appropriate. Chapters Three, Four, and Five juxtapose Calhoun’s claims about nationalism against theories of ethnicity, civil society, and a political community that takes public discourse seriously. Chapter Six addresses the distinction between civic and ethnic nationalism that Calhoun elaborated in his introduction to the Transaction Press reissue of Hans Kohn’s The Idea of Nationalism (2005).

The last chapter, “Nationalism and the Cultures of Democracy,” is a tour de force that brings together the institutional and cultural dimensions of Calhoun’s argument. Calhoun claims that “. . . nationalism and democracy may—together—hold more potential for providing political solidarity across lines of cultural difference” (p. 152). The “nation” provides a “public arena” where “peoples” can be both different and the same. Thus, the nation is an important site of social integration and central to democracy because democratic practice depends upon “social solidarity and social institutions.” Calhoun argues that those scholars who have focused on whether nations are “natural,” the “primordialists,” as well as those who argue that they are “constructed” a la Benedict Anderson, are equally off the mark. Nations are sites of human creativity where citizens engage in struggle, the “cultures of democracy,” as they negotiate their similarities and differences. The paradox and strength of the nation is that it simultaneously subsumes and celebrates difference—a source of collective obligation and individual freedom.

Nations Matter is a paradigm shifting discussion of nations, nationalism and democracy. Authored by internationally renowned social theorist, Nations Matter affirms Calhoun’s position as the leading contemporary analyst of the nation in all its dimensions—moral, emotional and practical. Anyone who wishes to write seriously about nations in the future will need to engage Calhoun’s counter-intuitive and elegant formulation.


Eduardo Bonilla-Silva
Duke University
Ebs@soc.duke.edu

White workers of the world, Unite! This slogan was used by South African workers in the early part of the twentieth century, but it could have well been used by the labor movement in the United States. The historical record documenting the racism of the white working class and in their unions is clear. We have plenty of books specifying how the white-dominated unions discriminated (that is, used their “social capital”) against workers of color until well into the 1970s. But until now, we lacked a book analyzing the interaction between the labor movement, the civil rights movement, the Democratic Party, and the state. This vacuum has been filled with Paul Frymer’s wonderful book Black and Blue. His overall claim is that the Democratic Party made a huge mistake by not marrying its labor and civil rights efforts. Failing to do so set a process that led to the development of a “bifurcated system of power that assigned race and class problems to different spheres of government” (p. 2). The book, then, does both a “biography and an autopsy of the Democratic Party during the New Deal” (p. 7). In contrast to those who blame the divided house of the Democratic Party on “identity politics” (e.g. Theda Skocpol, William Julius Wilson, Todd Gitlin, etc.), Fryer cogently shows that the baby was divided from the beginning. Fryer examines his thesis with data from political officials, courts records, cases filed by the NAACP, and the examination of relevant cases before the NLRB from the 1930s until the 1970s.

I must state for the record that this book by a political scientist and legal scholar is, unlike much of what comes out from that part of the academic field, theoretically rich. For example, rather than conceiving racism as prejudice, Frymer insists racism is institutional and, thus, it ultimately provides “rationality” for actors to behave in racist ways.
Frymer also conceives “the state” as an arena of struggle (an argument reminiscent of Poulantzas’ work), hence, politics for Frymer is extremely important. Lastly, and perhaps the most important theoretical and substantive point in Frymer’s account, power is deemed as working through institutions such as the Courts or the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). Rather than positing a priori that these institutions “simply reflect the interest of the powerful,” Frymer argues they “can take a life of their own and have an independent causal effect on how power is attained and manifested” (p. 9).

Frymer shows that the Wagner Act, and the institutions it created, ultimately failed as they became the “Magna Carta for White Labor.” This institutionalization of white labor power in the NLRB forced the civil rights community—particularly the NAACP, to find redress for discrimination in the Courts. This path, combined with the limited power of the civil rights enforcement agencies created years later (e.g., the EEOC), almost guaranteed, along with several laws enacted for different purposes (see Chapter Four), the expansion of the “legal state” as the place to settle civil rights concerns. Based on this analysis, Frymer concludes that the labor and civil rights communities will have to “rely less on mobilizing and organizing and more on a frank recognition of the realities of democratic representation” (p. 139) to advance their common interests.

And it was precisely the conclusion of the book that made me go hum, as I believe exactly the opposite! Frymer’s conclusion is derived from his concern with how things might have been rather than how they were. He laments how the Democratic Party split its labor and civil rights concerns rather than understanding that this was what was in the historical cards. Had Frymer followed his own argument about racism and institutional power a few years back, he would have concluded that this bifurcation of power was the logical outcome of how race and class had operated in America. Accordingly, unlike Frymer, I do not put my faith on the “realities of democratic representation” and the messiness of democratic politics for progressive social change. Instead, I believe that in order to create an inclusive democracy that reflects labor, race, and gender interests in its political institutions, we need more social movements and more organizational work. And the movements and the actors I envision that will push democracy forward will be, like they have been in the past, mostly outside formal organizations (Frymer limits his analysis of “social movements” to organized labor and the NAACP which excludes the multiple examples of less “organized” and equally important forms of social mobilization).

Despite my criticisms, this book deserves to be widely read. Frymer’s systematic analysis and clear exposition alone make this book required reading for sociologists interested in politics, political sociology, state and social policy, social movements, and race matters in general.


STEPHANIE LEE MUDGE
European University Institute
stephanie.mudge@eui.eu

Long an object of study in other disciplines, European integration has sparked a sociological literature relatively recently. Precisely how sociology’s concepts and problematiques can contribute to our understanding of the European Union (E.U.) is still being defined. The task is daunting: neither a nation-state nor an international organization comparable to, say, the WTO, the E.U. has been meticulously documented in what is often an encyclopedic, actorless mode, rendering the whole phenomenon guileless and smoothly machine-like on the surface, yet deeply ambiguous in meaning and effect.

None of this implies that we should give up on a sociological contribution to the study of integration. For sociologists studying Europe in any of its dimensions, the E.U. is now without a doubt the ethereal elephant-in-the-room. The elephant needs to be given form and depth, if for no other reason than its sheer magnitude: as of 2007, the 27-member E.U. had a population of 495 million people. This is much more than an ‘N of one.’

Contemporary Sociology 38, 1