Marxism, racism and ethnicity.

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Marxism provides a profound analysis of the interrelations of events, putting economics into perspective. However, Marxism as a method in sociological research fails to provide substantial explanation to problems pertaining to race and ethnic relations. Assumptions which can explain economic relationships fail to explain contemporary racism and problems associated with it. Advocates of Marxism face the challenge of showing the relevance of their theoretical and historical views to contemporary forms of race and ethnic relations.

Contemporary debates about race and ethnicity have been influenced in one way or another by Marxist and neo-Marxist scholarship and research. This is clear from both recent theoretical texts on the subject and from empirical and historical studies in a number of societies. Indeed, it can be argued that an engagement with Marxism has been at the heart of many of the most original contributions to recent debates in this field. It is therefore appropriate that, even at a time when Marxist scholarship is perhaps in relative decline and Marxism as a political ideology seems discredited, an attempt is made to reassess its contribution to our understanding of racial and ethnic relations in contemporary societies. This is what this article tries to do, at least in a partial sense, by taking a critical look at Marxist-influenced scholarship in this field.

The first part of the article looks at the development of a Marxist approach to racism and ethnicity. This includes an attempt to define the key questions with which Marxists have been concerned during recent years. The emergence of new critical perspectives from within the Marxist paradigm is then explored by reference to some of the main texts produced over the past decade or so. The concluding part of the article looks at the attempts to develop a post-Marxist analysis that takes account of the limitations of existing accounts of the dynamics of racial and ethnic relations.

FROM CLASSICAL TO NEO-MARXISM

The works of Marx and Engels contain a number of scattered references to the pertinence of racial and ethnic relations in particular societies - for example, the references to race as an economic factor in the slavery of the United States and the position of Irish migrant workers in Britain. But they contain little historical or theoretical reflection on the role of such processes in the development of capitalist social relations as a whole. Perhaps even more damaging, a number of critics have argued that several statements on race by Marx and Engels reveal traces of the dominant racial stereotypes of their time and an uncritical usage of common sense racist imagery. Additionally, a number of critics of Marxism have argued that the reliance by Marxists on the concept of class has precluded them from analyzing racial and ethnic phenomena in their own right, short of subsuming them under wider social relations or treating them as a kind of superstructural phenomenon (Solomos, 1986).

This kind of criticism has been a recurrent theme in both sociological and historical writing on this subject over the years. Yet it is clear from writings in the United States, Great Britain, and other societies that Marxism has provided an important source of theoretical influence in research on race and ethnicity. This can be seen in the number of important theoretical studies that have been produced by Marxist writers. There is also by now a sizable number of historical studies that have been produced from within the Marxist paradigm. What seems clear is that Marxist discussion of race and racism is searching for a new agenda for the analysis of the dynamics of racial categorization, and there are some encouraging signs of development and renewal.

What of the themes that have helped to define a specifically Marxist approach to the study of racism and ethnicity? Although it is not easy to state categorically what the main concerns of all Marxist approaches to this subject have been, it is clear that a number of themes have been emphasized in recent Marxist scholarship. For example, the role of political institutions has provided a major area of research for those scholars who have attempted to use a Marxist perspective. A number of studies have focused specifically on the role of the state as a site for the reproduction of racially structured situations. Drawing partly on recent Marxist debates on the nature of the capitalist state, a number of studies have analyzed the interplay between politics and racism in specific historical settings. Studies of the role of state institutions in maintaining racialized structures in a number of societies, particularly the United States and South Africa, have highlighted the importance of the political context of racism. This has raised important questions and problems: What is the precise role of the state in the reproduction of racially structured social relations? How far can the state be transformed into an instrument of antiracist political actions? These and other questions are currently being explored and debated.

Important contributions are being made to this debate from

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a number of countries, which are helping to fashion new perspectives on the role of the state in maintaining racial domination. A good example of such research is the numerous studies of the South African state and its role in institutionalizing the apartheid system during the period since 1948. These studies have shown that the role of state and legal institutions was a central part of the processes leading to the establishment of apartheid and its maintenance. They have also suggested that there is a need to include the state as a key actor in the study of racism in different national and political contexts.

