

FROM RACE RELATIONS TO COMPARATIVE RACIAL POLITICS

A Survey of Cross-National Scholarship on Race in the Social Sciences

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Abstract

Understanding racial dynamics and power relations in comparative, cross-spatial perspective is a topic which should have an extensive archive in the literature of comparative politics. Yet, the field of comparative racial politics remains at its infancy. While we have witnessed a resurgence in the study of race and ethnicity in the social sciences and humanities, much of the debate has been concerned with the meaning and relevance of the race concept, rather than its implementation. The authors believe comparative politics has a potentially distinctive and important contribution to make in the study of racial politics, as opposed to race relations, by foregrounding the role of politics in the social and political mobilization of various social groups premised upon the race concept, racial hierarchy, and distinction. This article provides a categorical review of the major trends and approaches to the comparative study of race in the social sciences, and provides an alternative conceptualization of racial politics.

Keywords: Racial Politics, State Racism, Comparative Racial Politics, Comparative Politics, Racial State

INTRODUCTION

This article is an attempt to outline a framework for the comparative study of racial politics through a review of existing literature on the political implications of race and ethnicity in a cross-national perspective. Our main objective is to highlight how comparative studies of race can generate new conceptualizations of the ways that racial and racist ideologies influence institutions, political parties, labor markets, and daily life across time and space. Specifically, methods of comparative politics can help

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advance the discussion of race and racism beyond the sociological treatment of race as a social construction, or the focus on identity-based concerns generally emphasized in the humanities.

A recent glance at the number of dissertations, books, and articles on the topic of race and ethnicity in politics confirms that most comparative scholarship on the topic has been undertaken in the area of sociology, more specifically, political sociology, and not political science. Although the study of race and ethnicity has been a feature of several fields within the discipline of political science (particularly American politics, African politics, and more recently, in studies of East and West Europe), it has garnered little attention in the field of comparative politics. Given that topics of race and ethnicity easily lend themselves to cross-spatial analysis and invariably intersect with the topical concerns of comparative politics, such as state sovereignty, territoriality, citizenship, and political culture, we find the relative dearth of new scholarship in comparative politics on these topics paradoxical.

Part of our effort is to encourage scholars of comparative politics within the discipline of political science to undertake the study of a phenomenon that has largely been dominated by Americanists. While several books and review essays in recent years have focused on the phenomena of race and ethnicity in comparative perspective, there has been little discussion of the conceptual and methodological implications of the comparative study of race and ethnicity on contemporary debates and discussion of these topics. As a result, the field of comparative racial politics remains at its infancy with much of the book-length scholarship in this field consisting of case studies often appearing in edited volumes (e.g., Bowser 1995; Cross and Keith, 1993; Koopmans and Statham, 2000; Messina et al., 1992; Wyzan 1990).

We believe this is a good opportunity to review not only a selection of empirical and theoretical works on questions relating to racial and ethnic politics, but also some of the presumptions guiding the perspectives therein. Rather than provide a detailed review of the entire literature on racial politics, we will consider significant conceptual innovations that have influenced the study of race and racism's effects on various forms of politics and institutions, and suggest ways in which comparative politics can make analytic use of these advances in cross-national, cross-regional scholarship. In the following sections, we will provide an overview of the present state of comparative scholarship on race, highlight key arguments and disagreements, and finally, offer some suggestions on how comparative methods can aid us in foregrounding politics, rather than race, as a key variable in the formation of racial hierarchy, inequality, identity formation and ultimately, racial politics itself. Accordingly, we seek to advance the debate on race beyond those circling around essentialist/biological versus constructivist/cultural definitions of race and racial difference. Instead, we propose that cross-national studies of racial politics require a multi-method approach that links the various methodologies of comparative history, public opinion research, and social and political theory.

BEYOND ESSENTIALISM AND CONSTRUCTIVISM

Much of the debate about ideas of race in the social sciences has been definitional, preoccupied with the earliest origins of the term, its spread and emergence, and variations in its use (Banton 1977; Cox 1976; Goldberg 1990; Mosse 1978). The disciplines of sociology, philosophy, anthropology, and literary studies have contributed to enriching scholarly understanding of the origins of the term *race*, and its various permutations, through translations over historical time as well as linguistic

and cultural boundaries. In particular, distinctions between constructivists and primordialists have informed many of the debates of the past several decades.

At the end of both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the race concept generated much debate and discussion among social scientists concerning its biological and epistemological moorings. Natural and social scientists alike have been concerned about whether the idea of racial distinction among human beings could actually be confirmed via investigation in the biological sciences (Duster 2003) or whether the race concept itself was the result of racist justifications for human hierarchy. Anthropologists such as Ruth Benedict and Franz Boas, as well as many of their students, sought to demonstrate that so-called racial distinctions could be explained by the culture concept. Nurture, rather than nature, was the true conceptual and epistemological category for identifying and comprehending human diversity (Benedict 1959). In political science, psychology, and, to a lesser extent, anthropology, the culture concept was often employed statically, if at all, to explain the variation in political and economic behaviors of certain groups. Clifford Geertz's classic essay on primordialism, which was subsequently criticized by anthropologists for its ahistorical, static conceptualization of ethnic identity, treated the culture concept as an immutable trait to be invoked and utilized as an organizing principal at any given moment, usually during times of crisis. To the mind of many of his critics, the culture concept had become the new race concept, serving to suggest innate, irresolvable human differences that could not be eradicated through socialization, education, or interaction between cultural groups.

Constructivists, on the other hand, argued that even so-called primordial sentiments of a particular group change and evolve over time, so that what was once identity N, is no longer identity N, even though group characteristics (at least those that are visible) of phenotype, language, and culture remain constant. Thus, identity, they argued, is culturally and socially, rather than biologically, constructed. Exogenous rather than endogenous factors determine what motivates groups to act politically as a group and in the name of, or for the sake of, group identity. When applied to explain sociological phenomena, such as poverty and inequality, the biological argument for racial distinction invariably relieves states, institutions, and civil society itself of responsibility for the societal conditions of "racial" groups. The implications, as many commentators have noted, is that if certain racial groups have innate tendencies toward under- or over-achievement, then their prospects for failure or success are pre-determined, regardless of social policy.¹

Variations on the nature versus nurture debate proliferated and intensified by the 1990s, to the extent that "thick" and "thin" versions of scientific and constructivist explanations for so-called racial distinction re-emerged by the 1990s. Even earlier, in the 1980s, scholars such as Stephen Steinberg (1981), Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1986), and John Solomos (1989) pointed out that culture-bound explanations for distinctions between educational achievement, poverty, and other indicators among "culturally disadvantaged" groups began to resemble pseudo-scientific racist explanations for Black and non-White marginalization in societies such as the United States and Britain. Right wing politicians and policy makers in both countries would often use a reified notion of the culture concept as something static and fixed to make predictive claims about the behaviors of members of groups according to extant racial, regional, or ethno-national classification. Politicians ranging from Enoch Powell, Jacques Le Pen, and David Duke employed culturally racist arguments to advocate the control and limitation of the movement and influx of various groups into countries such as Britain, France, and the United States.

