

CHAPTER 1

# Race and the Limits of Solidarity

## *American Welfare State Development in Comparative Perspective*

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The 1990s was not the first era of American welfare reform in the twentieth century. Three times before—during the Progressive Era, the New Deal, and the Great Society—Americans dramatically reshaped welfare policies, creating the familiar complex of programs that was reformed yet again in 1996. Perhaps the dominant theme of this history has been the deepening and increasingly troubling link between race and the politics of American social policy. The relationship between African Americans and the American welfare state has been a varied and changing one. Largely excluded from Progressive and New Deal policies of social provision, African Americans increasingly claimed rights to social benefits, culminating in the War on Poverty and the expansion of welfare rights in the 1960s. Far from excluding African Americans and other minorities, these developments explicitly targeted attention and resources on problems of minority poverty and exclusion.

In each of these episodes of reform, the status of African Americans in national politics has been crucial in shaping policy outcomes (Skocpol 1995a). In the Progressive Era, most African Americans lived in the South, where they were denied civil and political rights under the violent repression of Jim Crow segregation. Thus they were almost universally

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excluded from state-level Progressive social policies such as mothers' pensions. The New Deal represented a major breakthrough both for national social policy and for the political status of African Americans. The Social Security Act of 1935 created the first permanent national welfare policies, and northern African Americans began to switch their political allegiance to the newly dominant Democratic party. But the major partner in the New Deal coalition was the white South, whose disproportionate power limited the New Deal's capacity to include African Americans in social provision on equal terms. In the generation after the New Deal, however, African Americans both moved north in large numbers and mobilized a national social movement to demand the civil and political rights long promised but not yet fulfilled. As that movement bore fruit in the 1960s, African Americans were able to use their new-found political status to demand greater access to existing welfare benefits and new policies to promote equal opportunity. But the cruel irony of the Great Society is that these very policies fueled growing racial resentment and widened a burgeoning split in American welfare politics that divided white from black, middle- and working-class Americans from the poor, and cities from suburbs, leaving African Americans increasingly isolated—politically, socially, economically, and geographically—from the main currents of the American political economy.

The pattern of twentieth-century reform suggests that a crucial question in understanding the fate of African Americans in the American welfare state is whether they have been part of the broad national political coalitions that are always necessary to achieve lasting policy reform. The terms on which African Americans participate in these coalitions have shaped welfare policies, particularly by shaping the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion that those policies embody. These boundaries, in turn, affect the prospects for minority incorporation into social provision, whether as honorable beneficiaries or as marginal clients. These considerations, moreover, are not mere remnants of the past. The racial divide was at the very center of the politics of welfare reform in the 1990s, because of racialized perceptions and misperceptions of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and other policies, racially divided opinions about the proper direction of the welfare system and the federal government's role in social provision, and the shifting place of African Americans in electoral and party politics (Gilens 1999; Bobo and Smith 1994; Williams 1998). Thus in order to understand the politics of welfare reform in American politics in the 1990s and the prospects for minorities

in the new American welfare regime, it is essential to understand the historical dynamics of race and the politics of welfare policy coalitions.

Race is often held up as the essence of American exceptionalism, the single feature of American society and politics that, more than anything else, distinguishes the United States from other countries. Ira Katznelson (1981), for example, argues in *City Trenches* that racial (and ethnic) divisions inscribed in the urban landscape of the late nineteenth century account for the distinctive pattern of American working-class formation. Others point to racial and ethnic heterogeneity to explain the peculiarities of American welfare-state development (Lieberman 1998; Smith 1997; Quadagno 1994; Brown 1999). The United States, however, is not the only Western industrial democracy with a multiracial society. Great Britain and France, as well as other European countries, increasingly have significant populations of non-European origin that are identified as racially distinct from their society's dominant group—Africans in France, for example, and South Asians and West Indians in England. These racial encounters are transforming European politics, introducing a new and complex layer of social, economic, and political conflict into these societies and spawning a grimly familiar litany of problems: racism, discrimination, inequality, isolation, political powerlessness, and even racial violence. In Europe, too, racial division is becoming an increasingly vexing issue in welfare politics, as minority groups seek to claim welfare rights and right-wing politicians draw a link between race and welfare as part of their racist and xenophobic appeals. At the same time, however, different societies conceive of and cope with racial difference in dramatically different ways.

A comparative approach, then, can help us to understand how and why race has been so important to American welfare politics. By isolating critical similarities and differences—both the common elements of racial conflict in different countries and the variations in racial politics in different political settings—comparison can point the way toward a more general, causal explanation for the existence and form of racialized political conflict and its consequences for welfare politics. In this chapter I place the formation of the American welfare state in comparative context in order to expose more clearly the mechanisms by which racial politics helped shape the structure of the American welfare state. I begin with an account of how race can shape the formation of policy coalitions, and in particular the ways in which race might induce or inhibit the formation of the cross-class coalitions necessary for the adoption of welfare poli-

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cies. I then reexamine the familiar history of the enactment of New Deal social policies, setting it alongside social developments in Great Britain and France, to suggest that racially structured coalitions were central to the development of the American welfare state.

Racial Rule and the Limits of Solidarity

A focus on the building of solidaristic national coalitions for welfare policy means a focus on the institutional roots of the American welfare state and the connections among race, political institutions, and policy in American history. It is a common observation that the American welfare state is more fragmented and less universal than the welfare states of most other developed democratic nations—prone to division between generous social insurance policies for workers and stingy and punitive public assistance benefits for the poor; variable from state to state because of the federal structure of American politics; and lacking policies that most other countries provide, such as universal health insurance, family allowances, child-care (Esping-Andersen 1990).