Another important theme has been the role of racism as a source of division within the working class. This theme was central to the work of early Marxist writers such as Oliver Cox (1948). It has once again become central to contemporary debates about racism and class formation. In a number of studies about the role of racism and ethnicity in Western Europe and the United States, this question has been investigated from both a theoretical and a historical perspective. Stephen Castles and Mark Miller (1993) have recently looked at the complex ways in which class, race, and ethnicity have interacted in particular historical contexts to create distinct strata within the working class.

This concern with the state and politics has been evident in studies about the United States and Europe as well. A key concern of a number of recent U.S. studies has been the interrelationship between relations of politics, power, and racism. As Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1986) argue in Racial Formation in the United States, one of the most salient features of racial relations in contemporary societies is the role of political and legal relations in defining the existence of racial categories and defining the social meanings of notions such as racial inequality, racism, and ethnicity.

This theme has been taken up in studies of the situation of Black and other ethnic minorities in Europe during recent years. Such studies have looked particularly at the processes by which minority communities and migrant workers are often excluded from equal access to the political institutions and are denied basic social and economic rights. It is interesting to note in this context that in countries such as Germany and France, a key point in recent political conflicts has been the question of whether migrant workers should be given greater political rights.

A final aspect of recent debates about the pertinence of Marxism to the analysis of race and racism is the question of whether there is an intrinsic Eurocentric bias in the core of Marxist theory. This is a theme that has been taken up during recent years by a number of critics of Marxism and by others who profess to be sympathetic to the Marxist tradition. Perhaps the most important statement of this position is Cedric Robinson's (1983) Black Marxism, which argues forcefully that Marxism is inextricably tied to Western European philosophical traditions that cannot easily incorporate the experience of racism and ethnic divisions. This and other studies seem certain to raise questions that will play a part in Marxist discussions for some time to come.

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON MARXISM AND RACISM

The 1970s and 1980s were an important period in the emergence of a Marxist approach to race and ethnicity. This period saw the emergence of a number of substantial criticisms of the research agenda on race relations, written largely from a neo-Marxist perspective. Such criticisms were influenced both by theoretical and political considerations, and they helped to stimulate new areas of debate. One of the most ambitious attempts to provide a theoretical foundation for a Marxist framework can be found in the work of Robert Miles. The starting point of Miles's critique was his opposition to the existence of a sociology of race and his view that the object of analysis should be racism, which he viewed as integral to the process of capital accumulation (Miles, 1982, 1986).

The work of Miles represents the most worked-out attempt to develop a Marxist analysis of racism as a social and historical phenomenon. His writings reflect a deep concern with overcoming the potentially divisive impact of racism on class organization and radical political action. His analysis was first articulated in 1982 in Racism and Migrant Labour and is perhaps the most sustained attempt to include the study of racism within the mainstream of Marxist social theory. His empirical research has focused specifically on the situation in Britain and in the rest of Western Europe and has looked at the role of political, class, and ideological relationships in shaping our understandings of racial conflict and change in these societies.

For Miles, the idea of race refers to a human construct, an ideology with regulatory power within society. Analytically, race constitutes a paper tiger (Miles, 1988), which may be a common term of reference within everyday discourse but which presents a serious theoretical problem. It is here that Miles diverges from what he sees as the race relations problematic. Miles (1982, p. 42) is concerned with the analytical and objective status of race as a basis of action. Race is thus an ideological effect, a mask that hides real economic relationships (Miles, 1984). Thus the forms of class consciousness that are legitimate for Miles must ultimately be reduced to economic relations that are hidden within the regulatory process of racialization.

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It is within this context that the concepts of racial categorization and racialization have been used to refer to what Miles calls "those instances where social relations between people have been structured by the signification of human biological characteristics in such a way as to define and construct differentiated social collectivities" (Miles, 1989b, p. 75). A number of writers have attempted to use these concepts to analyze the processes by which the term race has been socially and politically constructed in specific historical, political, and institutional contexts.

Good examples of such studies include attempts to critically analyze the role of race relations legislation, the emergence of Black minority representation in political institutions, and the development of public policies dealing with specific aspects of racial inequality in areas such as employment and housing. The premise of such studies is that the processes by which race is given particular meanings are variable across and within national boundaries and are shaped by political, legal, and socioeconomic environments. Comparative studies of immigration policies in Europe have shown, for example, that the construction of legislation to control the arrival of specific groups of migrants was often the subject of intense political and ideological controversy.