Some scholars, such as Paul Gilroy (2000), Rogers Brubaker and Fred Cooper (2000), and Mara Loveman (1999), have argued that the race concept has no place in scholarly discourse and study since it corresponds to no actually existing differences between human beings to warrant species or sub-species distinction. While we certainly ascribe to a constructivist view of the race concept, we believe that the constructivist-essentialist debate, as important as it is in several disciplines, is a very rudimentary discussion of the political salience of the race concept, as well as racism's variability as a political phenomena in many parts of the world, under a variety of political systems, regime types, and economies. The invocation and employment of racial categorization, and the dynamics and processes of racism, are not predicated upon any one form of popular or scholarly explanation. At least one form of modern racism, what Etienne Balibar, echoing Frantz Fanon, calls scriptural racism, preceded biological explanations which gained favor in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as colonial expansion was justified, in part, by pseudo-scientific rationalizations. Based on hermeneutical readings of the Bible, texts such as the story of Ham were utilized by Spanish, Portuguese, and other Western papal authorities to justify the enslavement and trafficking of Africans after the sixteenth century, during the Atlantic slave trade. Other accounts of racial hierarchy, most notably in the Chinese system, can be traced back to as early as the eleventh century (Dikötter 1992). Thus, in our view, the debates between constructivists and essentialists, in both thick and thin versions, over the meaning and relevance of the race concept as an epistemological category represent only one debate among many throughout the course of history on not only what races *are*, but also once determined, how those races should be *used* in trade, commerce, domestic life, labor, and in recreational pleasures.

Indeed, both constructivist and essentialist arguments operate in arenas of politics in which the race concept in some form is already utilized to serve broader political aims of promoting racial hierarchy, racial egalitarianism, or "race-neutral" political objectives. Evidence of this can be found in contemporary debates involving academics and political actors who ascribe to a constructivist position—ranging from ideological conservatives to leftists who decry biological explanations of racial difference. A liberal philosopher such as Anthony Appiah, a left sociologist such as Paul Gilroy, and a political conservative such as David Horowitz can all decry biological explanations for racial difference and hierarchy, but the distinctions among these three, both in terms of scholarship and politics, are so vast as to render the constructivist label useless as a means of discerning their motivations and intentions concerning the banishment of the race concept.² Each has different aims for utilizing a constructivist idea of race in scholarship and polemics.

Consequently, neither constructivist nor essentialist views generally defined can further our understanding of ideas of racial politics in the contemporary world. The historian Barbara Fields (2003, p. 1400) succinctly identifies the limitations of the social constructivist account of the race concept as an analytic grid to interpret racism, race-based power dynamics, and unequal relations in a society: "identifying race as a social construction does nothing to solidify the intellectual ground on which it totters. The London Underground and the United States are social constructions, so are the evil eye and the calling of spirits from the vastly deep, and so are murder and genocide. All derive from the thoughts, plans, and actions of human beings living in human societies." If we accept the premise that the concept of race means nothing in itself, that it is merely a social construction, then our analytical lens should be turned toward actual patterns and occurrences in which race is meaningful in dynamics of power and politics. Rather than focus on the hollowness of race as a concept,

we are concerned with how the term is utilized to give meaning to behavior, norms, and structure across national-territorial and cultural boundaries.

RACIAL POLITICS IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Although we are quite sympathetic to the view that the race concept is an inaccurate description and categorization of human distinction, we do not believe that this is a sufficient basis to disregard or prohibit the study of the race concept's role in identity formation and in the structuring of inequalities. One of the most powerful ideologies of the modern era, nationalism, is neither a medical nor a socio-economic condition, but a deeply felt psychological disposition with significant effects upon economic and political development, immigration law and policy, and the overall treatment of ethnic, national, and racial minorities in many societies. The "reality" of nationalism's existence as a principle of political mobilization is not predicated upon its scientific basis. In terms of actual politics, the power of a particular idea or concept may lie not in its intrinsic truth or verifiability, but in its ability to influence groups and political actors who would not otherwise convene for the purposes of collective action to engage one another in coalitions and movements against other populations, societies, or states. We believe that the race concept, when found in political rhetoric, competition, and conflict, has an effect similar to nationalist mobilization. That race and racism, like nation and nationalism, can be employed in ideas about community, nation, state, and popular policies of exclusion and inclusion, suggests that the banishment of the race concept called for by scholars such as Brubaker may not in fact banish its use in actual human relations.

We propose the use of the term *racial politics* instead of *race relations* to avoid further reification of the race concept. The term *race relations* is misleading because it presumes that races actually interact with one another, and their interactions and intentions are not first mediated by many distinct, though overlapping, variables such as class, status, and education, as well as the role of markets, industries, and states. In other words, there are no relations between races; rather, labor markets, states, and economic and cultural institutions mediate and structure the range of interactions and relations between groups. The sociological use of the term *race relations* is a secondary identification of prior political and social phenomena: the actual creation and management of racial distinction. Not all members of a particular racial group respond to racial differentiation in the same way. Indeed, the term *race relations* conceals internal variation within groupings designated by race, as well as in the policies and practices of the states that mediate relations between such groups. Not only do ideas of race serve as a conceptual conduit between social structure and meaning, linking movement and access in society to specific groups of people, but ideas of race are also necessarily constituted by ideas about nationhood, citizenship, gender relations, levels of socio-economic development, as well as other factors in the constitution of civil society and its monitoring by the state.

Ira Katznelson's (1973) seminal study of race, politics, and migration in the United States and Great Britain marked the paradigmatic transition from the dominant "race relations" paradigm to a comparative racial politics approach that influenced scholarship on both sides of the Atlantic. *Black Men, White Cities* was one of the earliest studies in political science to compare systematically racial politics in two multiracial societies while going beyond the pluralist and behaviorist approaches to "race relations" that dominated the field from the 1930s to the early 1960s. Katznelson's work diverged from the "race relations" paradigm in three important ways.

First, Katznelson analyzed structural factors, rather than behavioral patterns, as independent variables that defined and limited the parameters of group and individual choice. Second, he argued that race and power were intrinsically related—race assumes meaning only when it becomes a criterion of stratification (p. 14). Finally, his study suggested that different governmental systems (parliamentary, monarchy *vs.* presidential, republican) had similarities with respect to the treatment of a particular minority group, thus focusing less on the formal distinction between regime and state types, and more on the process of racial discrimination, marginalization, and exclusion by the state and in civil society.

In his introductory chapter elaborating the state of “race relations” scholarship, Katznelson questions the methodological validity of behaviorist and pluralist approaches that stress cultural and psychological dimensions over economic and political ones. For Katznelson, these approaches provide an incomplete and inaccurate portrayal of “race relations” by focusing on individual choice and behavior while ignoring the institutional context of racial politics. He also rejects prevalent Marxist approaches that treat race simply as a manifestation of class. Racial political phenomena, argues Katznelson, “must be dealt with on their own terms” (p. 7). Accordingly, *Black Men, White Cities* examines the racial and political linkages among a subject population, the state, and popular ideologies that shape and limit available choices and the sphere of racial justice. Specifically, Katznelson’s comparison of Black political incorporation in British and American cities focuses on the ways that established political elites structured the choices available to minority communities, often leading to clientelistic, one-sided power relationships between the two.

Comparative studies of race and ethnicity have expanded rapidly in the three decades following Katznelson’s study. Currently, there are four broad areas of scholarship informing the comparative study of race that roughly coincide with distinct methodological approaches: the political economy of race; comparative analyses of culture, symbols, and ideas; social movements scholarship; and state-centered approaches. Each of these four categories of scholarship attempts to respond to the following questions: (1) To what extent has the idea of race been a feature of political and economic life? (2) To what degree is race something that operates independently of material, social, and cultural conditions? (3) To what extent does the idea of race invoke or affect aspects of politics, society, and culture not normally associated with it?

