

Introduction | Beyond Discrimination: Racial Inequality in the Age of Obama

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CONTEMPORARY RACIAL INEQUALITY in the United States poses a dual challenge for social scientists and policy analysts. It is, first, a serious policy problem. Nearly half a century after the peak of the civil rights movement, racial identity remains a significant predictor of class status and life chances. Across a wide range of social and economic domains—income, wealth, employment, education, housing, health, criminal justice, and others—African Americans and other minority groups consistently lag behind whites, with severe consequences not only for the well-being of disadvantaged group members but also for the health of American democracy (Wilson 1999; Hochschild and Weaver 2007). Second, racial inequality in the post-civil rights era poses an analytical challenge for scholars of American politics and society. In the wake of the civil rights revolution of the 1950s and 1960s, the most obvious barriers to racial equality—state-sponsored and state-sanctioned segregation, explicit discrimination, and widespread racism among the white public—have declined dramatically as factors in American life. Moreover, the antidiscrimination regime created by the civil rights laws of the 1960s, especially the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts, has been comparatively successful at rooting out the most egregious practices of racial exclusion and institutionalizing racial integration as a widespread public policy goal.

But these changes, while they have dramatically improved life chances for many members of racial and ethnic minority groups, have not closed the gap entirely, and multiple sources of inequality—residency, education, employment, income, wealth, among others—still overlap and reinforce

one another. Moreover, as labor-market and income inequality have grown and hardened in recent decades, the racial gap has become more acute, not less. In short, to adapt T. H. Marshall's (1964) terminology, while the transformations of the mid and late twentieth century may have conferred civil and political rights on African Americans and other minorities, broad-based social rights remain elusive. This general puzzle—the persistence of racial inequality in a world in which overt racial hostility does not carry the same meaning and weight as it did in the past—is both a profound challenge for American politics and a fundamental question for scholars of American society, and it is the central conundrum that the authors assembled in this collection seek to address.

The civil rights revolution removed the most visible and blatant means of producing and reproducing racial inequality from American society. But beneath the surface of racism and discrimination lay another layer of institutions and processes that have made racial inequality persist. These subterranean mechanisms have not been fully exposed or explored, and they remain poorly understood; identifying and analyzing these mechanisms is critical to understanding and ameliorating racial inequality, and that is the central task that we and our colleagues in this volume undertake.

BARACK OBAMA AND THE DECLINING SIGNIFICANCE OF RACISM

To many observers, the election of Barack Obama seemed to punctuate the long civil rights struggle and mark the dawn of a new era in American politics in which race would no longer stand as a barrier to opportunity or achievement. Obama himself embraced this imagery, beginning with his Democratic National Convention speech in 2004 (“There is not a black America and a white America and Latino America and Asian America—there’s the United States of America”) and continuing through his speech on race during the 2008 campaign, at the moment when his association with an outspoken black preacher threatened to derail his campaign (“Barack Obama’s Remarks to the Democratic National Convention,” *New York Times*, July 27, 2004). In his race speech, which he titled “A More Perfect Union” and delivered at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia (“Barack Obama’s Speech on Race,” *New York Times*, March 18, 2008), Obama at once acknowledged the history of racial division and conflict in the American past, envisioned a future in which racial distinctions would blur and ultimately fade into insignificance, and projected himself as an avatar of that future (Sugrue 2010, 118–24).

In keeping with these themes, Obama defied his opponents’ attempts to identify him as a “black” candidate of limited and parochial electoral ap-

peal (a dynamic most starkly apparent in the reaction to Bill Clinton's remarks around the time of the South Carolina primary in January 2008, first dismissing Obama's claims to have been a consistent opponent of the Iraq war as "a complete fairy tale" and then comparing Obama's campaign to Jesse Jackson's much more pointedly racialized presidential campaigns in 1984 and 1988) (Heilemann and Halperin 2010, 185–86, 196–201, 209–15; Remnick 2010, 510–12). Even African Americans were slow to embrace his candidacy for the Democratic nomination. For his part, Obama carefully straddled two political worlds, embracing (albeit uneasily) his African American identity and connecting himself with the legacy of the civil rights struggle as a member of the "Joshua generation" while methodically building a political career on the basis of cross-racial coalition building and electoral appeals (Obama 2007; Remnick 2010; Lizza 2008; Fredrick C. Harris, "The Price of a Black President," *New York Times*, October 27, 2012).