For Miles, the process of racialization is interrelated with the conditions of migrant laborers. Its effects are the result of the contradiction between "on the one hand the need of the capitalist world economy for the mobility of human beings, and on the other, the drawing of territorial boundaries and the construction of citizenship as a legal category which sets boundaries for human mobility" (Miles, 1988, p. 438). Within the British setting, this ideological work conducted primarily by the state acts as a means of crisis management and results in racializing fragments of the working class. Race politics are thus confined to the forces of regulation. For Miles, the construction of political identities that use racial consciousness play no part in the development of a progressive politics.

Miles raises some fundamental questions about the nature of political action within communities of migrant labor. The most important of these is the degree to which Black and minority politics are really distillations of class conflict. If this is true, then any movements away from class-based political action (i.e., movements toward any notions of Black community politics) are doomed to failure (Miles, 1988, 1989b). If one takes this argument further, class-based political action is ultimately in opposition to any sort of sustained political organization around a notion of race. For Miles, the politics of race is narrowly confined to the struggle against racism. This is neatly captured in the way he uses Hall's (1980, p. 341) statement on the relationship between class and race. He concludes that it is not race but racism that can be the modality in which class is lived and fought through (Miles, 1988, p. 447).

Miles's (1989b) insistence that racial differentiations are always created in the context of class differentiation is a core feature of his critique of the sociology of race relations. However, his position could be said to result in a kind of class reductionism that ultimately limits the scope of theoretical work on conceptualizing racism and racialized social relations. For example, in some contexts, class exploitation may be incidental to the construction of situations of racial dominance (Goldberg, 1992). However, the greatest contribution that Miles makes is his insistence that races are created within the context of political and social regulation. Thus race is above all a political construct. It is within this context that the concepts of racial categorization and racialization have been used to refer to what Miles (1989b) refers to as instances in which social relations between people are structured by the signification of human biological characteristics in a manner that defines and constructs differentiated social collectivities. His work constitutes an attempt to reclaim the study of racism from an apoliticized sociological framework and locate it squarely in a Marxist theorization of social conflict.

Another influential critique of the sociology of race during the early 1980s emanated from the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in Birmingham, England. The work of the CCCS Race and Politics Group during this period was particularly concerned with the changing nature of the politics of race during the 1970s and the development of new forms of racial ideology. The theoretical approach of the CCCS group was influenced by the work of Stuart Hall (1980) in particular. The CCCS group was critical of the arguments both of the sociologists of race and of Miles.

The work of the CCCS group resulted in the publication of The Empire Strikes Back (CCCS, 1982). This volume attracted widespread attention at the time and still remains a point of reference in current debates. Two of the contributors to this volume have subsequently attempted to develop substantive studies derived from it (Gilroy, 1987; Solomos, 1988, 1989). A major concern of the CCCS group was the need to analyze the complex processes by which race is constructed as a social and political relation. The CCCS group emphasized that the race concept is not simply confined as a process of regulation operated by the state but that the meaning of race as a social construction is contested and fought over. In this sense, the CCCS group viewed race as an open political construction whereby the political meaning of terms such as Black are fought over. Collective identities spoken through race, community, and locality are, for all their spontaneity, powerful means to coordinate action and

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create solidarity (Gilroy, 1987).

Within this model of political action, a multiplicity of political identities can be held. An inclusive notion of Black identity can prevail and, at the same time, allow heterogeneity of national and cultural origins within this constituency (Gilroy, 1987, p. 236). Gilroy, for example, argues that the crucial question here is the extent to which notions of race can be reforgex3 into a political color of opposition. He holds little hope that this process can be developed within the arena of representative democracy. Instead, he views pressure group strategies, which have evolved out of community struggles that use a specifically Black political vernacular, as the way forward. Gilroy argues for a radical revision of class analysis in metropolitan contexts. He suggests that political identities that are spoken through race can be characterized as social movements that are relatively autonomous from class relations.

It should also be noted that The Empire Strikes Back was one of the first books on race relations in Britain to look in any depth at the question of gender and the role of sexism in the context of racialized relations. The contributions of Hazel Carby and Pratibha Parmar to this volume provide a point of reference and debate about the interplay among race, class, and gender during the 1980s. They also highlight the relevance of looking at this dimension of racial relations in a context where the bulk of research remained gender blind.

