

# Views from the Margins



## Views from the Margins

Creating Identities in Modern France

Edited and with an introduction by

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What does it mean to be French? What constitutes 'Frenchness'? Is it birth, language, attachment to republicanism, adherence to cultural norms? In contemporary France, these questions resonate in light of the large number of non-French and non-European immigrants, many from former French colonies, who have made France home in recent decades. Historically, French identity has long been understood as the product of a centralized state and culture emanating from Paris that was itself central to European history and civilization. Likewise, French identity in terms of class, gender, nationality, and religion mainly has been explained as a strong indivisible core, against which marginal actors have been defined. This collection of essays offers examples drawn from an imperial history of France that show the power of the periphery to shape diverse and dynamic modern French identities at its centre. Each essay explains French identity as a fluid process rather than a category into which French citizens (and immigrants) are expected to fit. In using a core/periphery framework to explore identity creation, "Views from the Margins" breaks new ground in bringing together diverse historical topics on politics, religion, regionalism, consumerism, nationalism, and gendered aspects of civic and legal engagement.

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