There is also ample electoral evidence that Obama reached beyond race more effectively than other candidates for office in recent American history. In the post-civil rights era, no Democratic nominee for president has received a majority (or even a plurality) of the white vote in the general election, and Obama was no exception to this trend. But he did better among white voters than any Democrat in recent memory. Obama got 43 percent of the white vote in 2008, more than John Kerry in 2004 or Al Gore in 2000 (41 percent each). In fact, only Jimmy Carter in 1976 (47 percent) and Bill Clinton in 1996 (43 percent) got so large a share of the white vote since the 1960s. Although Obama's share of the white vote fell to 39 percent in 2012, he won reelection with an impressively cross-racial coalition.¹ Moreover, as Valerie Purdie-Vaughns and Richard Eibach argue in our collection, the election of the first black president held important symbolic power for Americans across racial lines.

But although it seems clear that race is still a meaningful political category and racial inequality remains one of the defining features of American life, it is also clear that the racial landscape has shifted dramatically between the mid-twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The United States, it seems, has entered what we might call a "postracist" era in which the role race plays in American society is more subtle and hidden from view than in earlier periods, when explicit racial beliefs and antagonisms underlay an open and explicit racial order.² Racial attitudes among white Americans have been substantially transformed over the past fifty years. Mass belief in biological or sociological theories of race that imply the superiority of some racial groups and the inferiority of others has almost vanished, and the expression of explicit racial prejudice has been rendered largely illegitimate in American political discourse. Americans broadly accept, at least rhetorically, the basic premises of legal, social, and political

equality across racial lines and recognize the value of diversity and integration in many arenas—workplaces, schools, public settings—where it was once rare, if not expressly forbidden. As Desmond King and Rogers Smith (2011) have argued, these trends indicate the apparent political triumph of a color-blind racial policy alliance, a collection of actors and institutions that promote policies rooted in individualism, without reference to racial identities.

But the transformative, even revolutionary, change of recent decades in the American racial terrain has also left behind a puzzling, not to say disastrous, residue of stability in patterns of racial inequality. Color blindness in American politics is multilayered and complex, and as King and Smith also point out, the contemporary color-blind racial alliance is composed largely of those who are at best indifferent (and at worst hostile) to claims for substantive racial equality, suggesting that the transformation of American race politics is far from complete. Nearly five years into the Obama era, the realities of economic crisis, war, and deeply polarized politics define the political moment. The nearly giddy enthusiasm of the campaign and election has subsided and with it, perhaps, the hope that the politics of race would recede into the background.

Moreover, Obama's candidacy and election may have themselves generated a racial backlash. In the 2008 general election, Obama outperformed the 2004 Democratic nominee, Senator John Kerry, in every area of the country except for the areas of the South corresponding to the old Black Belt, the cotton-growing region that formed the core of the segregationist, white-supremacist South of the twentieth century, where racial tension and resentment remain politically salient, a result that tends to belie recent suggestions that race was declining as a factor in Southern electoral politics (Gelman 2010, 190–92; Key 1949; Shafer and Johnston 2006). And the extreme right-wing reaction to the Obama administration exemplified by the Tea Party movement, while certainly motivated by genuine discontent with the drift of American politics and policy, seems to embody a certain amount of discomfort with Obama's racial and ethnic identity, as suggested by the obsessive focus on Obama's alleged Muslim background and foreign birth (a distortion that persists despite all evidence to the contrary). The commonly voiced Tea Party slogan, "Take back our country," conveys a message resonant with racial overtones (Zernike 2010; Barreto et al. 2011; Skocpol and Williamson 2012). Take back the country from whom? Indeed, antiblack and anti-Latino sentiments increased from 2008 to 2012, even though Obama had spoken less publicly on racial issues during his first two years of office than any Democratic president since the early 1960s ("AP Poll: A Slight Majority of Americans Are Now Expressing Negative Views about Blacks," *Washington Post*, October 27, 2012; Harris 2012).