The Political Economy of Race

First, unequal access to goods, services, and resources in a given society provides the opportunity to study similarities and differences between systems and modes of racial domination and their material effects. This first category of studies utilizes methods of political economy and demography to collect and interpret data on the role of racial and ethnic distinctions (among other variables) in social and political life. This body of work has been important in challenging traditional Marxist and liberal assumptions about the impact of modernization on racial politics by analyzing the organization and differentiation among different sectors of the economy by race—for example, African miners in South Africa or sharecroppers in the U.S. South—and their implications for social and political development (Greenberg 1980; Seidman 1994). Also, this approach has contributed to the growing field of international migration studies by emphasizing the relationship between race, capital accumulation, industrialization, and migrant labor (Castles and Davidson, 2000; Castles and Kosack, 1973; Freeman 1979; Miles 1982, 1986; San Juan 1992).

Cedric Robinson's *Black Marxism* (1983), a neglected work in the mainstream political science literature in the United States, first elaborated upon the idea of *racialization* as a political phenomenon within the process of working-class formation in Britain during the Industrial Revolution. This term gained popularity in the late 1970s and early 1980s, especially in British sociological scholarship, as scholars in the field of race and ethnicity increasingly began to question the biological conception of race. In particular, Robert Miles's work, beginning with his seminal *Racism and Migrant Labour* (Miles 1982), was arguably the most influential British attempt to question the uncritical application of race as an analytical concept. Building on the work of Colette Guillaumin (1980), Miles argued that the uncritical use of "race" in sociological analysis implies the acceptance, or at least the unintentional endorsement, of the argument that race is a biological reality that determines historical processes (Miles 1982, 1993). Instead, Miles proposes that the idea of "race" must be deconstructed in order to reveal the effects of the process of racialization.³ For Miles, racism should be viewed as an ideological relation of production, hinting at his more materialist and economic approach to the study of race.

In particular, Miles linked the process of racialization with the conditions of migrant laborers. He argued that the concepts of "race" and "race relations" should be replaced with "immigration" and "minority politics" thereby making what he considers the more useful comparison of the British experience with social formations in northwest Europe. With the reconstruction of capitalism throughout Europe, the contradiction between the need of the capitalist world economy for the mobility of human beings and the drawing of territorial boundaries resulted in the racialization of migrant labor as an "Other" that is "particularly suited to providing labour power within unfree relations of production" (Miles 1993, p. 50). He maintained that comparative studies of Britain with United States and South Africa on the basis of "race" offered limited insights because the latter two societies have "little in common with post-1945 economic and political developments in Britain, despite sharing a common ideological definition of 'race' as a social problem" (Miles 1993, p. 49). Yet, there are similarities across the three cases which make such comparisons more plausible. The United States and South Africa are nation-states which started as settler societies. In post-colonial Britain, anxieties concerning the cultural and racial contamination of British people, culture, and civilization through "mixture" with non-White immigrant groups were a motivating factor for early and ongoing anti-immigrant sentiment toward former colonials, restrictive immigration policies in the 1960s and 1970s, and the appearance of nativist, xenophobic ultranationalists whose platforms emphasized the presence of non-White foreigners. As in the United States and South Africa during the waning years of apartheid, more subtle racist platforms of ultranationalist parties emerged in British politics. Thus, despite several major differences, there are several political phenomena in postwar British society that lend themselves to comparative analyses of racial politics.

Miles's economic treatment of race as a counter to biological conceptions tends to reproduce the problems of previous Marxist theories by focusing on the race concept's epiphenomenal relationship to class and migration. By prioritizing the economy, the politics of race in British politics gets left out. Substituting "race" with "immigration" does not explain, for example, why some immigrants are accepted and others are not at a particular historical juncture. In fact, Paul Sniderman's (2000) study of reactions in various regions in Italy to the influx of Eastern European and African-descended immigrants suggests that the very reception of specific immigrant populations may be motivated by racial distinctions.

Many critics questioned Miles for returning the idea and politics of race to the realm of the epiphenomenal.⁴ Nevertheless, Miles's critique of the race concept stimulated new areas of debate on its application in British sociological scholarship. As David Mason (1999, p. 19) describes, "Almost every monograph, article or textbook now found it necessary to make extensive use of inverted commas whenever the word 'race' appeared." His work was followed by numerous studies whose objects of study were "racialization" and "racism" rather than "race" (Carter et al., 1996; Ratcliffe 1994; Small 1994; Solomos and Wrench, 1993).

Culture, Symbols, and Ideas

The second area of scholarship focuses on ideological systems, norms, and values associated with racial distinctions, or, how different groups of people define themselves in racial and ethnic terms and, by extension, those defined as Other. This scholarship often focuses on the more quotidian aspects of daily life in multi-ethnic or multi-racial societies, and on how groups erect, tear down, or reconstruct social and political barriers corresponding with their putatively racial identities (Freeman 1979; Gilroy 1987, 1993; Lesser 1999; Rogin 1996; Saxton 1990; Shohat and Stam, 1994; Takaki [1979] 2000; Twine 1998). Many of these works apply ethnographic and micro-level analyses in order to understand internal complexities and variations rather than cross-national patterns. Although much of this literature is not explicitly comparative, it can help us in understanding how stereotypes, symbols, and images inform racial categorization, and how individuals and groups respond to forms of exclusion, segregation, negative influence, and coercion premised on the idea of racial hierarchy and distinction. In political science, public opinion surveys on racial attitudes and behaviors, not just in the United States but also in Canada, Rwanda, France, Fiji, and others, represent one facet of this research. The aim of most survey-based studies is to correlate attitudes and behaviors motivated by racial hierarchy with ideas about national norms, political culture, and citizenship (Dawson 1994; Ignatiev 1995; Kinder and Sanders, 1996; Mendenberg 2001). In history, linguistics, communications studies, and, more recently, cultural studies, discourse analysis has been applied to examine racial ideologies cross-nationally (Fredrickson 1981; Goldberg 1993; Manzo 1995; van Dijk 1993; R. Young 1990), and in societies frequently overlooked in the literature on race and ethnicity (Dikötter 1992, 1997; Dower 1986; Koshiro 1999; Russell 1991; Weiner 1994).

Discourse analysis has become especially useful in discussing contemporary forms of racism that circumvent direct references to race. For example, John Solomos's (1989) *Race and Racism in Contemporary Britain* addresses the emergence of a "new racism" in Europe, and specifically in Britain, in reaction to the "new immigration" from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union as well as from North Africa. He notes that rather than atavistic forms of racism based on biological differences, contemporary manifestations of racism have been subtler with emphases placed on cultural differences (in relation to new immigrants as well as existing racial and ethnic minorities), national identity, and "anti-anti-racism." As he argues in his collaborative work with Les Back (Solomos and Back, 1995, 1996), the dynamic and multiple forms of contemporary ethnic and racial identities are matched by the increasingly plural and complex forms of contemporary racist discourses and practices that avoid explicit mention of race and racism.

In an earlier work, Solomos (1988) demonstrated the linkages between the negative imagery of Black youth, state surveillance, and state policy toward minorities before, during, and after moments of crises in civil society. Though not widely

discussed, Anthony Messina's (1989) study of racial politics in Britain was one of the few to analyze how race is invoked in party politics and competition. These works underscore the fact that the decision by dominant political parties to ignore racial discrimination was not due to a lack of observable phenomena but was, in fact, a political choice. In other words, regimes and dominant political actors often choose to utilize race as an instrument for national unification or conflict. The British case is paradigmatic in one sense, demonstrating how states, independently of regime type (for example, Cuba, Britain, and Japan) often work to project images of racial harmony or at least quietude independent of actually existing conditions and inequalities in civil society.

