staff, etc.) and **feeling of recognition and participation in the work/study environment**
3. **Experience of unequal treatment and discriminations**
Types: micro-aggressions; discrimination; insults and slurs; sexual pressure and violence; threats and physical violence
Forms and context of the most significant situation, frequency, period, characteristics of the perpetrators, places, witnesses, feelings and reactions
Motives: gender, ethnic origin, sexual orientation and gender identity, social class, health and disability, political and trade union opinions
4. **Impacts of this unequal treatment** (on relationship to oneself, studies career); complaints, and its results
5. **Additional personal data:** origin, religion, gender identity, etc.; authorization for a qualitative interview; list of associations and local and national authorities to contact in case of discrimination and violence

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Implementation and Contextual Difficulties

1. Political issues

- Different discrimination motives treated differently
- Institutionalisation of equality departments
- Fear of bad buzz effect

2. Legal

- GDPR (2018): institutionalisation of DPOs in universities
- Email addresses and socio-demographic data

Preliminary Results

General trends

- Unequal treatment: staff > students
- Motive: other > sexism > racism
- Form: micro-aggression
- Author: same-stratus
- Location: on campus
- Consequences :no action

Total <u>complete</u> : N=2034	Students (N=1755)	Staff (N=279)
Unequal treatment	17,7%	50,9%
Sexism	4,8%	13,6%
Racism	4,7%	9,7%
<u>LGBTphobia</u>	0,9%	2,1%
Health discrimination	1%	4,2%
Political/union discrimination	2,6%	5,9%
Class discrimination	2,3%	5,9%
Other motives	9,7%	40,1%

Participation rate: 6,2% for students and 10,1% for staff

Preliminary Results Racism

- Staff > Students
- Longer presence in HE
- More precarious status
- Foreigners and minorities
- More intimate setting

Racism as perceived motive		
Students	All students (N=1755)	4,7%
	Students (except PhD candidates - N=1682)	4,5%
	PhD candidates and graduates (N=85)	11,9%
Staff	Staff (all - N=279)	9,7%
	Researchers and teachers (N=126)	6,9%
	Administrative and technical staff (N=141)	12,8%
All (N=2034)		5%

Racism: skin color, nationality, origins or culture (real or imagined), accent or use of French language, religion (real or imagined), name

More to come !

[https://acadiscri.
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Thank you for your attention

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