

# Fanonian analysis of racism and postcolonial structures of othering

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**ABSTRACT.** The paper explores how boundaries affect the search for identity in the context of racism and colonialism. Colonized individuals often experience a sense of alienation and inferiority caused by the limitations imposed by colonial power structures, leading to a quest for personal identity. However, the binary division between the colonizer and colonized affects everyone involved, making searching for personal identity more complex and reinforcing systemic racism. The first section of the article examines how race, a socially constructed concept, plays a crucial role in defining the difference between oneself and others, imposing structures of othering based on Fanonian analysis. The second section discusses whether it is possible to avoid or overcome racism and racial oppression, shedding light on the inherent nature of othering, racism, and latent violence.

**RÉSUMÉ.** *Analyse fanonienne du racisme et des structures postcoloniales d'altérisation.* L'article explore la manière dont les frontières affectent la recherche d'identité dans le contexte du racisme et du colonialisme. Les individus colonisés éprouvent souvent un sentiment d'aliénation et d'infériorité causé par les limites imposées par les structures de pouvoir coloniales, ce qui conduit à une quête d'identité personnelle. Cependant, la division binaire entre le colonisateur et le colonisé affecte toutes les personnes concernées, ce qui rend la recherche d'une identité personnelle plus complexe et renforce le racisme systémique. La

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**MOTS-CLÉS:**

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première partie de l'article examine comment la race, concept socialement construit, joue un rôle crucial dans la définition de la différence entre soi et les autres, imposant des structures d'aliénation basées sur l'analyse Fanonienne. La deuxième partie examine s'il est possible d'éviter ou de surmonter le racisme et l'oppression raciale, en mettant en lumière la nature inhérente de l'aliénation, du racisme et de la violence latente.

**RESUMEN.** *Análisis fanoniano del racismo y de las estructuras postcoloniales de la alteridad.* El documento explora cómo afectan las fronteras a la búsqueda de identidad en el contexto del racismo y el colonialismo. Los individuos colonizados experimentan a menudo un sentimiento de alienación e inferioridad causado por las limitaciones impuestas por las estructuras de poder coloniales, lo que les lleva a buscar una identidad personal. Sin embargo, la división binaria entre colonizador y colonizado afecta a todos los implicados, lo que hace más compleja la búsqueda de la identidad personal y refuerza el racismo sistémico. La primera sección del artículo examina cómo la raza, un concepto socialmente construido, desempeña un papel crucial en la definición de la diferencia entre uno mismo y los demás, imponiendo estructuras de alteridad basadas en el análisis Fanonian. La segunda sección analiza si es posible evitar o superar el racismo y la opresión racial, arrojando luz sobre la naturaleza inherente de la alteridad, el racismo y la violencia latente.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:**  
racismo;  
violencia  
estructural;  
límites  
simbólicos

## 1. Introduction

Racism is a form of discrimination that can be both subtle and pervasive (Elias, 2023, p. 1). Racism not only separates people into different groups based on characteristics like skin color, ethnicity, or cultural practices but also actively creates and perpetuates symbolic boundaries, beliefs, and narratives that differentiate and distinguish between these groups. However, in response to existing beliefs and narratives, societal norms serve on an interpersonal and relational level as a means of power distribution and controlling social order by avoiding anything deemed unacceptable or different (Christian, 2018, p. 178). In contrast, at an institutional level, racism is either a failure to acknowledge the Other (racial or societal minority) (Elias, 2023, p. 5) or allocates different societal benefits to the Self versus the Other (Golash-Boza, 2016, p. 133).