Scholars have offered a variety of explanations for this pattern of development (see Skocpol 1992, 11–40). Some explanations focus on the American national values of liberal individualism, belief in self-reliance, and skepticism toward government (Hartz 1955). But these accounts cannot fully explain why some national welfare policies have been strikingly successful in the United States or why other liberal societies, such as Britain, have opted for more expansive social policies than the United States. Others emphasize the strength of business and the weakness of organized labor in the United States, both of which helped to close off the social democratic route to the welfare state that prevailed in much of Europe. But these explanations, which give great weight to class conflict, fail to account for the cross-class nature of the coalitions that underlie welfare policy-making, both in the United States and elsewhere (Baldwin 1990). A perspective that is to explain the emergence and sustenance of these coalitions must consider the political settings in which both values and interests—rooted not only in class but also in race, gender, and other social relations—are formed and mobilized and in which conflicts among competing values and interests are fought out and resolved, resulting in the enactment of policies. These considerations suggest the critical importance of the national political institutions that play a particularly important role in advancing or inhibiting such coalitions—above all leg-

islatures and executives, political parties, bureaucracies, and federalism—in shaping the development of national welfare states.

A number of prominent scholars of American and comparative politics and history have also placed race at the center of the formation of governing coalitions in multiracial societies. From the very beginnings of colonial American politics, as Edmund Morgan (1975) demonstrates, a racial hierarchy that distinguished slaves from free men and women helped unify whites across class distinctions around an emerging American ideology of freedom and equality. In his classic *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, V. O. Key (1949) argues that the imperatives of segregation and white supremacy emanating from the Black Belt—the swath of the American South where African Americans were most heavily concentrated, so named because of the dark, rich topsoil that made it ideal for growing cotton—constricted the formation of class-based politics. Rather than uniting “have-nots” of both races and pitting them against the white “haves,” as the ill-fated Populist movement had intimated, southern politics under Jim Crow revolved around racial fear and resentment (Woodward 1974; Goodwyn 1976). Whites often (but not always) came together across class lines to form a broad political alliance that shaped not only southern but national politics as well—through Democratic dominance in the South, the structure of the Democratic party, and the organization of Congress, which gave white southerners disproportionate influence over national politics and policy for much of the twentieth century (Key 1949; Potter 1972; Bense 1984, 147–74).

As Katznelson, Geiger, and Kryder (1993) have shown, the South was the pivotal player in the formation of policy coalitions in Congress in the middle of the century. Southern Democrats generally voted with other Democrats, except on civil rights and labor issues, when they routinely combined with Republicans to form a conservative coalition. This voting pattern, combined with southern control of key congressional committees through the ironclad seniority rule in Congress and the perpetual reelection of Democrats from the one-party South, gave white Southerners extensive power to shape policy. At the very least, southern representatives were able to block legislative initiatives that threatened their regional political economy that linked white supremacy and labor-repressive agriculture with local control of the apparatus of the state, or to modify policy initiatives to make them “safe” for the South (Moore 1966; James 1988; Lieberman 1998). In this way, race was central to the development of many of the core domestic policies of the twentieth century.

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More broadly, Anthony Marx (1998) compares the process of state building and racial formation in the United States, South Africa, and Brazil, countries that share histories of colonization and slavery. He argues that the creation of legal structures of racial subordination in the United States and South Africa resulted from whites' need to overcome divisions of class, region, and the like in order to consolidate their hold on developing state power in the wake of emancipation and decolonization. In Brazil, where such imperatives were absent from the state-building process, the same sort of legally imposed apartheid did not result. These studies suggest that race might, under certain conditions and over certain issues, be central to the political dynamics of state and nation building, the construction of essential political institutions that define patterns of governance and political inclusion over the long run. In particular, they highlight the role that race might have played in either creating or inhibiting the cross-class coalitions that have historically been necessary for the formation of national welfare states, developments that have both state- and nation-building implications. Finally, they suggest the value of examining American political development in comparative perspective, the better to isolate the ways in which race shapes the formation of welfare state coalitions.

For the United States, then, the question is to what extent race was an essential ingredient in the construction of social policy coalitions at the critical formative moment of the American national welfare state, the New Deal. It is important to note that this is a different question from the presence or absence of racism in policy deliberations or in society at large, which is the starting point for many analyses of the impact of race on American politics and public policy (Bell 1992; Hacker 1992; Kinder and Sanders 1996). The question is not one of simply searching for evidence of racist intent on the part of the framers of the Social Security Act of 1935, as some analysts have intimated, and concluding from its relative absence (relative, that is, to other policy debates of the same era) that racial exclusion from the act's policies was simply an incidental effect that followed from nonracial causes (Davies and Derthick 1997). Rather, the question is whether the particular configuration of American race politics ruled out certain coalitions—and hence certain policies—and made other coalitions and policies possible. But this question poses serious problems of explanation and inference if we look at the United States alone: how can we know what might have happened in the absence of racial division in American society? One way around this problem is to trace very carefully and precisely the mechanisms and processes by which

racial considerations might have affected decision making and coalition building in social policy enactments. Several works that follow this approach have found strong evidence that race was, in fact, causally central to the American story, although others have argued that policy effects that appear to be racial in origin could just as plausibly result from other causes (Lieberman 1998; Brown 1999; Davies and Derthick 1997).