These contradictions and ambiguities of America's postracist present—continuity in the midst of change—underscore the central question with which the authors in this collection grapple, individually and collectively. The postracist notion resonates not because it describes contemporary American society in any important particulars but because it evokes our sense that the ways in which race matters in American public life have changed, upending both commonsense understandings and social-scientific theories of race's place in American society. The key empirical puzzles that we investigate revolve around the analytical meaning of a *postracist* America and the "stickiness" of race in the postracist era. In the pre-civil rights era of blatant prejudice, legally sanctioned segregation, and explicit discrimination, explanations for racial inequality and the subordinate position of African Americans and other racially and ethnically defined minority groups were relatively easy to grasp. Prejudice has since declined, Jim Crow has been dismantled, and discrimination is illegal, and yet racial inequality remains stubbornly resilient at least in some areas, although declining in others (Hochschild 1999; Brown et al. 2003). If so much has changed in American politics and society, if so many of the barriers to racial equality have crumbled, why is there so much dispiriting continuity in the contours of racial inequality? Why and how does race still matter as a marker of inequality and a predictor of life chances? In the absence of the more easily legible patterns of the past, what are the mechanisms that reproduce and reinforce racial inequality in contemporary American life?

BEYOND INDIVIDUALISM

The key methodological implication of the postracist puzzle is that we need to move away from the inference that racial inequality is exclusively the consequence of factors that operate at the individual level. Across the social sciences, accounts of the causes of racial inequality have long focused primarily on racial attitudes (particularly those of whites), explicit acts of discrimination (particularly those by whites against African Americans and members of other minority groups), and the individual characteristics of African Americans and other minorities themselves. For much of the twentieth century, white prejudice was the dominant racial attitude in American society. For Gunnar Myrdal (1944), white prejudice lay at the core of the "American dilemma," the tension between American ideals of equality and universal rights and the subordinate status of American blacks. In his wide-ranging study of race relations in the United States, Myrdal found that the belief among whites in black inferiority was widespread, a finding that was corroborated by newly emergent survey and

experimental research across the social sciences. As a corollary, white Americans tended to support segregation and to oppose policies aimed at breaking down barriers and breaching color lines in settings such as workplaces, neighborhoods, and schools. Over time, as racial injustice increasingly came under assault in the middle third of the twentieth century, these attitudes began to change, and white Americans came to accept, at least rhetorically, principles of equality and integration (Page and Shapiro 1992, 68–81; Schuman et al. 1997).

More recently, however, some observers have argued that racial prejudice still dominates the racial beliefs of white Americans and that the express desire to exclude African Americans and other minorities accounts for the persistence of racial inequality (Bell 1992; Hacker 1992). More subtle versions of what we might call the “racism thesis” suggest that even though explicit expressions of racial prejudice are frowned on, racial stereotypes remain a powerful framing device that can shape social and political behavior and policy debates, often in ways that remain hidden behind a norm of color-blind equality (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Gilens 1999; Mendelberg 2001). Others suggest that racial prejudice per se is less important than other kinds of beliefs in shaping white Americans’ opinions about policies such as affirmative action and others that are targeted at minorities (Sniderman and Piazza 1993; Sniderman and Carmines 1997; Sniderman, Crosby, and Howell 2000).

What these perspectives share, despite their disagreements about the prevalence of certain kinds of racist beliefs, is the view that what matters in creating and sustaining racial inequality is prejudice, whether overt or latent. Whatever the degree of prejudice that remains in American society, it is unquestionably less widespread and virulent than it once was, making it hard to attribute the persistence of inequality entirely to it. The more or less overt prejudice of an earlier era has largely been overwritten by a rhetoric of color blindness and an acceptance, if not a celebration, of diversity as a fundamental maxim, although as we suggest these categories are rather double edged.