The ambiguous forms of racism and various uses of racializing, i.e., the identification of race and racial identities, in different societies embed different expressions of racism and racialization that eventually marginalize diversity and relations creating classification between the Self and the Other (Ahmed, 2012, p. 43; Seikkula, 2019, pp. 95–96). Moreover, racism affects how values and ideas accepted in one culture extend to people in other cultures without considering that these values and beliefs are not universal or held by all people (Christian, 2018, p. 172). Nevertheless, various forms of racism hold the same form, for example, causing harm, discrimination, and marginalization of individuals or groups who do not fit the restricted norms of the dominant cultural narrative, regardless of whether unintentionally or on purpose (Osanami Törngren & Suyemoto, 2022, para. 9). Therefore, to analyze racism means to understand its structures, not whether it is biologically determined or socially constructed, and as mentioned by Glasgow (2009): “[o]ne virtue of identifying racialized groups (and their members) as the targets of racism is that it allows us to avoid taking a stand on whether race is real” (p. 81). In other words, racism’s fundamental component is the claim that one’s culture is superior and considered the center of value systems, even though this concept is primarily about power dynamics and asserting one’s dominance over others. Exploring the historical context of colonialism can provide valuable insights into the mechanics of racism and how it perpetuates a cycle of prejudiced beliefs, behaviors, and symbolic boundaries by blurring the lines of identity boundaries.

One of the main boundaries created throughout colonialism is the idea of civilization. Édouard Glissant (1997) argues that the colonial imposition of culture and civilization onto colonized people is a manifestation of a “will to civilize,” that is “linked to the passion to impose civilization on the Other” (p. 13n2). The colonizers’ “will to civilize” stems from their belief that they are superior to the colonized and

that it is their responsibility to “civilize” and “improve” the colonized. In this case, the colonizers impose their Self-ness onto the natives as the Other, based on the understanding that their beliefs and narratives can ensure the better development of native societies. This mentality encourages the racist imposition of the colonists’ culture and civilization upon the natives.

The same narrative was illustrated by a well-known French West Indian thinker Frantz Fanon who emphasized the dependence of the Other on the Self, emphasizing that the natives depended on the colonizers for their identity and sense of self. Fanon focused on the perspective that the Other or the black embodiment is dependent on the colonial Self, where there is no blackness (otherness) without the established Self: “[f]or not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man” (Fanon, 2008, p. 90). For Fanon, there is no double meaning – the black person as the Other has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white person as the Self.

However, Fanon’s perspective fails to regard the symbolic boundaries pre-existing in creating and sustaining the relationship between oneself and others. It is crucial to recognize that not only does the Other rely on the Self, but the existence of the Self is dependent on the symbolic representation of the Other (Mbembe, 2019, p. 132; Stephens, 2018, p. 311). As a result, racial relations are prone to various shifts, power dynamics, and shifting hierarchical structures as social standards change in response to already established narratives and beliefs. Nevertheless, addressing Fanon’s viewpoint allows for a more comprehensive examination of the colonial perspective on racial relations, highlighting the significance of racial bias expressed through a hierarchical system that categorizes people based on physical and cultural abilities (Knoblauch, 2020, p. 300).

By realizing the significance of symbolic boundaries in sustaining racism, it can be possible to comprehend the ubiquitous and enduring nature of racial power structures and hierarchies in postcolonial society. This knowledge can show how to challenge the social structures that categorize people into various racial, ethnic, and social groupings while also destroying the stable, now nearly invisible limits of institutionalized, systemic racism.

## 2. Racism and societal relations

According to Sayyid (2017, p. 20), the concepts of “race” and “racism” can be altered by shifting the focus from cultural and biological factors to political factors,

which impact both lived and non-lived bodies as well as participation in society. In this context, Fanon also presented the perspective of racism as a biopolitical tool used to ostracize the Other who resides on the inferior side of the demarcating line, in what he called the “zone of non-being,” while the Self inhabits the privileged “zone of being” (Fanon, 2008, p. xii; Grosfoguel, 2016, p. 11). This biopolitical perspective helps to perceive how racism is established and maintained by everyday political practices that all social actors accept as part of daily life (Essed, 1991), where the demarcating line between the Self and the Other functions as a symbolic boundary establishing and maintaining racism. Consequently, racism is a system that maintains inequalities, discrimination practices, and stereotypes based on one understanding of race, various beliefs and narratives, and physical embodiment.

Therefore, the foundation of racism is the hierarchical distinctions between various racial and ethnic groups based on social, cultural, and historical aspects centered around societal and personal beliefs and narratives that create a sense of “normalcy” or “naturalness”, or even between centers and peripheries, the Self and the Other (Christina, 2018, p. 179; Grosfoguel, 2016, p. 12). The unjust distribution of wealth and power in society and prejudice against and stereotypes of particular groups are all made acceptable through normalization and biopolitical structures of objectivization of the lived experiences of others.