In exploring these issues, The Empire Strikes Back acted as a catalyst to a politicization of debates about the role of research in relation to race relations. In a sense, the political struggles that were occurring within Black communities during the 1980s were being echoed in the context of the production of knowledge about racism. The sociology of race relations stood accused of being implicitly conservative and unable to articulate the theorization of racism with the nature of a class divided and structural inequalities in power. On the other hand, the sociologists of race and ethnic relations were also criticized for letting their theoretical imaginations be colored by an implicit Eurocentrism. The result was that the sociological literature demonstrated an inability to record the experiences of the Black people in Britain in a sympathetic way (Lawrence, 1981). These challenges marked an attempt to articulate the theoretical debates about how to understand racism with the political urgencies of economic crisis and the ideological challenge of the conservative new right. The point we want to emphasize here is that this debate needs to be situated within the political conjuncture of the early 1980s. It is quite clear that the preoccupation with prioritizing the analysis of racism was linked to a concern to fix the theoretical debate on questions of power and inequality. However, in making the conceptualization of racism a priority, these critiques failed to develop a theoretical framework for an elaborated analysis of wider social and cultural processes. It is this issue that has become one of the central theoretical questions of recent years.

CONCEPTUALIZING CONTEMPORARY RACISMS

The debates of the early 1980s continue to influence research agendas. However, a number of recent developments have meant that the neo-Marxist critiques of the early 1980s have not been able to cope with the complexities of theorizing racism during the 1990s. The first of these is the crisis within Marxism itself. In this context, some have called for a radical revision of class analysis (Anthias, 1992; Castells, 1983; Gilroy, 1987) to incorporate political movements that mobilize around forms of identity other than class. Others have suggested a need to move away from Marxism as a framework of analysis and have taken on some of the concerns of poststructuralism and postmodernism (Gates, 1986; Goldberg, 1990).

One of the results of this shift is the growing concern with the status of cultural forms and a return to an analysis of the nature of ethnicity in metropolitan settings. The political naivete of the early work on ethnicity meant that, for much of the 1980s, the analysis of cultural processes and forms was rejected in favor of a focus on the politics of racism. The rejection of "culture" was tied to the notion that the culturalist perspective of the 1970s did little more than blame the victims of racism (Lawrence, 1982). However, the question of cultural production and the politics of identity is fast becoming an important area of contemporary debate. New perspectives are being developed that examine the ways in which cultural forms are being made and remade producing complex social phenomena (Hewitt, 1991). These new syncretic cultures are being plotted within the global networks of the African and South Asian diaspora (Bhachu, 1991; Gilroy, 1987).

The process of reclaiming culture in critical debate has simultaneously involved a reexamination of how racism is conceptualized. These contributions engage in one way or another with the arguments of poststructuralism and postmodernism, and they point to the need to avoid uniform and homogeneous conceptualizations of racism. Although not yet part of the agenda of mainstream research on race relations, a range of studies of racialized discourses in the mass media, literature, art, and other cultural forms has begun to be produced. Reacting against what they see as the lack of an account of cultural forms of racial discourse, a number of writers have sought to develop a more rounded picture of contemporary racial imagery by looking at the role of literature, the popular

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media, and other cultural forms in representing changing images of race and ethnicity.

As David Goldberg (1990) has pointed out, "the presumption of a single monolithic racism is being displaced by a mapping of the multifarious historical formulations of racisms" (p. xiii). In this context, it is perhaps not surprising that a key concern of many recent texts in this field is to explore the interconnections between race and nationhood, patriotism, and nationalism rather than analyze ideas about biological inferiority. The ascendancy of the political right in Britain during the 1980s prompted commentators to identify a new period in the history of English racism. The "new racism," or what Fanon (1967) referred to as "cultural racism," has its origins in the social and political crisis afflicting Britain (Barker, 1981; Gilroy, 1990). Its focus is the defense of the mythic "British/English way of life" in the face of attack from enemies outside ("Argies," "Frogs," "Krauts," "Iraqis") and within ("Black communities," "Muslim fundamentalists"). Paul Gilroy (1987, pp. 55-56) points to an alarming consequence of new racism in which Blackness and Englishness are reproduced as mutually exclusive categories.