An alternative approach is to compare the United States to other countries that share certain political and social characteristics in order to see how countries with differently organized racial politics confronted similar problems of welfare state development and whether particular racial configurations are associated with particular social policy coalitions. In the United States, the centrality of race, usually taken as an exceptional feature of American politics, arises from the history of African slavery in North America that reaches back almost as far as permanent European settlement of the continent (Berlin 1998; see also Tannenbaum 1946; Elkins 1959). But slavery was only one form of rule based on racial distinctions. More generally, the processes by which racially defined rule shapes political institutions and strategic political circumstances may apply in a variety of contexts (Davis 1966). Other systems in which rule is based on racial categories include apartheid (including Jim Crow in the American South), certain brands of nationalism (including nationalism's totalitarian variants), and, most relevant for the present comparison, imperialism and colonialism.

"Two new devices for political organization and rule over foreign peoples were discovered during the first decades of imperialism," wrote Hannah Arendt (1968, 185). "One was race as a principle of the body politic, and the other was bureaucracy as a principle of foreign domination." Like slavery and segregation, imperialism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries constituted rule by "whites" of European descent over "blacks," conducted through a set of formal institutions and social arrangements supported by an ideology of racial superiority. All of these forms of rule were also justified and explained by other means—economic, political, diplomatic—and a complete explanation of slavery, segregation, or imperialism would surely involve all of these (see Baumgart 1982). But underlying these explanations, or at least deeply intertwined with them, is what W. E. B. Du Bois (1986, 16) called the color line, "the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Africa and Asia, in America and the islands of the sea." Similarly, imperialism and colonialism, no matter how extensively they involved other factors, constituted irreducible structures of racial rule.

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The high point of imperialism and colonialism in Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also coincided with the formative period of European welfare states. The welfare state traces its origins to a political moment in which imperial conquest and colonial rule were at the center of political life. Both enterprises were part of the process by which European states negotiated the transition toward mass politics and democracy, which required new means for securing the allegiance of the working class and creating an “imagined community” among citizens (Hobsbawm 1987, 101–7; Anderson 1991). Thus the politics of welfare state building, the construction of a means of social solidarity at home, was connected to the process of drawing race-based distinctions between national citizens and colonial subjects across national boundaries. Seen in this light, the welfare state is potentially an agent of the political construction of race-based national solidarity. By linking social groups to each other and to the state through a network of social rights, welfare state institutions created in this context were thus instrumental in defining the rights of differently situated racially defined groups of citizens and subjects to what T. H. Marshall (1964) described as full membership in society, and to state protection against what Franklin Roosevelt (1938, 3:291) called “the hazards and vicissitudes of life.”

### Racial Legacies and the Formation of Welfare Coalitions

The welfare state is a particularly useful focus for the comparative study of race relations. It is, among other things, a mechanism of social solidarity, a means of linking citizens to the state through a set of social rights and to each other by ties of interdependence (Marshall 1964; Baldwin 1990). Of course, welfare states are at once inclusive and exclusive mechanisms. On the one hand, they embody these solidaristic ties among a community of citizens. On the other hand, they define a boundary between the community and outsiders, depending on who is eligible for assistance on what terms, and in so doing they can also construct and reconstruct lines of inequality and social division within societies along lines not only of class but also of gender, citizenship, and race (Esping-Andersen 1990; Freeman 1986; Orloff 1993; Lieberman 1998). Thus the welfare state is one of the key defining structures of social and political inclusion and exclusion in the modern nation-state. But welfare states differ in the balance they strike between their inclusive and exclusive

imperatives, and so the welfare state is critical to understanding the capacities of states to incorporate racial minorities.

Thus variations in the nature of imperialism and colonialism (or patterns of racial rule more generally) were potentially of critical importance in shaping welfare state formation. In particular, the domestic politics of imperial rule—the extent to which clear racial boundaries between home citizens and colonial subjects underlay the power and democratic legitimacy of metropolitan political elites in imperial powers—had important effects on the politics of social solidarity. To the extent that imperial politics demanded a hard and fast racial line between citizens at home and subjects abroad, social welfare policies were more free to insist on a high level of social solidarity among their beneficiaries. In other words, the presumption of racial homogeneity at home allowed for the construction of welfare systems with more forceful and authoritative means of connecting individual citizens to the state. There were both positive and negative reasons for this outcome. On the positive side, the challenge of imperial rule demanded an “imperial race,” which placed a burden on the state to ensure the health and welfare of its own citizens. On the negative side, the hermetic racial division between home and abroad meant that a strong, centralized, and deeply penetrating welfare state did not pose an unacceptable challenge to a racial hierarchy that ordered political life within the home country. But where the boundaries of imperial and racial citizenship were more permeable, the possibilities for social policy were restricted by the possibility of racial inclusion. The presence of racial diversity *within* rather than *across* national boundaries changed the solidaristic imperatives of social politics, making the creation of centralized national welfare states rather more politically dangerous. In such countries, the problem of distinguishing between those who were and were not entitled to consideration as members of the solidaristic national community was a more complicated political and administrative enterprise, since one could not simply presume that social and national boundaries coincided. Rather, welfare states in these countries were more likely to take complex institutional forms, involving decentralized decision making and administration rather than constructing direct links between citizens and the state.

This argument about the connection between forms and patterns of racial rule allows for a comparison of the role of race in welfare state formation in the United States, Britain, and France. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, all three countries ruled over far-flung ter-

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ritories with racially diverse populations with states that institutionalized racial rule in some form. Although the United States, among these three countries, would conventionally be considered the most multiracial, many more people of non-European descent were ruled from London or Paris than Washington. In the early twentieth century, both the British and French empires had majority nonwhite populations by a wide margin, while the nonwhite population of the United States hovered at around 10 percent (Lieberman 1997). The principal difference in the form of racial rule was whether racial minorities were located inside or outside national boundaries. In the United States, the racial minority population was located entirely within the country's home borders, and the immediate proximity of African Americans posed a particular set of political challenges for American whites, especially in the post-Civil War South (Key 1949). In Britain and France, by contrast, almost all nonwhites lived in the colonies and not in the home country (although in France, as we shall see, national and racial boundaries remained more politically porous than in Britain), producing a very different set of political challenges for white elites at home.