During colonialism, the colonizers implemented practices that objectified and normalized the natives, aiming to discipline bodies to gain better use of them (Mbembe, 2001, p. 113) and more appropriate cultural assimilation, social hierarchies, and economic exploitation. These practices profoundly impacted natives’ views regarding their skin color, lifestyle, and values. Consequently, Fanon’s works demonstrated how colonization and decolonization subjected black individuals to normalization, resulting in the psychological transformation of native’s bodies and lifestyles, as well as the whitening of their skin color and self-image, referred to as denegrification.

Colonialism was based on a misguided idea of what was expected and acceptable, resulting in the belief that being white was the ideal way of existing while being black was considered inferior. Colonizers did not see blackness as an appropriate characteristic of the civilized Self, resulting in the observation that “‘native’ is declared impervious to ethics, representing not only the absence of values but also negation of values. He is, dare we say it, the enemy of values” (Fanon, 2021, p. 6). The further established association of blackness with savagery and the antithesis of civilization was seen as one more aspect that threatened the colonizers’ (the Self’s) social structure, identity, culture, and power systems (Fanon, 2021, p. 108; Mbembe, 2019, p. 77).

Because of this, the discourse of authority in the colonial setting established power dynamics that favored the white colonizers over the black colonized natives, resulting in a suppression of black identity (Nielsen, 2011, p. 368). However, these structures also produced a new understanding of the Self and the Other, where the Self was seen as the one who may have more control or influence over the other in racially determined relationships. Nevertheless, normativity's elaborate and intricate mechanisms – which aim to make everyone conform to a unified ideal or standard – maintain this power dynamic. According to Fanonian analysis, the white person is the model for others within the colonial system., illustrating that whiteness is established as the standard in this context. Therefore, the normativity of the colonial Self was not preexisting; it was formed through various colonial praxis.

In social interactions, being seen as an example does not always depend on physical appearances, such as skin color, ethnicity, or racial traits. Instead, it often comes down to having a clear understanding of one's position of power and superiority; this results in what Michel Foucault (2008) described as a fear of power degradation (pp. 66–67). Sense of one's superiority and authority can cause a generalized sense of dread of losing one's cultural identity, influence, and power, which manifests in a desire to maintain one's position of power by demeaning others and alienating them from oneself. Here of importance comes the distinction between the Self and the Other, the one who holds power and the one who does not. Notably, the subjugation and normalization of the Self and foreign Others become a reason to draw false conclusions about others' race, skin color, authority, and ability to participate in social processes.

However, these relations are not constant. The Self holds its stance only if the Other is unwilling to change these hierarchical power relations. Therefore, in certain colonial situations where the colonizers were imposing their language, culture, and even skin color as the norm, the natives affected by the colonial system felt compelled to change their mentality (inner body) and outer body – their external appearance and lifestyle to gain some ontological grounds for their existence (Stephens, 2018, p. 319). As the new Self, the colonizers tried to reform the natives' understandings and beliefs. And as Others, the natives were, through experienced colonial violence or their own desire, compelled to integrate into this new political situation.

Integration into colonial society required a transformation in one's body. The body became not an object but a changeable subject, whose “skin, which has either been naturalized or born here, is assumed to not belong here – in this place, in this land, within this topography. The historical and social meaning of race in a location

dislocates certain bodies” (Sundstrom & Kim, 2014, p. 28). People have felt the need to fit the new ideal of the body by exercising denegrification or whitening of the body, according to Fanon (2008, p. 91). However, in the context of biopolitics, where each bios has its own role, the transformation of oneself has an immense impact on everything around them. Thus, while the black individual felt the need to “become a man among men” (Fanon, 2008, p. 92), the one-sided relations of the hierarchical colonial system became unbalanced. As a result, the relations between colonized and colonizers created a world that sustained a system affecting everyone involved, making it impossible to escape the biopolitical colonial regimes (Nayar, 2020, pp. 217–218).