A second approach to racial inequality centers on discrimination, the deliberate differential treatment of individuals based on their race or other characteristics. Along with racial prejudice, discrimination in politics, education, employment, and other domains of American life was the norm for much of the twentieth century. Sanctioned by the United States Supreme Court in 1896, the systematic exclusion of African Americans from schools, jobs, and neighborhoods reserved exclusively for whites was a core feature of American life—not only in the South, where segregation and white supremacy thoroughly structured politics, economy, and society, but also in the North, where public policy, group mobilization, and institutional struc-

ture conspired to exclude African Americans from opportunity and mobility (*Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537 (1896); Key 1949; Jackson 1985; Wilson 1987; King 1995; Sugrue 1996). African Americans, moreover, were widely excluded from voting rights in the South, depriving them of political power and further reinforcing broad patterns of discrimination (Keyssar 2000; Valelly 2004).

Over the course of the twentieth century, African Americans waged a battle on multiple fronts against discrimination in education, employment, public accommodations, and the ballot box. The war against discrimination was engaged in multiple theaters—in states and at the national level; in both North and South; in the courts, Congress, the executive branch, and the streets—and by the 1960s it had met with broad success. The Supreme Court reversed its constitutional sanction of discrimination, state governments took action against discrimination, the civil rights movement toppled Jim Crow in the South, and Congress passed the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts, outlawing discrimination in education, employment, and at the ballot box (*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka et al.*, 347 U.S. 483 [1954]; Chen 2009; Johnson 2010; Sugrue 2008).

As a consequence of this mid-twentieth-century transformation of law and policy, overt discrimination in realms such as employment, education (especially higher education), housing, government contracting, and voting declined dramatically. This decline in discrimination resulted partly from state action in the wake of the core civil rights legislation of the 1960s: the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968. State enforcement of these acts has been variable. In employment, the United States developed a comparatively strong enforcement regime, characterized by affirmative action practices and diversity norms that have come to be widely shared among private and public employers alike, braced by the federal courts, federal and state administrative authority, and private litigants (Lieberman 2005; Dobbin 2009; Farhang 2010). The legal protection of voting rights for African Americans as well as Latinos and other minority groups has similarly dramatically transformed the American electorate and expanded minority political empowerment (Davidson and Grofman 1994; Harris, Sinclair-Chapman, and McKenzie 2006).

At the same time, antidiscrimination enforcement in education has been somewhat less vigorous, from the Supreme Court's admonishment that desegregation of public schools should proceed "with all deliberate speed" to the court's denial of remedies such as metropolitan busing that might have more effectively overcome the limitations of residential segregation and the local control of schools (*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka et al.*, 349 U.S. 294, 301 [1955]; *Milliken v. Bradley*, 418 U.S. 717 [1974]). Simi-

larly, antidiscrimination efforts in housing have achieved limited success as federal efforts to integrate neighborhoods have been caught between local resistance and bureaucratic lassitude at the federal level (Bonastia 2006; Sugrue 1996; Massey and Denton 1993).

From their highpoint in the 1970s, all of these formal efforts to desegregate American social and economic life have come under challenge in both the political arena and the courts, and these rollback attempts have also met with varying success. Liberal principles of equality frequently collided with politics as local communities resisted policy attempts to integrate schools and neighborhoods (Hochschild 1984; Sugrue 1996; Hochschild and Danielson 2004). Federal courts have limited the use of race-conscious desegregation measures in public primary and secondary education (*Hopwood v. Texas*, 78 F.3d. 932 [5th Cir. 1996]; *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1*, 551 U.S. 701 [2007]) and in government contracting (*City of Richmond v. J. A. Croson*, 488 U.S. 469 [1989]; *Adarand Constructors, Inc., v. Peña*, 515 U.S. 200 [1995]) but thus far, at least, protected them in higher education (*Grutter v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 306 [2003]).

The Florida state legislature enacted Governor Jeb Bush's proposal to end the use of affirmative action by state government, including public universities. Referendums banning affirmative action have passed in California, Michigan, and Nebraska, while more far-reaching efforts to prohibit the collection of race statistics (on the French model) have failed thus far. States have responded with creative efforts to work around these legal proscriptions of explicitly race-based diversity efforts, seeking to achieve integration by apparently color-blind means—an ironic strategic reversal of Justice Harry Blackmun's admonition that "in order to get beyond racism, we must first take account of race. There is no other way. And in order to treat some persons equally, we must treat them differently" (*Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, 438 U.S. 265, 407 [1978]; Peterson 1995; Sabbagh 2007).