Similarly, Etienne Balibar (1991) examines the "new racism" in Europe, focusing especially on France. Defining *neoracism* as a racism that is officially antiracist, Balibar observes that neoracism in Europe co-opts arguments put forth by anti-racist movements—e.g., minority group rights, toleration of cultural differences, and so forth—to suggest that resistance to such movements is "natural" because "cultural" divisions threaten national unity and identity. Accordingly, the "new racism" in Europe focuses not on biological heredity but on the "insurmountability of cultural differences" and "only 'the harmfulness of abolishing frontiers, the incompatibility of life-styles and traditions . . .'" (Balibar 1991, p. 21). The phenomenon of "neoracism" in Europe displays striking parallels to what Stephen Steinberg (1981) has termed the New Darwinism in the United States. According to Steinberg (1981, pp. 79–80):

notions of biological superiority and inferiority have been replaced with a new set of ideas that amount to claims of *cultural* superiority and inferiority. The affinity to nineteenth-century Social Darwinism is especially pronounced where culture is treated as fixed—that is, as a relatively permanent and immutable entity that operates as an independent force in history. For the New Darwinists, culture is inherited just as inexorably as if it had been implanted in the genes.

Indeed, one of the underexamined aspects of the study of the "new racism" phenomenon in the United States is its parallels in several Western European countries during the same period, coincident (but not coterminous) with the rise of the New Right.

By focusing on cultures, symbols, and ideas, this scholarship has provided us with effective tools for comparing myriad ideologies and practices of race and racism even when state and social actors themselves avoid references to race. Furthermore, this combination provides an opportunity to observe and analyze how extant stereotypes, prejudices, and imagery interact with new conditions of labor, migration, and new national-state formations, to synthesize and create novel processes of discrimination, exclusion, and marginalization that are both new and old, local and transnational.

Racial Politics and Social Movements

This leads to a third area, namely, studies of social movements where ideas of racism and racial discrimination are linked to questions of justice and nationalism, whether in the form of the Mau Mau in Kenya (Edgerton 1989), Black consciousness in Brazil (Hanchard 1994), the United States, and South Africa (Fredrickson 1995; Marx 1998), or, conversely, South African Whites held in psychological siege by apartheid (Crapanzano 1985). In sociology and political science, the new social movements literature that has focused on, for example, the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, the

anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, or the indigenous rights movements in Australia and New Zealand, reflects the overarching preoccupation with how people utilize the prospects and conditions of racial and ethnic marginalization for purposes of collective action (Castles et al., 1992; Chong 1991; McAdam 1982; Tarrow 1994). This area also includes the vast literature on ethnic conflict that examines intergroup conflicts, ethnic mobilization, movements for national self-determination, and state management of conflicts in comparative perspective (Esman 1994; Gurr and Harff, 1994; Gurr et al., 1993; Horowitz 1985; Kellas 1991; Lijphart 1968; McGarry and O'Leary, 1993; Newman 1996; Rothschild 1981; Tiryakian and Rogowski, 1985; C. Young 1976, 1993). Lastly, some of the literature in this category examines the intersection of racial and ethnic consciousness with other social identities based on gender, class, religion, nationality, and sexuality (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992; Bhatt 1997; Chung 2000; Sudbury 1998; Twine and Blee, 2001). The advantage of the social movements literature is the catholic use of various methodological approaches and clearly articulated distinctions about their uses and limitations. Another advantage of the social movements literature is the focus on actual social and political dynamics, the interplay among political actors, voluntary associations in civil society, and the state, and not simply racism or race in the abstract. Again, the examination of nationalist, nativist, and other movements in which racial chauvinisms often appear can provide opportunities for scholars to identify the race concept and the practice of racism as contributing factors to other forms of social mobilization.

The Nexus of Race and State

The final area of scholarship encompasses literature on the role of the state in constituting and maintaining racial classification, whether to enforce situations of inequality, conduct forms of surveillance upon racially or ethnically marginalized groups, or, as seen in the cross-national phenomena of affirmative action debates in nation-states ranging from France and India to Brazil and South Africa, utilize the state apparatus to redress situations of racial inequality in civil society and the economy. State institutions and policies, such as censuses and citizenship policies, construct and maintain racial distinctions through racial classification and surveillance. Another area of the state, its coercive apparatus, reinforces these distinctions. The legislative body makes laws and certain types of surveillance possible. Finally, the juridical area of the state presides over the sites where contestation among laws, meaning, and application corresponds with legal precedents in civil society. The works of sociologists and political scientists such as Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann (1991), Mahmood Mamdani (1996), Anthony Marx (1998), Melissa Nobles (2000), Robert Lieberman (1998), and Erik Bleich (2003) are within this broad area of study. The societal implications of racial and ethnic classification have drawn the attention of cultural and social anthropologists, particularly due to the impact of colonial regimes and ideologies upon multiple populations simultaneously, which provides an opportunity to consider racial and ethnic relations within national societies as well as between them.

Michael Omi and Howard Winant's *Racial Formation in the United States* (1986) is one of the most frequently cited sociological works that elaborates on the idea of the racial state. Their racial formation theory—which borrows heavily from Gramsci's conception of hegemony—links macro-level and micro-level analyses to the study of race as both structure and meaning. Rather than treat race as a naturally occurring phenomenon, they use the term *racialization* to refer to the ideological process of extending “racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social

practice, or group” according to changing historical contexts (p. 64). Thus, they seek to explain the process by which racial meanings are assigned, interpreted, and transformed through political struggle. For Omi and Winant, the concept of race is meaningful only in relation to the specific social and historical contexts in which it is embedded (p. 60). At the same time, they propose that race has been and continues to be a fundamental organizing principle of social and political relations in the United States.⁵ In other words, for Omi and Winant, politics in the United States is essentially a politics of race—“the state *is* inherently racial. Far from *intervening* in racial conflicts, the state is itself increasingly the pre-eminent site of racial conflict” (p. 76). Racial projects by the state form the basis for individual and collective identity formation; at the same time, they become the site for political struggle between racially based social movements and the racial state, resulting in an “unstable equilibrium.” Here, Omi and Winant’s formulation gets to the core of normative presumptions inherent in several versions of the “melting pot” thesis, the belief that racial conflict, over time, can be downgraded to ethnic conflict and ultimately dif-fused (Glazer and Moynihan, 1970).⁶

A distinct advantage of state-centered approaches is to identify and situate racial politics within the complex of material (economic and structural) and institutional processes, and not relegate the politics of race to the superstructure, as in Marxist terminology, or as an aberration appended to capitalist and industrial development, as in classic understandings of race in liberal theory. Race utilization is thus a material and political artifact of certain polities, never entirely distinct from economic and institutional processes, but not entirely determined by these processes either. Too often, scholarship about “race relations” in specific societies has tended to assume and define race relations according to the forces of sociological definitions and cultural explanations at the national level (e.g., Brazil is a racial democracy, Japan is a racially homogenous society) rather than examine the political ordering of race relations at the level of the state. Though states are often central in societies where racial categorization, conflict, or inequality are noticeable features, this may be less the case in societies with weak state structures or regimes, or in societies where the state’s role in racial formation is often inherited, in part, from the bureaucratic-administrative legacies of an imperial power, as evidenced in the early history of many settler and colonial societies.