As Fanon describes, the black body strived to become part of the colonizer’s world, and the blackness became dependent on the white person’s perception, creating a dialectical necessity for freedom by separating themselves from their own identity (Fanon, 2008, p. 114). It meant that the Other needed to disentangle oneself from blackness and alter the hierarchical position of oneself versus the colonizer, to become a new self. However, in no way it meant that the new self was accepted, on the other hand, new boundaries were established:

The white gaze, the only valid one, is already dissecting me. I am fixed. Once their microtomes are sharpened, the Whites objectively cut sections of my reality. I have been betrayed. I sense, I see in this white gaze that it’s the arrival not of a new man, but of a new type of man, a new species. A Negro, in fact! (Fanon, 2008, p. 95; Stephens, 2018, p. 315–316)

Without an integral part of their identity, the person feels a sense of disconnection, loss, and confusion, forced to attempt to establish new grounds for their identity and embodied experiences (Glissant, 1997, p. 143). However, losing one’s prior identity and not being accepted by the Self can cause violent reactions and resistance both towards those alike, the self and the opposing ones. And in the Fanonian illustration, as the natives were surrounded by colonizers’ brutality and violence in dismantling their blackness, they adopted these practices to dismantle the colonizers’ whiteness or even their own blackness in some instances. This leads to the creation of new boundaries and reinforces the existing ones. Hence in some cases, the natives took the places of colonizers, practicing the differentiation and normalization practices onto their people, who were unwilling to be subjected to colonial structures; in other words— they kept on fighting for their previous identity. Nevertheless, it is crucial to recognize that breaking down these boundaries is not an easy task, as they are deeply ingrained in society’s structures and institutions.

### 3. Colonial biopolitics and violence

The colonial system represents “racial denial of any common bond between the conqueror and the native” (Mbembe, 2019, p. 77), creating everlasting tension between the Self and the Other. And at the core, the discourse of racial subordination encompassed in these relations represents the particularity of racial identity (Gilroy, 1999, p. 202), while also disclosing the ambivalence in identity-creating processes. Judith Butler, in her book *The Force of Nonviolence* (2020), wrote:

The ‘I’ and the ‘you’ the ‘they’ and the ‘we’ are implicated in one another, and the implication is not only logical; it is lived out as ambivalent social bond, one that constantly poses the ethical demand to negotiate aggression. (p. 69)

However, what occurs when this aggression is not simply a matter of negotiation but becomes structurally, and symbolically embedded in newly established identities and cultures, narratives, and beliefs? Fanon (2021) declared that the colonizer is the one who “brings violence into the homes and into the minds of the colonized subjects” (p. 4). While the point of view presented is valid, it is critical to bear in mind that the violence against others and those who do not conform to the normalized definition of the Self is primarily characterized by the daily deprivation of identity rather than the actions of any particular colonizer or group. This distinction is crucial in understanding the nature and impact of such violence. Meaning violence was already part of everyday life outside the colonial system, but what is important is the normalization of violence – the imposing of identities even though identities may never have been fixated.

The identity became a subject to symbolic boundaries and undefinable ideas of normality:

I wanted to be typically black – that was out of the question. I wanted to be white – that was a joke. And when I tried to claim my negritude intellectually as a concept, they snatched it away from me. They proved to me that my reasoning was nothing but a phase in the dialectic. (Fanon, 2008, p. 111)

In this context, the power dynamics impacted how the Self and the Other acted, behaved, and perceived the core concepts of their appearance, being, and sense of belonging. This tension creates a defensiveness to the power imposition and subordination because the “experience of being a black male subject in the institutions of whiteness is that of being on perpetual guard: of having to defend yourself against those who perceive you as someone to be defended against” (Ahmed, 2012, p. 161). And when natives start to fear their blackness (Fanon, 2008, pp. 7–9), the same idea



of “fear of the other” between the colonizers and colonized, the Self and the Other, disseminated. Thus, in colonial racialized relations, the gaze and the place of the Other are vital, making the Self the object of the Other (Knoblauch, 2020, p. 299), for one cannot exist without the other. Their interconnections are inescapable and even necessary for upholding already present power relations. In other words, “the colonizer depends upon colonized, for when the colonized refuse to remain subordinate, then the colonizer is threatened with the loss of colonial power” (Butler, 2020, p. 48). Hence, the colonizer and colonial system are always “in relation to the place of Other” (Bhabha, 2004, p. 63).