The new cultural racism points to the urgency of comprehending racism and notions of race as changing and historically situated. As Goldberg (1992) has pointed out, it is necessary to define race conceptually by looking at what this term signifies at different times - thus the question of whether race is an ontologically valid concept or otherwise is sidestepped in favor of an interrogation of the ideological quality of racialized subjectivities. The writing on new racism shows how contemporary manifestations of race are coded in a language that aims to circumvent accusations of racism. In the case of new racism, race is coded as culture. However, the central feature of these processes is that the qualities of social groups are fixed, made natural, and confined within a pseudo-biologically defined culturalism (Barker, 1981). What is clear from these writings is that a range of discourses on social differentiation may have a metonymic relationship to racism. The semantics of race are produced by a complex set of interdiscursive processes in which the language of culture and nation invokes a hidden racial narrative. The defining feature of this process is the way in which it naturalizes social formations in terms of a racial/cultural logic of belonging.

The politics of race and racism has undergone numerous transformations during recent decades. Debates about the ontological status of race, the object of investigation, and the agenda for research in this field are partly the result of these transformations. Whereas some authors writing in the tradition of race and ethnic relations studies have been careful to separate the research process from political action, such a separation is in some ways impossible and even undesirable. This is why the political agendas involved in conceptualizing racism need to be made explicit.

It is perhaps because analytical debates necessarily involve political disputes that no one theoretical perspective is dominant at the present time. Indeed, much of the mainstream research in this field is not theoretically informed in any substantial way. There is a need for greater theoretical clarity on key concepts and a broadening of the research agenda to cover issues that have been neglected, such as the politics of culture and identity. In this sense, Michael Banton (1991) may well be right in his contention that different theoretical paradigms may be able to contribute their own distinctive accounts of the processes that involve the attribution of specific meanings to racial situations. However, the point that Banton misses is that the various paradigms that are adopted within this area of research contain an implicit or explicit political position vis-a-vis the politics knowledge production. In this case, it is not a matter of choosing appropriate analytical tools from some diverse theoretical bag, but rather it is necessary to situate these paradigms in relation to each other and political debates over what could or should be the focus of analysis.

The question of how to conceptualize racism is not purely an academic matter; it is connected with a wider political culture in any given historical conjuncture. Our own awareness that this is the case has been heightened by our current research into local politics and racism in Birmingham and the dilemmas we face with regard to the relationship between research and political interventions (Back & Solomos, 1993). One of the starting points of this research is that race is foremost a political construct. As a result, racialized assertions need to be located within processes of social regulation and identity formation. In the course of our research, however, it has become clear that racism manifests itself in plural and complex forms. In this situation, the logic of racism needs to be appraised in what we call metonymic elaborations. This means that racisms may be expressed through a variety of coded signifiers. We have already discussed one such elaboration (i.e., the coding of race as culture). Contemporary racisms have evolved and adapted to new circumstances. The crucial property of these elaborations is that they can produce a racist effect while denying that this effect is the result of racism. For example, the new racisms of the 1980s are coded within a cultural logic. As a result, the champions of this racism can claim that they are protecting their way of life and that the issue of color or phenotype is irrelevant.

In this context, unitary or simplistic definitions of racism

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become hard to sustain. However, it seems clear that contemporary racisms share some central features. They attempt to fix human social groups in terms of natural properties of belonging within particular political and geographical contexts. The assertion that racialized subjects do not belong within, say, British society is then associated with social and cultural characteristics designated to them within the logic of particular racisms.

In this context, the meanings of race and racism need to be located within particular fields of discourse and articulated to the social relations found within that context. It is then necessary to see what kinds of racialized identities are being formed within these contexts. We are suggesting a position that builds into any analysis a rigorous scrutiny of racialized definitions, whether they are operated by the local state or by the range of political mobilizations that are occurring around racial and ethnic identities within Black communities. This approach seeks to decipher the meanings of racialized identities without attempting to prioritize one classification as more legitimate than another.

We are suggesting a model for conceptualizing racisms that is (a) sensitive to local and contextual manifestations of racist discourse and (b) able to connect local manifestations with wider or national public discourses. The theoretical work on racism has produced accounts of racism that derive contemporary forms of racism from public political discourse. This evidence is then used to generalize about broad trends within British society. We are suggesting that there is a need to situate racisms within particular settings and then move toward a more general account of their wider significance.