In his tripartite analysis of the interrelationship between race and national formation in South Africa, Brazil, and the United States, Anthony Marx (1998) asserts that “states make race.” The more specific question might be: *how* do states make race? In many post-colonial polities, states have relied on pre-existing models of racial classification and codification, which pre-date independent state formation, as well as new objects and processes of classification, as the mingling of colonizer and colonized blood produced human beings who did not fit into extant phenotypical categories. Thus, in this respect, colonialism made new forms of racial categorization possible. This is not to suggest that models of racial classification/codification have not been innovated upon or transformed in newly independent societies and polities. The polities of South Africa or the United States, for example, created new racial and ethno-national categories, combined them with extant racial categorizations, and created their own models of apartheid and segregation. Under both scenarios, however, new states and their regimes rely, in whole or in part, on categorizations which pre-date states themselves. States, in many instances, provide opportunities for particular racial meanings, practices, and ideologies to assume material form in economics and politics. Marx’s emphasis on the role of the state in racial formation provides an important reminder and antidote to the more metaphorical accounts of racial

construction, a difference which sometimes treats racial categorization as a somewhat amorphous, fluid process of indeterminate classification. This particular type of state-centered approach can neglect or obscure the role of mass migration or forced exodus brought about by colonialism which, in many multiethnic, plural, and multi-racial societies, was a contested, manipulative process leading up to, and not coincident with, state formation. State formation—whether in the form of independence in cases of former colonial rule, or in the transition from monarchy to republic, or authoritarian to liberal democratic regime—represents a distinct shift in the definition, patterning, and process of “race relations” and race-related political phenomena in these societies, but the meanings employed have often had a longer “shelf life” in the circulation and utilization of racial ideologies.

Discussions of race relations in various societies often treat racial and/or ethnic conflict separately from regime type. For example, commentators writing about the United States and France at the turn of the century, such as Alexis de Tocqueville, acknowledged the prevalent practices of discrimination against non-White citizens but, nevertheless, did not question the democratic features of the polity. After consulting with several U.S. African American scholars such as Ralph Bunche, Gunnar Myrdal (1944) began to question whether the mistreatment of a particular racial or ethnic minority was indicative of the polity’s commitment to democracy as a whole. Its very title, *An American Dilemma*, identified the tension between state and civic elite self-congratulatory representations of U.S. liberal democracy, and the reality of the profoundly antidemocratic maintenance of racial apartheid. In more recent years, the work of scholars such as Ira Katznelson (1973), Stanley Greenberg (1980), and Rogers Smith (1997) have explored the political contradictions that arise from the relationship between race and the state.

David Theo Goldberg’s *The Racial State* (2002) represents one of the few attempts to merge racial theory and political theory through an examination of the nexus of racial and national-state formation in comparative perspective. Entering into a burgeoning debate which has largely featured philosophers, legal theorists, and comparative sociologists, Goldberg posits that the invocation of race in virtually all spheres of Western state apparatuses demonstrates the race concept’s direct and indirect influence upon notions and policies of citizenship, statehood, immigration policy, policing, and surveillance. Charles Mills, Emmanuel Eze, Anthony Bogues and Robert Gooding-Williams in philosophy have undertaken some of the work to demonstrate the more philosophical dimensions of racial and racist theorizing, and its impact upon political philosophy. Most scholarship in this area, however, has up to now focused upon single nation-states and philosophical debates (Burleigh and Wippermann, 1991; Omi and Winant, 1986; Solomos 1989).

Goldberg gleans the national and imperial histories of the Dutch, German, British, and French cases and ferrets parallels among state practices of racial formation, racialized distinctions between citizenship and subjecthood, and the employment of technologies of surveillance, classification, and codification for putatively distinct racial groups. Goldberg even situates the German case, in particular, as the extreme, rather than exceptional, case among the more severe examples of a general pattern of recurrent racialization of state practices among Western powers. In this way, Goldberg’s approach allows students of racial politics to analyze a range of polities, not just those which have specific histories of *racist* political behavior.⁷

One of the issues Goldberg does not address in *The Racial State*, however, is the relation and distinction between states and regimes, and the impact of regime type on racial politics. This theme could be of potential interest to comparativists seeking to extend the methodological implications of his thesis to examining distinctions

between regime types and racial politics. How, for example, have totalitarian regimes differed from liberal, authoritarian, and corporatist regimes in their treatment of race as an organizing principle in civil society and within the state? Non-Western racial or racist states and policies are largely absent in Goldberg's theorization and empirical examples of the racial state. This is one of the limitations in many of the aforementioned approaches to the study of racism and the state; that is, they equate state racism exclusively with Western national-state policies and behaviors. Societies such as Indonesia, Malaysia, China, Russia, and Fiji have histories of ethno-national exclusionary practices which border on or otherwise become state racism. Further scholarship in the area of state racism should account for the myriad forms of racism in state practices in various parts of the world, which would create increased possibilities for cross-regional and state-policy comparisons.

A COMPARATIVE RACIAL POLITICS APPROACH?

Although each of the four extant approaches has helped to elucidate and illuminate the politics of race in comparative perspective, they have not provided us with the tools to compare systematically the interactions of states, markets, institutions, ideologies, and social actors in race-informed phenomena. One of the distinct advantages of comparative politics is its methodological proclivity toward cross-national analysis, which enables researchers to identify and configure recurrent patterns and practices that are not immediately discernible at the level of the national-state. Assessments of the internal dynamics of individual nation-states can reveal contradictions and tensions among federal, regional, and municipal modes of governance (Gibson 1990) and ethnic and racial tensions between and within groups (e.g., in Eastern Europe, Rwanda, and Peru). Such analyses help scholars comprehend the limitations of approaches that treat the national-state as a fixed, stable unit of analysis with internally and externally consistent and coherent territorial boundaries, language formations, iconographies, and cultures.

The extant concept of race is inevitably bound up with notions of national state sovereignty and, subsequently, exceptionalism (Fredrickson 1997). Racial exceptionalism refers to the articulated belief that certain societies have race relations that are peculiar and incommensurable with other multi-racial and multi-ethnic societies (Hanchard 1994). What is striking about many national and regional studies of race and ethnicity is the recurrent manner in which specialists have called for approaches that incorporate a particular society, state, or population into a comparative scheme in order to evaluate and assess its "peculiarity" or "exceptional" status. Few scholars would suggest that because each nation-state is unique in some ways, we cannot compare differences and similarities in capitalist development. Yet, the exceptionalist arguments concerning matters of race in national-states recur in many debates around Germany, the United States, South Africa, and Brazil. We understand the importance and necessity of prioritizing a national territory and/or population in order to comprehend the historical processes of specific political phenomena, as well as the dangers of reducing cross-national variation through comparison to single or even multiple variables. At the same time, the tendency to look exclusively to a particular nation-state as a sole influence upon its internal dynamics neglects the influence of extra-national movements, phenomena, and ideas.⁸

Studies of ethnic and race relations focusing on individual nation-states often isolate internal dynamics at the expense of global patterns and intertwined national-state legacies of racial domination. As we discuss later in this article, racist stereotypes and

ideologies about Gypsies in Western Europe circulated throughout Europe, and now, in the aftermath of the European Union, have resurged as a transnational phenomenon of anti-Gypsy sentiment and racist violence. Such sentiment and violence cannot be understood at the level of the national state.

The study of comparative politics encourages structured comparisons based on general patterns while identifying what may be unique to each national case. Cross-national comparisons, whether of institutions, populations, or regimes, can enable scholars to make better sense of the *work that race does* to link seemingly different ideologies and material and political practices. Invocation of race in politics can be found in political discourse as varied as the nationalist rhetoric of Jacques Le Pen, George Wallace (former governor of Alabama), David Duke, Jorg Haider of Austria, or Idi Amin of Uganda. Race is an interdependent variable that assumes meaning only in relation to the specific social and historical contexts in which it is embedded. Specific groups are inscribed and accorded a set of attributes that are treated as fixed or given under certain economic, political, and cultural conditions (e.g., Turks in Germany as immigrants and non-citizens; Gypsies as outsiders and non-citizens; eighteenth-century Blacks in the U.S. as slaves and the antithesis of citizens).