The new violence thus is born the “colonized subject thus discovers that his life, his breathing and his heartbeats are the same as the colonist’s” (Fanon, 2021, p. 10). The colonial violence is not only internalized terror representing natives’ daily lives as they are taught to behave more like the colonizers, follow the laws, and experience the colonizers’ violence on their bodies through whipping, raping, beating, and torturing. This violence is also defined by the external terror of losing the dominance, letting both the Self and the Other (the colonizers and natives) believe violence is the only choice. At the same time, colonizers developed a fear of the “savage” natives (Fanon, 2021, p. 150). Throughout this “entrenched, systemic, oppressive character of colonialism in which the world of the colonized is transformed into a normalized lawless space, Fanon believed the decolonization phase could only be accomplished through violence, that is, through an armed struggle for liberation” (Nielsen, 2011, p. 375). Hence, while natives fear losing their identity and being subjected to the order of colonizers, colonizers begin to fear the natives, who are fighting against the colonial regime.

Justifying colonizers behavior against natives, claiming that they were merely trying to help the natives fit into the new social structure (Fanon, 2021, p. 24), they reinforce the idea of them being the holders of the right ideas and truth, subjecting natives to their ideals of normality enforcing also concept, in this case, of whiteness, and “[r]acism in turn is often reduced to bad feeling, [t]he narrative of an injured whiteness becomes central to [be] represented as hurt by the proximity of racial others” (Ahmed, 2012, p. 169). The act of racism becomes an act of portraying the Other through violent stereotypes, which reduces them to concepts of savagery and irrationality. Meanwhile, the dominant group views themselves as superior, rational, and noble. For instance, the colonizers’ methods of communication implied that natives were sick and in a vegetative state, even more – resembling animals (Fanon, 2008, p. 7, p. 225). All types of racism have a shared hierarchy perspective, whether it is institutional, systemic, or racial discrimination. They all stem from the notion that certain people are considered

superior due to some normalized traits. Therefore, the racial relations between the Self and Other can create an aggressive and violent tension.

It is crucial to understand that racism may not directly cause violent acts but fosters an environment where violence is more likely to occur. Fanon illustrated the injustice and harm caused by the colonial system on natives and the black embodiment. He emphasized that colonizers committed not only physical violence but also caused psychological hardships by depriving natives of their authentic identities and diminishing them to the status of the Other. Thus, it can be observed how “[c]olonial biopolitics does not only beat the colonized body into the dead or dying, it renders through slow, protracted violence of denial, the descent of the human into the nonhuman” (Nayar, 2020, p. 223). In a sense, the pursuit of decolonization to achieve freedom and power made the natives become the savages the colonizers believed them to be. During their effort to establish control, the colonizers used harsh and brutal methods to impose their beliefs and social systems on the colonial territories. This led the natives to view them as also savages, having witnessed the harshness of colonization firsthand.

Both the native and colonized individuals need to exist within the oppressive systems that were produced and maintained by the distribution of colonial and racial power. The colonial system became embedded in the new identities of both the Self and the Other, making it difficult to dismantle the structures of institutionalized systemic racism. Hence, it was essential to deconstruct these boundaries of the Self and the Other by providing the necessary tools to disrupt and break down these structures of oppression. If “the other is within us and affects how we evolve as well as the bulk of our conceptions and the development of our sensibility” (Glissant, 1997, p. 27), then without the necessary tools, the daily violence and tension evolve and submerge in the structures, identities, and environment.

To achieve progress, it was crucial to address issues related to skin color, geographic location, and racial hierarchies that were used to maintain colonial power and distinguish between the colonizers and the colonized (Mbembe, 2019, pp. 77–78; Oliver, 2003, p. 183). Race became a political apparatus that ensured, sustained, and promoted life and order. However, what characterizes something as violent is how the idea and memory of race are comprehended, for example, the idea that “finally culminates in mass murder, genocide, expulsion and ethnic ‘cleansing’ often begins with less obvious forms of violation such as social discrimination, the constant refusal to let others participate in social and political life, sheer ignorance and demanding indifference” (Liebsch, 2006, p. 131).