One of the weaknesses of the literature that examines media and political discourses is that it has not attempted to look at how these ideological forms manifest themselves at the local level within specific communities. The question remains, How pervasive is the new racism? Or, How do these national discourses relate to the particularities of a specific social context? Gilroy, for example, alludes to a new kind of cultural politics that defines new racism and develops a political and cultural aesthetic that is both Black and English. Hall (1988, p. 30), returning to the flag metaphor, refers to a shift in his own thinking: "Fifteen years ago we didn't care, or at least I didn't care, whether there was any black in the Union Jack. Now not only do we care but we must."

A series of empirical studies has shown evidence that significant dialogues are taking place within multiethnic communities of working-class youth (Hewitt, 1986; Jones, 1988). In the encounter between Black young people and their White inner-city peers, "Black culture has become a class culture ... as two generations of whites have appropriated it, discovered its seductive forms of meaning for their own" (Gilroy, 1990, p. 273). The result is that it is impossible to speak of Black culture in Britain separately from the culture of Britain as a whole. These processes have important implications for developing an analysis of racism that is socially, politically, and even geographically situated. The local context has important effects resulting in complex outcomes in which particular racisms may be muted whereas others flourish (Back, 1993).

Another focus within the emerging literature on the cultural politics of racism has been the social construction of race and difference in literature and the cinema. This has been a neglected area of research but, during recent years, this has been remedied by the publication of a number of important studies of race, culture, and identity. Originating largely from the United States, such studies have looked at a number of areas including literature, the cinema, and other popular cultural forms. They have sought to show that within contemporary societies our understandings of race, and the articulation of racist ideologies, cannot be reduced to economic, political, or class relations.

This type of approach is in fact more evident outside sociology. During recent years, the work of literary and cultural theorists in the United States and Britain has begun to explore seriously the question of race and racism and has led to a flowering of studies that use the debates around poststructuralism and postmodernism as a way of approaching the complex forms of racialized identities in colonial and postcolonial societies (Gates, 1986, 1988; Goldberg, 1990).

There has also been a growth of interest in historical research on the origins of ideas about race and in the dynamics of race, class, and gender during the colonial period (Ware, 1992). This has been reflected in important and valuable accounts of the changing usage of racial symbols during the past few centuries and in accounts of the experiences of colonialism and their impact on our understandings of race and culture. The work of Gayatri Spivak (1987) has helped to highlight, for example, the complex processes of racial and gender identification experienced by the colonized during the colonial and postcolonial periods. Other studies have sought to show that the oppressed themselves have produced their own discourses about race and identity in the context of their own experiences of domination and exclusion (Bhabha, 1990; Young, 1990).

Equally, it has also become clear that there is a need to shed the narrow confines of the race relations problematic and develop a more sophisticated analysis of the impact of various racisms on the White majority. An embryonic

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literature exists on the politics of Whiteness that is attempting to develop such a focus of inquiry. However, there are immediate difficulties with this endeavor, as Richard Dyer (1988) has shown in his discussion of film representations. Dyer contends that White ethnicity in the cinema is implicitly present but explicitly absent and, as a result, it has "an everything and nothing quality" (pp. 44-46). In these representations, Whiteness is equated with normality and, as such, it is not in need of definition. Thus "being normal" is colonized by the idea of "being White." From a different perspective, Bell Hooks has graphically discussed the terrorizing effect that Whiteness has on the Black imagination. Writing on her experience of growing up as a Black woman in the American South, she comments, "Whiteness in the black imagination is often a representation of terror" (Hooks, 1992, p. 342). Clearly, there is a need for a research agenda that looks at the way White subjectivities are racialized and how Whiteness is manifested in discourse, communication, and culture.

This turn within critical writing has important implications. One of the fundamental criticisms of the sociology of race and ethnic relations is that it has too often focused on the victims rather than the perpetrators of racism. Prioritizing Whiteness as an area of critical endeavor has the potential to disrupt the sociological common sense that equates the discussion of racism with the empirical scrutiny of Black communities.