The invocation of race is further distinguished from the use of the term, *ethnicity*, because the former, more often than not, denotes hierarchy, the latter, less so. Specific groups and institutions, motivated by presumptions, prejudices, anxieties, belief systems, and ideologies, set the terms and conditions under which people interact with one another, consequently influencing the distribution of goods, services, and resources as well as processes of identity formation. Groups in turn contest, reject, or accept the terms of their access to material goods, services, and resources, as well as the myriad ways in which they are depicted and reacted to in a given society. In this way, not only do ideas of race serve as a conceptual conduit between social structure and meaning (Gilroy 1987), linking movement and access in society to specific groups of people, but they are necessarily constituted by ideas about nationhood, citizenship, gender relations, levels of socio-economic development, as well as other factors in the constitution of civil society and its monitoring by the state.

Instead of concentrating on the origins or definitions of “race,” an approach that treats race as a political phenomenon, rather than epiphenomena or essence, focuses on its employment and implementation in myriad political forms. This approach analyzes the processes by which the idea of race is invoked and practiced in political rhetoric, electoral competition, and public opinion as well as other modes of political competition and conflict.⁹ While race has neither a biological nor otherwise reified claim upon human difference, its thoroughly subjective character gives race its political resonance in politics in plural, multi-religious, and multi-national societies. Racial invocations serve as a binding element not only between groups and individuals, but also as a binding element that fuses seemingly disparate political rhetoric, institutional practices, and ideologies. This type of “comparative racial politics” approach acknowledges the relative autonomy of racial politics. It also acknowledges that the idea and practice of racial hierarchy and differentiation are neither completely apart from nor wholly subsumed by the modalities of class, economy, and nation. Race signifies not only group differentiation but also identity, structure, and power. Racism is certainly a form of politics.

The distinction between epistemic and a use-value aspect of the race concept is important to our understanding of race’s persistence in political life. Race and racism, in our view, are related though distinct practices that employed various classificatory schemes to justify the distinction and, in some instances, unequal treatment of various human groups, independently of the epistemological validity of the concept

of race itself. The fact that racism and the race concept have outlived several seemingly definitive scholarly and ecclesiastic debates should suggest that, independent of its dubious pedigree in the natural sciences, its continued employment in actual human interaction makes its recurrence worthy of study, at least as a means of naming specific processes of power, inequality, identity, and preference formation.

As with most political phenomena, the “truth” or “facts” of a conflict are often secondary or even irrelevant to the outcome of the debate surrounding the conflict. Winners and losers of political debates, electoral campaigns, and other modes of political contestation rely on elements other than truth or objectivity to sway their constituents. So it is with the political phenomena of race. Rigorous scientific, cross-national studies at the end of the twentieth century have demonstrated that biological differences between putatively “racial” groups are so miniscule that all peoples belong to the same human family; yet, these findings have not lessened the force of “race” in human interaction. In debates about race, as in other forms of political debate, political arguments recur not because of their verifiability, but because of their *plausibility*.

We believe that comparative politics can contribute greatly to our understanding of the *plausibility* of the idea of race, how it is successfully or unsuccessfully utilized in societies as a symbolic and material referent for employment, family organization, and procreation, ideological and formal party affiliation, and surveillance by the state. To clarify and justify further our bias toward a use-value perspective on ideas of race, we believe the now well-worn phrase, “race is a social construction,” provides qualitatively, interpretively oriented scholars with little means of discerning *how* ideas of race are evoked, conveyed, and practiced in both racially “plural” and “homogeneous” societies. In other words, rather than begin with the phrase, “race is a social construction,” we suggest comparativists and scholars more generally begin with questions such as, How do interests differ between and within groups who utilize race in various forms of politics? How do ideas of racial difference inform the material life of various groups in multi-ethnic and multi-racial societies, and, in turn, impact the crafting of state policies on immigration, policing, surveillance, and citizenship criteria?

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH: BROADENING OUR COMPARATIVE LENS IN CROSS-NATIONAL STUDIES OF RACIAL POLITICS

Our proposition for a new conceptualization of racial politics considers recurrent patterns of social, political, and cultural conflict not only in long-deemed multi-racial and plural societies, but also in polities not previously included in race relation paradigms. In fact, our motivation for a new conceptualization stems from our consideration of examples that demonstrate forms of political behavior and beliefs in societies defined as racially homogeneous and by implication, without racism. Evidence of racial conflict in parts of the world not associated with racial animus, especially nation-states that presumably have racially or ethnically homogeneous populations, suggests the need to broaden our comparative lens.

Like approaches in political economy which suggest colloquially to “follow the money trail,” scholars can track the patterns and practices of discrimination and economic exploitation of specific populations across national boundaries as a means of both identifying and confirming racisms against one or more populations cross-spatially. This can be done through comparison of demographic indicators as well as

through more symbolic, interpretive means of identifying stereotypes, caricatures, modes of violence, or other indicators of marginalization which may or may not be statistically, quantifiably evident. For example, how do certain populations get particular meanings ascribed to them? How do these meanings change over time? How are they conflated with other populations both internally and externally? Analyzing such cross-national patterns at both the micro and macro levels allows us to identify similarities, entanglements, and overlaps of how specific racial and ethnic groups are characterized as well as how racial stereotypes, racist imagery, and forms of racial domination in one nation-state influence racial politics in others.¹⁰

This method has two principal advantages. First, it helps determine whether the condition of a particular population is nationally specific or multi-national. Members of a particular population, especially political actors from marginalized groups, can compare and contrast their conditions and circumstances with those of ethno-national, religious, or racial groups in other territorial sites, comparing notes, as it were. Second, such comparisons not only help to identify continuities and discontinuities, but they also, almost simultaneously, highlight differences in national-state reactions to these populations. This in turn helps assess not only degrees of animosity toward a particular group, but also the distinctive, often idiosyncratic manner in which states process and react to the internal animosity toward a particular group, whether there is symmetry or tension, for example, between state and civil responses. Internal tensions within either society or state provide indicators of political instability, freedom of association and speech, as well as many other factors social scientists utilize in their assessments and typologies of regime types and polities.

For example, mainstream approaches to the study of racism in Japan often frame the case as regionally or culturally specific—one that negatively influences Japanese foreign relations with its Asian neighbors or that can be somehow categorized as emanating from “Asian values.” Indeed, discussions of racism in Japan often focus more on racist statements made by Japanese politicians vis-à-vis American racial minorities than on racial politics within Japan. Yet, the marginalization of long-term Korean and Chinese residents, *burakumin*, Ainu, Okinawans, and recent Asian immigrants parallels that of phenotypically different groups in multiracial societies in terms of discrimination in housing, education, and employment based largely on consanguinity. Certainly, state denial of racial/ethnic discrimination is a feature of state management of racial conflict, not an objective evaluation of racial and ethnic politics.

Our proposed method invites comparisons of cases with similar processes of racial discrimination and mobilization that may often be overlooked because scholars have traditionally placed them in exclusive categories of analysis—such as those of citizenship, immigration, or ethnicity—or because state and social actors themselves do not explicitly use the term, *race*, in reference to their cases. For example, if, as Balibar (1991) contends, immigration has come to replace race in contemporary manifestations of neoracism in Europe, then it would seem that much of the literature on international migration that focuses on Europe without discussion of racial politics may, unwittingly perhaps, give credence to the officially antiracist stance of the “new racism.” In addition, scholarship that examines international migration simply as a security issue overlooks the racial dimensions of the debates on immigration as well as the aforementioned connection between state sovereignty and race. The recent resurgence of the right in countries such as France, Germany, and Norway, where the issue of racial difference is central to the political rhetoric of right wing nationalists, suggests otherwise.