Nevertheless, implicit biases, discriminatory actions, ignorance, and mimicry can become mainstream racism and make it challenging to identify and address them, worsening racial tension and violence over time and contributing to the ongoing presence of systemic racism in all aspects of society (Fanon, 2021, p. 108). As Foucault has written: “power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth” (Foucault, 1995, p. 194). Thus, the existing racial relations and racism represent the complexity of colonial power relations; it is not just about the colonizer and the practiced racism, i.e., the depersonalization of natives and racialization of the entire colony as savages or less meaningful Others. Mainly colonially embedded racism depicts that it cannot be overcome without overcoming the system itself as everyone already is involved in certain narratives of the Self and the Other.

Nevertheless, no matter how subjectivity is constituted, the historical continuity gets altered and aids in transforming new meanings (Nielsen, 2011, p. 371). New perceptions of oneself are created even outside the scope of skin color and heritage. The perception of racism shifts hence not only between conflict between white and black races but also between dynamics focused on bodily practices and lived experiences and overall power dynamics of the Self and the Other.

#### **4. Driving force of racism and othering**

Racism as a worldview is sustained by participating in social structures and reinforces structural inequalities, creating a cycle of discrimination and injustice (Ate-nasio, 2019, p. 152). In that case, addressing how these practices become embedded in the relations between the Self and Other is crucial, examining how domination, fear, and normalization-embedded techniques of the racial paradigm contribute to racism and racial oppression.

Colonial settings showcase how violence becomes necessary – either for protection or to cultivate power (Mbembe, 2001, pp. 174–175). In this case, colonial situations frequently employ not only physical violence but also “denial and deprivation” (Nayar, 2020, p. 223) to establish and uphold control over colonies and their inhabitants. Fanon even suggested viewing the felt fear of the colonizer as the fear of white man who was defending himself by creating the Other to keep his desires and preoccupations in the place and intact (Fanon, 2008, p. 147). A racist worldview in which colonists see themselves as superior and the colonized as inferior might result from the will of dominance, superiority, and fear. Nevertheless, to overcome the possibilities of Other becoming more human, more civilized, and superior, the colonial “power is

already operating through schemas of racism that persistently distinguish not only between lives that are more or less valuable [...], but also between lives that register more or less empathetically as lives” (Butler, 2020, p. 112). Not only the racist stereotypes internalize language, values, and violent attitudes of colonizers (Oliver, 2003, p. 181) but also the fundamental value of life and the value of living.

Colonialism involves the domination and control of one group over another through political, economic, and cultural means. The colonial mentality of one-sided relations strives to overtake generational thinking, producing a relational system where “the other is the one who must, each time, prove to others that he is a human being” (Mbembe, 2019, p. 132). But the possibility to prove the evolvment, the sense of equality and other potentials are taken away (Fanon, 2008, p. 41). Soon after, the racial standards that partook place in colonization became a standard for immediate othering – positioning the foreigners as the Other, simplifying all based on the Self’s perception. It is not simplification because “it is a false representation of a given reality. It is a simplification because it arrested, fixated form of representation that [...] constitutes a problem for the *representation* of the subject in significations of psychic and social relations” (Bhabha, 2004, p. 107). The fixed roles and differences between the colonizer and colonized, the Self and the Other, are not just a simplification but an intrinsic structure limiting and normalizing in its nature.

The fixed roles and differences between the colonizer and colonized are not just a simplification but an intrinsic structure limiting and normalizing in its nature. Therefore, even something out of context, such as music, can be used to create stereotypes about marginalized groups. Fanon provided a description of a white woman who feared black people’s music and dancing because of her father’s association with it, illustrating how deeply ingrained biases can develop and influence how others are perceived and treated (Fanon, 2021, pp. 180–184). She was not afraid because of music itself, but of the image the father’s stories and depiction created. Moreover this paradigm showcases how people who returned home possibly spread fear of black people or the Other by perpetuating beliefs about the natives’ savagery, upholding the notion that all individuals who resemble this Other will act similarly. This example serves as a reminder of how deeply ingrained and commonplace preconceptions influence how others are seen and treated.