But the geographical and political proximity of blacks and whites did not alone determine the impact of racial rule on the welfare state. Equally important was the centrality of race to the process of building political coalitions around social reform, particularly whether or not race emerged as a significant or even dominant line of political cleavage that altered or even trumped other potential cleavages—primarily class (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). Internal racial distinctions were not a necessary condition for the formation of race-based social reform coalitions. In both the United States and Britain race helped overcome class-based political conflict and was one of the central axes around which the politics of welfare revolved; the political construction of racial distinctions was critical in the creation of cross-class coalitions for welfare policy in each country. But the difference between internal racial conflict in the United States and the appearance of internal racial homogeneity in Britain proved critical in pushing the two countries toward different approaches to constructing welfare institutions. In Britain in the years before World War I, social reform and imperial fervor were the twin pillars behind a political coalition that created inclusive national welfare policies as a means of unifying Britons across class and against a racially defined threat from outside. In the United States the coalition behind the welfare state in the 1930s also depended on the protection of racial rule, but there the imperative of uniting whites against blacks produced an

approach to welfare policy that was necessarily exclusionary and decentralizing rather than inclusionary and national.

Race was hardly absent from French politics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but it did not come to trump or displace other more fundamental cleavages in French social politics. Like Britain, France did not confront black-white racial diversity within its national borders, but it was consumed in the early twentieth century with intense conflicts over anti-Semitism in society and politics, conflicts in which Jews were routinely portrayed as an alien race (Sternhell 1986; Birnbaum 1993). At the same time, the process of French nation-building in the Third Republic had been one of continual assimilation of non-French populations within France itself, many of whom were seen as racially distinct, even equivalent to France's African subjects. Eugen Weber (1976, 485) even goes so far as to suggest that "the famous hexagon [a traditional name for the territory of France because of its six-sided shape] can itself be seen as a colonial empire shaped over centuries." Thus the prospect of racial diversity in interwar France, both metropolitan and overseas, was an opportunity as well as a threat to political elites, and French imperialism was less consumed with constructing racial distinctions across national boundaries. French social reform in the interwar years did not mobilize racial antagonisms to overcome class divisions, whether to inclusionary or exclusionary effect, resulting in the perpetuation of the Third Republic's corporatist pattern of social provision, based on civil society attachments.

## Coalition Building in Three Countries

### *The United States*

In the United States, it was not only the presence of African Americans within national boundaries but also their status as presumptive citizens (at least under the original intent of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution) that posed the fundamental conundrum of social politics: how to produce welfare policy without running afoul of the South. The historical connection between race and the politics of the welfare state arose primarily because of the particular configuration of political institutions by which whites ruled over blacks, not only in the southern states but also in the national government. The segregated, white supremacist South of the first half of the twentieth century set up an elaborate set of mechanisms to disenfranchise African

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Americans and to undermine the rights that the Constitution seemed to protect. Although Reconstruction, the postwar military occupation of the South, ended formally in 1877, northern Republicans continued to try to use federal power to enforce black voting rights in the South until the 1890s (Valelly 1995). Consequently southern politicians developed a very strong interest in protecting state- and local-level political autonomy from national incursions. The South was a one-party region and elected only Democrats to Congress (with very rare exceptions). Once in Washington, southern Democrats, who won essentially perpetual reelection, climbed the rigid seniority ladder in Congress so that when Democrats controlled Congress, southerners chaired committees, in an era in which congressional rules gave committee chairmen tremendous power over policy-making. Although twentieth-century southern Democrats were more heterogeneous than is commonly recognized, they were reliably unified (and often allied with Republicans against their fellow Democrats) on civil rights and labor issues, and they used their pivotal legislative position to challenge (and usually to defeat or amend) any policy provision that they regarded as a challenge to the southern system of racial supremacy and labor-repressive agrarian peonage (Key 1949; Katznelson, Geiger, and Kryder 1993).

Until the New Deal, social reform at the national level was almost nonexistent, for a number of reasons. As Theda Skocpol (1992) has shown, the structure of American political institutions—separated powers; a locally representative Congress; decentralized, patronage-based, nonprogrammatic political parties; a weak bureaucracy; federalism—militated against national social insurance and other European-style welfare policies, as did the lack of national mobilization behind such policies. Moreover, the Supreme Court routinely blocked attempts at social and economic reform until the middle of the 1930s. Some reforms were possible, especially maternalist policies such as mothers' pensions, maternal and child health assistance, and protective labor regulations for women, but very few workingmen's social policies succeeded until the 1930s. The localized structure of most maternalist social policies, especially mothers' pensions, meant that they largely excluded African Americans. Several southern states had no mothers' pensions at all; those that did declined to operate them in heavily black counties and used discretionary administrative tactics to direct benefits to white families (Howard 1992; Ward 2000).

Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, abetted by the Supreme Court's timely about-face, brought the national government into the business of

social reform. Like other countries' old-age insurance schemes, Social Security was adopted by a coalition that wedded industrial interests and landed interests who practiced labor-repressive agriculture. Roosevelt's reform coalition, which combined northern urban workers, midwestern farmers, and southern whites, was in many respects similar to the industrial-agrarian coalitions that produced social reform in many European countries, and it pursued a familiar reform agenda: social insurance, labor rights, and economic regulation (Baldwin 1990). The essential elements of the New Deal coalition were the urban workers of the North and the Bourbon planters of the South. Neither bloc could make policy without the other, and in particular the committee structure of the House and minority protections in the Senate gave southern members of Congress inordinate power to shape policy. It is little surprise, then, that the Social Security Act, like most other New Deal enactments, benefited these groups. In this respect, the American case closely resembles comparative cases such as Germany and Austria, where similar coalitions adopted social insurance schemes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Köhler and Zacher 1982; Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens 1992).

But whereas these European coalitions were conservative, even authoritarian, coalitions of upper classes who proffered social insurance to workers as a defense against socialist agitation, the New Deal coalition was a cross-class coalition that wedded the social democratic impulses of southern workers with the often reactionary demands of the white southern elite (Ritter 1983; Baldwin 1990; Hecló 1986; Skocpol 1991). The American coalition was built on racial rather than class hierarchy, and the southern planter class used its strategic control of fragmented state institutions to perpetuate racial exclusion and reproduce the racial order of the southern states (Marx 1998). The exclusion of agricultural workers from Old-Age Insurance served the interests of this coalition for different reasons. For the white South, it prevented African Americans from entering into a direct relationship with the national government unmediated by local structures of white power and ensured the perpetuation of their status not just as low-wage workers but as political and social inferiors; for southern Democrats, it allowed the adoption of one pillar of an ambitious agenda for industrial economic security.

The resulting policy settlement, the Social Security Act of 1935, took the form of a race-laden institutional bargain between the southern and northern wings of the Democratic party over the terms and mechanisms of inclusion in the welfare state—that is, over the boundaries of social

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solidarity. The Roosevelt administration proposed a widely inclusive set of social policies under national control, combining fully national social insurance for all workers with financial support for state public assistance policies such as mothers' pensions, under terms that would give the federal government substantial administrative and political leverage (Lieberman 1998). This package—inclusive, national social policy—proved unacceptable to southern congressional leaders because it threatened to create direct links between southern African American workers and the national state, effectively mobilizing a class coalition against racial hegemony. The responsible congressional committees, both chaired by southerners, altered Roosevelt's proposal by eliminating agricultural and domestic workers from eligibility for national social insurance on the one hand and removing federal controls over state public assistance on the other. Occupational exclusions eliminated more than three-fifths of the African American workforce from the protection of social insurance; radically decentralized public assistance allowed wide areas of discretion to local elites in setting benefit levels and requirements. The result was a structurally limited, decentralized, and bifurcated welfare system that perpetuated African American dependence on local political and economic elites for their livelihoods (Skocpol 1988). Thus at the founding moment of the American welfare state, the particular institutional configuration of racial rule effectively blocked the formation of a more fully reformist coalition, joining classes across racial lines in support of more a more broadly solidaristic welfare state. Instead, even though African Americans were nominal partners in the New Deal coalition (although not solidly until 1936 or even after), the imperatives of racial dominance outweighed conventional class position in defining interests and cleavages in the social politics of the 1930s (Weiss 1983; Carmines and Stimson 1989; Katznelson 1981).

The welfare system that emerged from the New Deal moved on two tracks. Social insurance policies—Old-Age Insurance (Social Security) and Unemployment Insurance—were national policies that paid benefits linked to workers' contributions as a matter of right. Although it weathered considerable uncertainty through the 1940s, Social Security was politically unassailable by the early 1950s, largely because of its contributory structure but also because of equitable professional administration and skillful political management (Derthick 1979). As a result, it not only included African Americans fairly and without discrimination, it also expanded to include previously excluded occupations, including farm work and domestic labor, effectively bringing many African American

workers into the national welfare state on the same terms as whites. By contrast, public assistance policies (especially AFDC, the program most commonly called “welfare”), which disproportionately targeted African Americans, were decentralized and parochial, placing near-complete authority in the hands of local political elites. The result was widespread discrimination against African Americans in AFDC administration, not only in the South but in southern cities as well, especially cities dominated by traditional party organizations (machines), another setting in which African Americans were dependent on white elites for their access to benefits (Lieberman and Lapinski 2001; Katznelson 1976). While regular workers gained nationally protected social rights through an expanding social insurance regime, African Americans were disproportionately relegated to weaker, partial, and fragmented links with the welfare state through public assistance. Thus entering the post-World War II era, the United States had a two-track welfare state with a strong racial valence essentially built into its institutional structure, the legacy of the configuration of racial rule that structured social politics in the 1930s.

There are alternative interpretations of the evidence about racial exclusion from Social Security. Gareth Davies and Martha Derthick (1997, 221–24) also make a comparative argument, although one that is more of an exercise in taxonomy than serious causal reasoning about the process of building a social policy coalition in the 1930s. Many other countries already had old-age insurance systems in place as the United States was contemplating one, and as they stood in 1935 most of those systems covered agricultural workers, suggesting that feasibility was not an insurmountable problem for the coverage of farm employees. This fact was well known to the Roosevelt administration appointees and staff, whose original draft of the Social Security Act also included agricultural workers (Lieberman 1998, 42–43; U.S. Social Security Board 1937, 183). However, Davies and Derthick correctly point out that in many of these countries, agricultural workers had initially been excluded and were brought under the social insurance umbrella only later. They use this observation to bolster their argument that by excluding farmworkers at the outset the United States was merely following the lead of more experienced nations and attempting to create a workable system. As they also point out, many proponents of Old-Age Insurance, including the secretary of the treasury, worried about the feasibility of covering agricultural workers and recommended deferring such coverage. Many others, however, argued on the other side that feasibility was not a problem and offered concrete proposals to facilitate coverage of agricultural,

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domestic, and casual labor (Lieberman 1998, 41–42). In this superficial reading, the comparative evidence about feasibility can, it would seem, support either reading of the evidence.