Two recent cases illustrate how racial ideologies and practices travel across national-state boundaries and affect local politics. The first involves the murder of an

immigrant from Mozambique by three neo-Nazi youths in the former East Germany. The incident, which occurred in June 2000, was part of a series of racially motivated attacks beginning in November 1990 with the murder of an Angolan immigrant. As described by the press, this case became a symbol of the resurgence in neo-Nazi violence and anti-immigrant sentiment especially among the young in eastern Germany, where unemployment is twice that of western Germany. Indeed, unemployment in the Dessau region, where the incident took place, has been over 20% since the collapse of the East German chemical industry (*New York Times*, August 23, 2000: A8). One of the neo-Nazi defendants in this case stated that he had attacked Alberto Adriano, the victim, because “foreigners take our jobs” (*New York Times*, August 31, 2000: A8). Immigrants, however, make up only 9% of the German population and the overwhelming majority resides in the west. Moreover, the three youths had been chronically unemployed and had not looked for work.

In January 2001, a similar case occurred in Norway where two neo-Nazi youths murdered Benjamin Hermansen, a teenager of Ghanaian and Norwegian ancestry. Described as a “watershed” by Norway’s prime minister, this case challenged the notion that racism is not a problem in what is widely regarded as a homogenous, tranquil society. Although non-White immigrants number only about 200,000 of the total 4.4 million population in Norway, anti-immigrant sentiment has surged in recent years as reflected in the ouster of the Labor Party by a coalition supported by the anti-immigrant Progress Party in the September 2001 elections. In this case, the judge concluded that the defendants had cruised the streets of Oslo’s Holmlia suburb, where a large number of non-White immigrants reside, with the intention of “getting a foreigner” (*Guardian*, January 18, 2002: 14). During the trial, the defendants declared that “Norway should be reserved for White-skinned Norwegians,” reflecting a general fear that foreigners are abusing Norway’s generous welfare system (*New York Times*, January 18, 2002: A8).

Both of these cases demonstrate the prevalence of the idea that non-White “foreigners” pose an economic threat to the White “native” population. Furthermore, both cases exhibit dual practices of racism: racist assumptions and racist violence. The Norway case in particular highlights how racial ideas and practices normally associated with multiracial societies resonate in societies that are regarded as homogenous and free of overt racial conflict. Critically, the target population need not be present to be symbolically identified with laziness, criminal behavior, sexual depravity, and other stereotypes. Where do these ideas come from? How do these ideas circulate? What is the motivation to kill somebody who is seen as a racial threat? If we were to examine these cases as purely national or regional phenomena—for example, as legacies of Germany’s Nazi past or as part of a resurgent fascist movement in Europe—we would overlook the parallels and connections to similar racial phenomena not only in other parts of Europe but also in the United States, Russia, Uganda, Indonesia, and China to name just a few examples. In the absence of overt conflict as in the Norway case, racial ideologies affect politics at the level of the quotidian as well as the spectacle. Our discussion of the case of European Gypsies in the following section, for example, shows not only the persistence of racial ideologies, but also the challenges to different levels: the quotidian, party, domestic, national, regional, international, and transnational.

There are thus four different aspects and phases of the mobilization of racial politics in the ambit of ideology: articulation, congruence, behavior, and reiteration. Agents utilizing such ideologies may underestimate or overestimate their degrees of resonance (and hence, degrees of political viability of their programs and aims). However abhorrent, reprehensible, or unpopular racially and ethnically chauvinist ideologies

may appear to some, ideologies, in and of themselves, do not burn churches in the United States or synagogues in France or chase down immigrants in Dessau, Germany, Milan, Italy, or Kampala, Uganda. It is in this sense that we suggest that racial ideologies *mediate* the relationship between chauvinist ideas and behaviors by making ideas seem not only actionable, but also justifiable even in the face of contrary evidence.

The contemporary reactions to the presence of Sinti/Roma peoples in Western Europe point to the enduring effects of racial ideologies upon target populations in multi-racial and multi-ethnic polities. Survey data on popular responses to various populations in Europe have demonstrated that Gypsies are the least liked population of all immigrant and resident groups deemed as outsiders. The significance of the regional indicators of ostracism of Gypsies inheres not only in the presence of racist attitudes and behaviors against a specific population, both subtle and overt, but also in the manner in which both state and nation-state centered analyses limit our comprehension of the transnational and multi-national dimensions of antipathy toward a specific population.

As comparativists, we believe that nation and nation-state centered analyses can bear the risk of isolating certain political phenomena of racial politics or comprehending them as local or singular phenomena. What the instance of anti-Gypsy antipathies further points to for scholars is the legacies or residues of racial ideologies from previous eras of nation-state formation and consolidation. Despite differences in political culture, institutions, language, industry, and economy, a variegated unity of nationalist ideologies has persistently constructed Sinti/Roma as outsiders, and thereby has challenged explanations which assert the primacy of the state as a generative site of racist ideologies and racial categorizations (Barany 2002; Hancock 1988). Indeed, the state may be an arbiter or manufacturer of contemporary depictions. However, given the vast differences in immigration policies as well as in histories of nationalism and xenophobia, the “givens” of anti-Gypsy ideologies, sentiments, rhetorics, and behaviors cannot be attributed to the states of contemporary Western Europe for the simple fact that such ideologies pre-date both the post-World War Two era and European consolidation.

The summary report on Islamophobia published by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia indicates a rise in “physical and verbal threats being made, particularly to those visually identifiable Muslims, in particular women wearing the hijab” (Allen and Nielsen, 2002, p. 16). Despite variations in the number and correlation of physical and verbal threats directed at the Muslim population among the individual nation-states, one overarching feature among the fifteen European Union nation-states is the tendency for Muslim women to be attacked because of the role of the hijab as a signifier of Muslim identity (Allen and Nielsen, 2002, p. 35). In Luxembourg, which has a much smaller Islamic population than other EU members and which reported relatively few incidents of Islamophobia, rare is the sight of Islamic women wearing veils in public, according to the report. Other visual identifiers include turbans and beards for men, even though such identifiers have more ambiguous, multivalent symbolism.

The conjuncture of catastrophic event (9/11/2001) and pre-existent antipathy toward political refugees, asylum seekers, and non-White immigrants serves to underscore how racist, ethno-national chauvinisms can be exacerbated in times of crisis. When added to the continuing internationalization of a global labor force, flexible production, increased traffic in cyberspace, and voluntary and involuntary migrations, crises also provide further rationalization for states and dominant groups to limit or place added strictures on migration as well as on the political, economic, and social rights of populations defined as Other.¹¹

CONCLUSION

In assessing the current state of approaches to the subject of race, we must confront the fact that race-based classificatory schemes and racist justifications for the subordination and slaughter of various groups have endured despite constructivist claims of race's obsolescence as a viable category for social scientific investigation. The gap between constructivist pronouncements announcing the obsolescence of the race concept and the recurrence of conflict premised in whole or in part on racial distinction and enmity, provides the basis for new theorizing about the politics that emerge from these conflicts. The examination of racisms is only a part of a literature that could constitute the basis of a sub-field within comparative politics. A field of comparative racial politics could combine the study of racism with anti-racist strategies instigated by social movements, minority groups, as well as states, in addition to the political activities of racist organizations to promote exclusionary public policies of immigration and social welfare by emphasizing the racial distinctions of potential immigrants and resident foreigners (Gurr et al., 1993; Jalali and Lipset, 1992–1993). Lastly, a focus on race and nationalism in comparative politics could yield new approaches and empirical investigations into the linkages between racism and political behaviors, ideologies, and institutional practices. The lack of interest in racial politics among students of comparative politics is especially ironic because, as Ira Katznelson (1973, p. 14) has argued, the study of race itself is fundamentally the study of politics, or “organized inequality.” Not only does it deal with the question of “who gets what and how” but also “who gets left out and how.” We would also add that the study of race and racism necessarily overlaps with the study of nationalism, political economy, social welfare, and immigration.