Consequently, the identity boundaries are not dismantled merely by changing power relations and positions – a societal system needs to undergo changes. Because the subject becomes trapped in their identity, and their position as either the Self or the Other remains fixed regardless of the power dynamics. New boundaries are created by

merely removing the colonial experience from their identities without considering the repercussions. In fact, in racial relations not only symbolic meanings that encompass the Self and the Other is important, or the time and place, but also imagined meanings and norms, and the interchangeable relations of people involved (Stephens, 2018, p. 311). Hence, even if the colonized becomes the Self and the colonizer the Other, this does not change how these positions are perceived, as they are deeply embedded in the symbolic boundaries established by societal narratives. Therefore, it is necessary to go beyond mere changes in power dynamics and positions to truly dismantle these symbolic boundaries and create a more equitable and just society, going beyond the identity itself.

Even after they are no longer directly under colonial rule, colonized people may still internalize negative attitudes about their own culture, identity, and value because of the persistence of established boundaries between the rightful, the normal and valuable. Both involved “have to move away from the inhuman voices of their respective ancestors so that genuine communication can be born” (Fanon, 2008, p. 206). Nevertheless, as stated by Fanon, the effect on the individual self “is precisely the elaboration, the formation, and the birth of conflicting knots in the ego, stemming on the one hand from the environment and on the other from entirely personal way this individual reacts to these influences” (Fanon, 2008, p. 62). When the understanding of one’s worth and dignity is influenced by negative stereotypes and attitudes imposed by others and themselves, this can have unintended consequences for marginalized and dominant groups, even if no one person or group actively tries to cause harm (Atenasio, 2019, p. 170). Because, as stated, beliefs and attitudes can become deeply ingrained in society and can continue to shape the way that people view and treat one another, even if they are not consciously aware of it, racial inferiority, racial discrimination, and stereotyping still take place in settings also outside the colonial system.

Therefore, people’s perceptions and actions towards one another are still influenced by ingrained prejudices and racist beliefs, even when the colonial system is no longer in place and the concept of race does not play a more dominant role. Racial prejudice and inequality are still maintained because social constructs are still utilized to group and distinguish people based on their physical and socioeconomic traits, or

In short, we call beliefs ‘racist’ even when they neither issue in racist behavior nor issue from racist noncognitive attitudes; we call attitudes ‘racist’ even when they fail to effect racist behavior and are unaccompanied by racist beliefs; and we call some behavior ‘racist’ even when it takes place in the absence of racist beliefs or attitudes. (Glasgow, 2009, p. 69.)

Even if racially predetermined oppression is no longer associated with the concept of race, social constructs are still used to categorize and differentiate people based on physical characteristics such as skin color, hair texture, and facial features, and socioeconomic factors such as social status, income level, class, and overall belonging to society (Garcia, 2017, p. 13). Race becomes a tool throughout the interaction that also helps to compel violence throughout institutions, systems, and structures. However, “[a]fter a society becomes racialized, a set of social relations and practices based on racial distinctions develops at all societal levels” (Bonilla-Silva, 1997, p. 474); racism is not solely driven by the idea of race as a characterization of the normalized Self, but also by embedded power structures and relations between the Self and the Other.

Of course, the concept of race, the notion of a superior race, and the imbalance of power produced by colonialism continue to be core aspects of racism. Even when there is no open dialogue about race, racist attitudes and discrimination based on racial prejudice still exist. Thus, racism reinforces the notion that one group (based on racial, ethnical, or cultural and societal aspects) is superior to all others, limiting others’ opportunities by either assimilating or annihilating them (Bhabha, 2004, p. 49). Therefore, racism can manifest itself in a variety of ways and can even persist in the absence of overt attitudes or beliefs. Overcoming racism means not overcoming concepts of race, but the symbolic implications in the relations of the Self and the Other.

As showcased, racism is primarily a relationship between the Self and the Other, the normalized and foreign. And whether people accurately describe race or even believe that race matters in social contexts, if both continue to persuade the normalization of the “Other” based on myths and stereotypes, and violence, then the interlocked relational violence becomes embedded and unavoidable like the concept of race. Furthermore, whether the question is genuinely about race does not change the fact that it is possible to talk about racism. As a result, confronting and destroying the cultural norms and attitudes that support these constructs is also necessary to eliminate the symbolic limits underpinning them, because the meaning people have change with shifts in narratives.