This version of the comparative argument, however, does not help to resolve the causal question about the roots of exclusion in the American case because it does not identify the political mechanisms or processes that made exclusion a compelling part of a coalition-building strategy for Social Security's advocates. What is worth comparing is not only the outcomes of the legislative processes of welfare state development but also, and most centrally, the processes themselves. The pertinent question is not what kind of overseas models were available to American policy-makers but rather what were the implications of agricultural inclusion or exclusion for the possibility of forming a winning coalition in Congress for what was, after all, a bold and controversial policy initiative. To the extent that welfare state building entailed constructing mechanisms of social solidarity, broadly inclusive coalitions should form. Patterns of exclusion, by contrast, are particularly revealing about the social and political bases of the welfare state, and in the United States the systematic exclusion of African Americans from national social provision suggests further comparative examination of the way race affected the shape of solidaristic, cross-class coalitions.

France and Britain also built welfare states in the early twentieth century in political contexts that were highly charged by racial antagonisms. Social reformers in all three countries faced similar problems of coalition-building for policies of social provision, the challenge of devising policies that would knit disparate social groups together across class lines under common ties of solidarity and social citizenship while at the same time drawing clear boundaries between full citizens and outsiders. Race was an important boundary condition in each case, although it played different political roles in shaping social policy coalitions in each country. Brief, suggestive sketches of the role race played in the politics of welfare state development in each country can throw important light on the American experience by zeroing in on the institutional mechanisms that made race especially important in the American case.

*Great Britain*

In imperial Britain, in contrast to the United States, race politics was not defined by proximity but by distance. For the most part, the racial divide in the British Empire was a geographical one, with whites living at the

center, in the British Isles, and nonwhites at the periphery, in overseas colonies and dominions. But the politics of racial rule, in the form of imperial politics, was at the center of British politics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The last third of the nineteenth century was an uncertain and unsettled period in British politics. Reform acts in 1867 and 1884 quadrupled the size of the British electorate, marking the transition to mass democracy and upending the elite patterns of British party politics (Hobsbawm 1987, 85). The relatively stable Liberal-Conservative partisan alignment of the generation after the first Reform Act shifted to one of Conservative dominance after the Liberals split over Irish Home Rule in the 1880s; meanwhile the new Labour party began to gather strength among recently enfranchised workers. But although Tory hegemony meant that liberal social reform lay mostly dormant, social politics remained alive because of the key figure in the new Conservative majority, Joseph Chamberlain, a renegade Liberal and an advocate of social reform who became colonial secretary in a Conservative-Unionist government in 1895.

What linked these elite factions and made the Conservative-Unionist alliance cohere was imperialism, support for the maintenance and strengthening of the empire. But in the new world of mass politics, empire was not an easy political sell. The Conservative-Unionists could not easily mobilize popular support for traditional imperial aims of glory and commerce; Liberals tended toward humanitarian sympathy for oppressed colonial peoples, while Labour was coming to oppose what it saw as the economic and political exploitation inherent in imperial rule (Clarke 1996, 20). In response, Chamberlain began to shift the focus of British imperialism away from the Indian Raj and toward other colonies and dominions peopled and governed by emigrating white Britons—especially Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa—knit together by national ties and racial affinity, economic ties, and democracy. Essential to this political stance was a conception of Britain's racial mission to lead the colonial world for both the enrichment of Britain and the betterment of imperial subjects. The notion of an "imperial race," distinguishing white Britons from nonwhite colonial peoples, was central to the politics of imperialism at the turn of the century (Simmel 1960).

The centerpiece of Chamberlain's imperial policy was tariff reform, a system of free trade within the empire and protection from outside goods, especially a tax on foreign grain. In order to sell tariff reform to the working class, which traditionally supported free trade because it kept food prices low, Chamberlain linked tariffs with social reform—old-

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age and unemployment pensions, and labor exchanges. Social reform appealed to imperialist politicians for a number of reasons. For Chamberlain and others, imperial strength was essential to Britain's continued prosperity and economic dominance, and hence to the welfare of the working class. For others, such as the Fabian socialists and Liberal reformers, the proposition was the reverse: the welfare of the working class and the breeding of a healthy and robust "imperial race" were essential to the success of the empire. Like imperialism, social reform constituted a long-standing project that was by itself too weak to sustain a majority coalition. By reframing social reform as an imperial policy, reformers made both policy courses possible where neither would have been sustainable by itself (Semmel 1960).

The fight over tariffs divided old-line Conservatives, while the defense of free trade galvanized Liberals, and although Chamberlain's tariff-reform proposals were defeated, the link between imperialism and social reform opened new political possibilities. The Liberal government formed in 1905 was dominated by a group of so-called Liberal Imperialists for whom the goals of imperialism and social reform were inseparable. Behind Prime Minister Herbert Henry Asquith, they pursued an ambitious social reform agenda that formed the basis of the British welfare state, along with an expensive naval buildup for the defense of the empire (Kennedy 1976, 205–37; Clarke 1996, 53–56). Under the leadership of Chancellor of the Exchequer David Lloyd George and president of the Board of Trade Winston Churchill, the Liberal government enacted a series of social reforms that undermined the locally operated Poor Law system that had prevailed in England for more than three centuries (Polanyi 1944). Legislation in 1908 created a national system of labor exchanges to help the unemployed find work; the Old Age Pension Act of the same year enacted noncontributory, means-tested pensions. Finally, in 1911 the National Insurance Act created a system of compulsory, contributory national unemployment and health insurance (Baldwin 1990, 99–102; Oigus 1982, 173–87; King 1995).