Hall has pointed out the urgency of deconstructing the meanings of Whiteness, not just for countering racism but also for the well-being of the African and Asian diaspora living in Britain:

I think for black people who live in Britain this question of finding some way in which the white British can learn to live with us and the rest of the world is almost as important as discovering our own identity. I think they are in more trouble than we are. So we, in a curious way, have to rescue them from themselves - from their own past. We have to allow them to see that England is a quite interesting place with quite an interesting history that has bossed us around for 300 years [but] that is finished. Who are they now? (BBC Radio, 1989)

There is already an emerging literature that is trying to answer the rhetorical question Hall has asked (Back, 1993; Jones, 1988). However, the connection between race and nation may well be eclipsed during the 1990s by the specter of an integrated and racialized Europe.

Theoretically, comprehending Whiteness is certainly an important intellectual project. However, there are a number of possible shortcomings. In the hurry to shift the critical gaze, there is always a danger of suspending reflection on the analytical terms of this project. Like many of the debates on the ontological status of culture, there is a danger of reifying Whiteness and reinforcing a unitary idea of race. To avoid this, it is crucial to locate any discussion of Whiteness in a particular empirical and historical context. Equally, one must insist that Whiteness is a political definition that regulates the consent of White subjects within the context of White supremacy. Additionally, any discussion of Whiteness must incorporate an appreciation of how gendered processes are inextricably articulated with the semantics of race (Back, 1993; Ware, 1992). We are arguing that interrogating Whiteness as a form of identity and a political discourse must (a) focus on decolonizing the definition of "normal" and (b) simultaneously prohibit the reification of Whiteness as a social identity.

In summary, we are suggesting that the theoretical engagements of the early 1980s cannot adequately conceptualize racism during the 1990s. The political struggles that underscored these debates have moved on. In many ways, the turn toward the conceptualization of culturally defined racisms and the politics of identity has been led by the political events of the late 1980s. In particular, the continuing hegemony of the conservative right in Britain has challenged theorists to reappraise the usefulness of Marxist orthodoxy. This is perhaps best exemplified by the debate over the New Times thesis (see Hall & Jacques, 1989; Sivanandan, 1990), which suggests that a range of sites for social antagonism and resistance exists within contemporary Britain that cannot be conceptualized within a conventional class analysis. Equally, in the context of the complex forms of identity politics, the semantics of race cannot be confined to the politics of regulation (Miles, 1989a). The controversy over the publication of Salman Rushdie’s book, The Satanic Verses, has provided a warning that the politics of culture cannot be appreciated within the conceptual language of the 1980s.

Questions of cultural production and change must be integrated within a contemporary conceptualization of racism. Thus we are suggesting that these theoretical debates need to be contextualized within a shifting political context. The certainties of the critique of the race relations problematic are no longer tenable. What seems to characterize the contemporary period is, on the one hand, a complex spectrum of racisms and, on the other hand, the fragmentation of the definition of Blackness as a political identity in favor of a resurgence of ethnicism and cultural differentiation. At the same time, and perhaps paradoxically, new cultures and ethnicities are emerging in the context of dialogue and producing a kaleidoscope of cultural syncretisms. There may well be contradictory trends emerging, but neither the race relations problematic

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of the 1970s nor the racism problematic of the 1980s is equipped to deal with the contemporary situation.

CONCLUSION

In summary, we are suggesting that Marxist scholarship on racism and ethnicity has made a valuable contribution to our knowledge of racial and ethnic relations during recent years. But it is important to bear in mind that, like all other major theoretical paradigms, Marxism has not provided an answer to all the theoretical and empirical conundrums that we face. The analysis of contemporary racisms needs to be situated within particular discursive contexts. Racism cannot be reduced to class relations, but neither can it be seen as completely autonomous from wider social relations such as gender and sexuality. It is clear that the 1990s will pose serious questions with regard to the way racism is conceptualized. In this context, the orthodoxies of the past 10 years may prove inappropriate when attempting to meet these challenges.

From this perspective, it is important to maintain an openness in theoretical and research agendas on racism and ethnicity. The experience of the past decade would seem to point to the need to see the Marxist contribution to these agendas as by no means fixed and unchanging. The challenge over the next period for those scholars influenced by the Marxist tradition will be to show the relevance of their theoretical and historical insights to the analysis of contemporary forms of racial and ethnic relationships.

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