## 5. Conclusion

Racism is constantly subjected to shifting norms, influenced by narratives, beliefs, and symbolic boundaries (Marriott, 2018, pp. 283–286). Consequently, individuals may internalize these norms, reinforcing the existing normalization system. However, the subject that racism affects shows a desire to establish their position

overcoming normalization; for instance, within colonial contexts, the subject (the Self or the Other) wants to become the dominant in racial relations (Fanon, 2021, p. 92). These power dynamics in racial relations are intrinsically violent since it is unpredictable whether the Self or the Other will be willing to adapt. Problematizing the willingness to adapt and not cave to the presumed natural reaction, it is viable to emphasize the violence that results from the power dynamics between the Self and the Other. While the Self is seeking to maintain its power and normalize its superiority over the Other, the Other is simultaneously trying to undermine the *status quo* and break through this bond that the Self imposes.

According to Fanon, the Self might resist the Other's aspirations to emerge and claim their own identity, leading to violence against the Other. On the other hand, the Other may resist the attempt of the Self to hold onto power, which could result in violence toward the Self and the Other. The cycle of violence reinforces the asymmetry between the two groups and becomes a part of the power dynamic. Thus, it is crucial to comprehend power dynamics and how they contribute to prejudice and violence to overcome these relationships affecting bodies, language, and everyday practices. Hence racial superiority is so deeply ingrained in society that it becomes the default or "normal" way of existence, creating an inescapable tension between the Self and the Other. Accordingly, designating the Other as something implies becoming the Other: "the more we claim to discriminate between cultures and customs [...], the more completely do we identify ourselves with those we would condemn" (Levi-Strauss, 1952, p. 12).

Therefore, even in racism as a systemic ideology is embedded in colonial biopolitics, power structures, and dominant relationships between the Self and the Other, the underlying bias of how the relations will be perceived and performed depend on prior symbolic understandings (Knoblauch, 2020, p. 306). However, when acknowledging that the Self cannot exist without the Other and that racializing and othering are always in place, a more meaningful dialogue about racism may result.

To overcome racism and the structural consequences, every individual must actively abolish these structures as part of the system. Fanon, in his work *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008), concludes that "[b]oth have to move away from the inhuman voices of their respective ancestors so that genuine communication can be born" (p. 206). Observing how relationships are formed can help understand conceptual history or genealogy or how concepts come to be embedded in everyday life. It does not imply eradicating one's past, guilt, or fears. If it is feasible to articulate the mission in this way, it is to comprehend the history and learn from it – not via acts of violence, but through dialogue (Sayyid, 2017, p. 24). Because even while there will always be the

interconnected relations of the Self and the Other, the nature of those relations can be transformed.

Therefore, while for the colonial system, the meaning of race was crucial to the sustainability of racism, in the modern era, race seems to be a secondary issue that becomes visible when systemic injustice, inequality, or discrimination has been pointed out. Nevertheless, the understanding of how colonialism left behind a long-lasting legacy of racism and inequality can be made more accessible with the help of Fanon's observations. The persistent struggles of people of color in postcolonial states reflect colonialism's lasting effects, including economic and political dominance. Fanon's works can also help to understand the psychological trauma of collective Other; this allows us to see how people of color internalize negative stereotypes and perpetuate harmful cultural beliefs about themselves and their communities. Fanon's perspective also emphasizes the significance of analyzing and challenging the ways colonialism continues to influence current power dynamics and inequalities structures and might be beneficial in addressing systemic and structural racism and violent racial, ethnic, and social discrimination.

To conclude, Fanon's postcolonial study of racism and colonialism offers a critical viewpoint on how racism, relationships, and social and cultural beliefs are intertwined and emphasizes colonialism's continued effects on people of color. His work illuminates how the Self and the Other are intertwined in symbolic understandings of identity and why racism is an act of discrimination and symbolic dehumanization that helps the dominant and superior group pursue their aims. These racial inequalities balance the norms established by societies and marginalized communities' lived experiences, illuminating a stark contrast between the ideals of equality and the harsh reality of systemic discrimination and conflict of symbolic boundaries. Therefore, by comprehending Fanon's ideas, a better grasp of the causes and lasting effects of racism might be gained to make the world more just and equitable.

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