The study of race provides opportunities for cross-national research that can ultimately be linked to some of the classic preoccupations of comparative political science: for example, the interaction between state and civil institutions, between social movements and states, as well as determinants of political stability, flexibility, and democratic rule in a particular nation-state. On the other hand, comparing racial and ethnic politics cross-nationally while respecting the uniqueness of each national case illuminates both the world-historical and local aspects of racism, racial and ethnic identities, and racial and ethnic politics. Extant methodologies in comparative politics tend to compare bureaucracies and institutions either cross-nationally at the level of the state or within one nation according to federalist, centralized, or cantonal systems. In this article, we have proposed a method that combines ethnographic, micro-level analyses of racial processes in daily life with macro-level examinations of the state. In other words, we are concerned with how race works and how it is made and remade over time not only at the level of the state, but also within civil society. In conclusion, we believe that comparative studies of racial politics provide a singular opportunity to consider some of the analytic and conceptual challenges posed by the recognition that ideologies of race and racism in the twenty-first century connect disparate peoples, regimes, institutions, and national mythologies in peculiar, often startling ways.

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NOTES

1. The significance of this debate resonated within other disciplines as well as in real-life politics and conflicts; with matters of race, matters of biology are never far behind. The

debate that emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s over the allegedly biological origins of supposedly distinct racial groups of human species regrettably, in our view, returned scholarship on race to more biologically based arguments. Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray's *The Bell Curve* (1994), which made several claims about race and culture, exorcised biologists and anthropologists respectively for its application of biological theories to explain differences in intellect and mental aptitude among various "races" of human beings. In what Stephen Steinberg (1981) presciently referred to as "the New Darwinism," the term *culture* supplanted biology as a means of distinguishing and rationalizing differential societal outcomes for various groups in the United States. As we discuss later, several European scholars and commentators noted similar ideological innovations in the discourse about race in Western Europe during this period.

2. Another variant of the constructivist argument is the position of Walter Benn Michaels, a sociologist who posits the idea of race as performance, that performing Blackness or Whiteness is tantamount to *being* White or Black in a society such as the United States. Though there is much to be sympathetic about in this view, particularly since it takes the constructivist perspective to the level of daily life and practice, it ignores the structural and symbolic dimensions of racial classification which are external to the individual, and present the individual with a range of choices or options in a society or context. Indeed, Walter Benn Michael's performative definition of race could be seen as emphasizing the meaning component of our definition of race while ignoring the structural dimension.
3. Miles distinguishes between the position that class relations always mediate the expression of racism and the notion that racism is functional to capital. He maintains that the former position refers to the claim that the "historical and contemporary influence of racism" in Western Europe is "necessarily refracted through the prism of class conflicts" (Miles and Singer-Kérel, 1991, p. 272).
4. Furthermore, in his review of Miles's *Racism After "Race Relations,"* David Theo Goldberg questions the basic premise of Miles's position that race and racism are ideological rationalizations of capitalist labor exploitation. He notes that Miles incorrectly attributes the first English use of racial language to the seventeenth century when, according to Goldberg's findings, it first appears explicitly in 1508. This finding suggests that "racial articulation did not arise simply to *rationalize* slavery; rather, it made possible the very conceptualization of enslaving racial Others" (Goldberg 1996, p. 223).
5. David Goldberg (1993, pp. 3, 206–210) takes a more global and historically extended view of this argument. He proposes that, since its inception at the turn of the fifteenth century, race in the West has been one of the "central conceptions of modernity" that, in the form of racialized expression, has "served to fix social subjects in place and time, no matter their spatial location, to delimit privilege and possibilities, to open opportunities to some while excluding the range of racialized Others."
6. In a later work, Winant (1994) extends this analysis to the global context, arguing that race is a fundamental organizing principle in the modern world that is "simultaneously a global and a local phenomenon, politically contested from the largest to the smallest of social terrains" (p. 113). He asserts that the direction of racial theory must correspond with the changing meaning of race. Global developments associated with the movement of capital and labor illuminate the "continuing significance and changing meaning of race" (p. 14) rather than its demise. Though there is a global intent to his analysis, one must ask whether there is indeed a *single* global pattern of racial politics and dynamics, a question raised in a review essay in the inaugural edition of this journal by sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva. In Winant's quest for an overarching theory, there is also a tendency to project a singular paradigm of racial politics worldwide. This paradigm of racial formation, maintenance, and transformation does not account for forms of racism outside the boundaries of non-Western nation-states and is not uniformly applicable to cases involving non-White peoples or peoples of developing countries. For example, anti-African racism in China, discrimination against Koreans in Japan, and East Indian discrimination in Uganda do not necessarily correspond with Western imperial paradigms of racial hierarchy.
7. It is commonplace in various literatures of political science and other social sciences to complicate earlier conceptualizations of state practice, bureaucracy, and policy formation as somewhat neutral processes of arbitration vis-à-vis civil society. Stepan's (1978, 1988) earlier studies of authoritarian rule in Peru and other parts of Latin America, O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead's (1986a, 1986b, 1986c) collaborative scholarship on transitions from authoritarian rule as well as Przeworski's (1986) discussion of studying transitions to democracy all demonstrate, among other tendencies, the proclivity of states to

- massage, shape, and give coherence to civil society based on a set of normative assumptions, which encompass perceived economic and political imperatives. Virtually no attention is paid in these literatures, however, to how states and regimes exhibit similar behaviors according to the logic of race and notions of racial distinctiveness and the effects of such behaviors on immigration policy, domestic and social welfare policies, as well as more elastic factors such as national identity.
8. Indeed, national mythologies of a people and/or particular territory serve this purpose.
 9. Gurr and Harff (1994) attribute the instrumentalist view of ethnic politics exclusively to scholars who apply rational actor models to situations of ethnic conflict, and by extension, racial conflict as well, insofar as racial or ethnic difference is viewed as a factor or variable in political processes, and can be invoked by political actors, institutions, and organizations in the hope of affecting political outcomes. While there is certainly a rationalist dimension to the employment of the symbols of solidarity and exclusion, as well as resolve and anxiety associated with the ideas of ethnic or racial difference, our view does not preclude the possibility of forms of racial and ethnic chauvinisms affecting political outcomes which may either be unintentional, or not directly evolving from political intentionality. Ideology represents the dimension of racial politics that best evidences the space for analysis between primordialist and instrumentalist views. As we discuss later in this article, there are numerous cases of the use of outwardly or subtly racist ideologies to mobilize certain populations against others in which neither genetic and sociobiological nor rationalist and instrumentalist approaches to racial politics have primary or even secondary explanatory weight.
 10. Similarly, Dawson and Cohen (2002) argue for a multi-method approach to research on race and politics that is informed by interdisciplinary scholarship and that explores the intersections of race with other social cleavages.
 11. Well before the consolidation of the European Union, however, European sociologists had begun to focus on the effects of non-White migration into Europe at a moment when several European countries were experiencing economic downturn. The edited volume by Robert Miles and Dietrich Thranhardt (1995) addresses some of the implications of immigration during this period, with implications for public policy, citizenship laws, and the specific diffusion of xenophobic ideologies regarding non-White populations—residents, immigrants, and citizens alike.

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