Together, these policies took an important step toward centralizing the British welfare state, creating direct and unmediated links between nearly all workers in Britain (and their families) and the state by providing benefits as a matter of right (Marshall 1964). These policies thus constituted an important mechanism of social solidarity underpinned by a broad coalition that brought together middle- and working-class concerns. Such national solidarity, constructed by social policies aimed partly at unifying an "imperial race," served as a counterweight against

the class warfare that seemed to be tearing continental Europe apart. British social imperialists on the right and the left alike believed that the amelioration of working-class conditions was necessary to prevent forestall “divisive” socialism that would foment class conflict and undermine the empire (Semmel 1960; Hobsbawm 1987, 101–4). Like American welfare policies, then, the coalition behind these policies was built on a foundation of racial rule that served to unify Britons across classes in favor of moderate social reform. But unlike American race politics, which differentiated Americans from each other along internal, institutionally and politically constructed racial lines, British race politics constructed a national racial community against others abroad and thus identified a national interest in welfare policy that began to unify British citizens in a network of social solidarity through the welfare state and the mechanisms of social citizenship.

### *France*

In France, as in Britain, the politics of race was primarily a matter of the distinction between the colonies and the metropole. And as in Britain, imperialism and social reform mingled in French politics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, suggesting at least the possibility of a similar cross-class social-imperial coalition that might have linked race-based imperial rule with domestic social solidarity in the form of welfare policies. In fact, some social reformers in France explicitly invoked the importance of racial distinctions and imperial rule in support of solidaristic policies (Elwitt 1986, 82–84). But political differences between France and Britain—in both the character of race politics and the structure of national political institutions—prevented this coalition from forming, resulting in a more decentralized welfare state rooted more directly in civil society than Britain’s. Thus race politics in France did not provide the impetus to overcome the mediated and indirect structures of social provision that had developed in the nineteenth century.

One important difference was the status of social imperialism in the French intellectual and political universe. Unlike the British theorists and practitioners of the politics of social imperialism, French social imperialists tended to be opponents (or at least skeptics) of democracy (Semmel 1960, 237–38; Baumgart 1982; Renouvin 1983). In the early years of the Third Republic monarchism remained a potent force in French politics (Nord 1995, 3, 59–61, 134–35; Cobban 1965, 3:15–23). It was antidemocratic politicians and intellectuals such as Maurice Barrès, Léon Daudet,

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and Charles Maurras who most directly advocated links between social reform and racially inflected notions of national unity. Moreover, Maurras along with other more respectable conservative social reformers supported decentralized social policy, which would place power in the hands of local elites and corporate bodies, reminiscent of feudalism, rather than the state. Thus French social imperialism was not poised to produce a coalition for national, centralized social reform as a vehicle for cementing national unity.

A second important difference was that internal differences were more salient in French national and colonial politics than in British politics. French nationalism was aimed largely at domestic enemies, particularly Jews. Antisemitism, particularly during and after the Dreyfus affair, was a critical focal point of mass politics and a vehicle for national political mobilization and cross-class political alliances (Sternhell 1986, 44–48; Birnbaum 2000; see also Cobban 1965, 3:90). At the same time, France was continuing inside the hexagon its process of internal assimilation of regional and linguistic minorities, who were commonly compared in official discourse to racially distinct Africans and other external colonial subjects (Weber 1976, 485–88). Finally, French colonialism was more focused on the prospect of the assimilation of colonial subjects into the French nation, in keeping with the nineteenth-century pattern of internal assimilation of both natives and immigrants. In both metropolitan and overseas France, policies aimed at assimilation between Europeans and non-Europeans was fiercely controversial, and these controversies often had explicitly racial grounds (Lebovics 1992; Cobban 1965, 3:91–93; Elwitt 1986, 83–84; see also Cooper 1996). Thus French politics struggled with both internal diversity and the possibility of external association, making the formation of a racially constructed, cross-class coalition for social reform unlikely and, by the same token, rendering social reform problematic as a vehicle for pursuing national unity.

The structure of French political institutions was a further barrier to the construction of a stable coalition for national unity through social reform. The Third Republic was dominated by a parliament with neither a strong executive nor a robust party system, so that despite mass suffrage the representation of social interests beyond the republican bourgeoisie was limited (Hoffmann 1963, 12–18). Thus even when a broad coalition that included the more moderate representatives of labor came to power in 1899, it proved to be short-lived and disinclined to move toward serious national social reform (Hobsbawm 1987, 102; Elwitt 1986, 293–95; Cobban 1965, 3:56–60). Thus to the extent that the raw materials

existed for a coalition in favor of social reform as an agent of national social solidarity as a response to the imperatives of racial rule, French political institutions were ill equipped to sustain such a coalition.

The consequence of these forces for French social reform was that welfare policies developed not through the construction of national, state-led policies but by the accretion of decentralized, corporatist welfare schemes that were neither state-administered nor state-financed (Chapman 1995, 293–95; Baldwin 1990, 102–5; Ashford 1991). These policies had their roots in the nineteenth-century flourishing of *mutualité*, mutual societies organized around occupational, fraternal, or other local attachments. A series of French welfare policies took this form, from workmen's compensation to old-age pensions to family allowances (Saint-Jours 1982, 107–19; Pedersen 1993, 224–91; Weintrob 1996). Unlike Britain, France did not create centralized, state-led welfare before World War II, although not for lack of trying—a serious attempt to create national, compulsory, contributory old-age pensions failed in 1910. When national social insurance did pass in 1930, followed by family allowances in 1932, they left in place the *mutualité*-based structure of earlier welfare policies, so that attachments to the French welfare state remained mediated by civil-society attachments and contributed only weakly, if at all, to the construction of social solidarity before World War II.

## Conclusions

The contours of racial rule in the United States, Great Britain, and France contributed to the construction of differently configured welfare states in which citizens and groups of citizens were connected to the state through different institutional mechanisms. In Britain and the United States welfare state institutions were the product of coalitions that united whites across class to provide racially exclusionary social benefits; the difference between the two lay in the difference between internal and external patterns of racial rule, which led similarly drawn coalitions to embrace very different prescriptions for social reform. In France, by contrast, the imperative of racial solidarity did not produce a coalition for nationalizing social reform because of differences both in colonial relations and in political institutions. Only in the United States did these early welfare state developments have immediate and direct implications for racial minorities—African Americans—who were widely excluded from social

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benefits in the wake of the New Deal through deliberately fragmented institutions. But each system created a set of institutional terms by which groups could form attachments to the welfare state and acquire rights to social provision, and it was these institutions that would structure the later incorporation of racial minorities into welfare systems. These institutions were far from innocent of the historical legacies of racial rule that structured the politics of their creation, and none of these countries would have to wait long to see how these policy systems would respond to the challenge of increasingly multiracial societies.

Above all, these comparative patterns puncture the mythology of American racial exceptionalism by undermining the supposition that the American welfare state was uniquely stunted or thwarted by racial division. Other countries, too, faced broadly similar political tasks in building national welfare states in the face of race-based challenges to national solidarity that stemmed from racial rule in the form of slavery or colonialism. Thus simply to say that race or racism impeded the growth of a national, inclusive welfare state in the United States begs important questions of definition and causation. What precise characteristics of America's racial-political complex shaped welfare policy-making? How were racial classifications filtered through different political and institutional contexts to produce different outcomes? And what social and political mechanisms made race relevant to welfare state building in particular ways at particular historical moments?

Much of what we thought we knew about American racial exceptionalism turns out, on comparative examination, to be not exceptional but relatively universal among Western countries seeking to build solidaristic national welfare states—racialized definitions of nationhood, attempts to define the contours of social citizenship and welfare rights along racial lines, dilemmas surrounding the legitimacy of multiculturalism, and even more particular technocratic problems of localism and policy design (Favell 1998; Lieberman 1999). But at the same time, the comparison also helps to refine, if not exactly to reinforce, our sense of American racial exceptionalism by focusing attention on what, precisely, is exceptional about American race politics, on what stands out from the more general patterns that emerge from comparative analysis. It is not race per se that is exceptional in American political history, but the particular way it is arrayed across American political institutions, practices, and beliefs that has made it especially powerful in shaping policy—the ways race interacts with regionalism and federalism, the structure of

Congress and political parties, and the peculiar dynamics of coalition formation in American national politics.

The comparison also suggests further directions and possibilities for research on racial influences on national politics and policy-making. Viewing the United States in comparative perspective helps to uncover broad-brush patterns of linkage among race, national political institutions, and the possibilities for coalition building for solidaristic policies of social provision. But these large-scale patterns still leave unanswered fundamental causal questions about the mechanisms of racial influence on policy, the ways in which racial classifications in national politics can act in both overt and covert ways to shape political institutions and practices as well as policy outcomes. Only more fine-grained historical research coupled with careful theorizing can unpack these problems.

But this is a crucial task if students of American welfare policy (and of American politics and public policy more generally) are to understand some of the profound paradoxes and dilemmas of our time. Although America is much less segregated and much less outwardly racist than it was a half-century ago, race remains one of the deepest and most intractable dividing lines of contemporary American politics. Despite dramatic advances in civil and political rights for American minorities, they remain, in many ways, poorly integrated into the welfare state and into American national life (Schuman et al. 1997; Bobo and Smith 1994; Gilens 1999; Lieberman 1998, 1999). In order to understand these curious patterns of our own day, it is essential that we begin to explore not simply how America's peculiar and distinctive racial culture affects our politics but how patterns of historical embeddedness have shaped the possibilities of politics—how race is “built into” American political institutions and practices in both visible and invisible ways.

In the 1990s, as Americans turned once again to welfare reform, the place of African Americans in the political system was once again of critical importance in shaping social policy. While they remained overwhelmingly Democratic voters, African Americans were no longer at the center of the Democratic party's national agenda. Touting his credentials as a “new Democrat,” Bill Clinton promised to move his party away from its focus on issues of civil rights and poverty and toward issues that would woo back the white working- and middle-class constituencies that had abandoned the party in the wake of the 1960s. At the same time, Republicans “mastered a politics permeated by race-coded messages that played on the anxieties of white Americans” in order to retain the loyalty

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of those same constituencies (Williams 1998). With African Americans increasingly marginal to the political strategies of both parties, increasingly isolated from the center of American politics, and increasingly linked in the public mind with the pathologies associated with welfare, the conditions were bleak for African American participation in a broad, solidaristic welfare policy coalition. It was these structural conditions that set the stage for the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. Armed with a historical and comparative account of the linked roles of race and welfare in American politics, we can better understand how this reform came to pass and what it might mean for the fate of America's minorities under the new welfare regime and for the future of American race politics.