At the same time, the enforcement of antidiscrimination law has clearly worked to reduce racial and ethnic gaps in important economic outcomes. The economist James Heckman has documented the early impact of the Civil Rights Act in black employment and wages in the South in the 1960s and 1970s (Heckman and Payner 1989; Heckman 1990; Donohue and Heckman 1991). Affirmative action has in fact had a nontrivial, if modest, impact on the educational and employment opportunities, wages, and socioeconomic status of people of color and women, with significant spillover effects for the broader society (Burstein 1985; Bowen and Bok 1998; Holzer and Neumark 2006). More recently, Roland Fryer (2011) has shown that although racial gaps in economic and social outcomes (such as employment, health, and incarceration) remain robust, the share of those gaps

that can be attributed directly to discrimination (rather than to gaps in education outcomes—which may themselves result from discrimination)—has fallen dramatically in recent decades.

Moreover, many large and influential public and private organizations—including corporations, universities, and the military—have thoroughly internalized the goals of diversity (along many dimensions, not restricted to race) and adopted a standard set of personnel practices that embody at least a version of antidiscrimination law (Dobbin 2009; Karabel 2005).³ To be sure, discrimination is still a substantial barrier to economic success, especially in employment and particularly for young inner-city black men, who are frequently the targets of stereotyping about what William Julius Wilson (2009) summarizes as “ghetto behavior” (Neckerman and Kirschenman 1991; Goldsmith, Hamilton, and Darity 2006; Pager 2007). But despite the persistence of explicit discrimination, it is increasingly difficult to sustain the argument that the deliberate discriminatory actions of individuals alone can account for contemporary patterns of racial inequality.

BEYOND DISCRIMINATION

The persistence of racial inequality in an era when explicit, intentional racial discrimination has declined, if not entirely disappeared, frames the central puzzle we address in this volume. We have entered an era in which racial attitudes by themselves are no longer sufficient to account for patterns of racial inequality. This transformation gives rise to three key questions, which our contributors address in turn. First, when and how did this historical transformation occur, from a period in which racism and overt discrimination shaped American society to the contemporary post-racist moment? Second, what role do racial attitudes play in the postracist era? The absence of the explicit racist expression of an earlier period does not imply that individual beliefs about racial difference are no longer consequential for social relations and collective outcomes, merely that they are expressed differently and act through different pathways. Several of our authors address the consequences of racial attitudes in this new world. Finally, what other institutional and structural mechanisms operate to perpetuate and shape racial inequality in the postracist world?

History and Context

The historical transformation of the landscape of racial inequality motivates the first group of contributions to the collection. How and when did the shift occur, from inequality visibly created and maintained by explicit

and legally codified racial beliefs to today's more hidden and recondite structures? The Obama era, which frames the work of all the contributors, denotes a distinctive historical configuration of factors that shape the questions we ask and the arguments we fashion—the confluence of the post-civil rights, postracist moment we have already described with an era of conservative, deregulatory politics and rising economic inequality, punctuated recently by severe financial crisis and the longest and deepest recession since the Great Depression (see Pierson and Skocpol 2007). Locating our key analytical theme—the racially unequal consequences of facially racial-neutral institutions—in history's flow helps further to identify and analyze the role that these more macro-level historical conditions play in shaping and constraining the processes that produce racial inequality and to question the portability—across time, place, and context—of our propositions about the mechanisms that generate and reproduce racial inequality. Not all the chapters in the volume are themselves geared toward this kind of historical inquiry, but returning briefly to the distinctive characteristics of this historical moment allows us at least to ask key questions about the role of the broader political, economic, and social context and the generalizability of our perspective.

Historical inquiry is important also because we seek not a static portrait of racial inequality at a single moment but an account of how racial inequality has unfolded over time. It is a commonplace observation that racial inequality in the United States is pervasive and persistent because of the country's distinct history of slavery, segregation, and white supremacy. But this observation raises important questions about how racial inequality is transmitted over time, an issue that is usually elided in discussions of racial inequality. Scholars have suggested a range of processes that might account for the "stickiness" of racial inequality over time—psychological, sociological, economic, cultural, and political. An alternative set of arguments suggest that history has no bearing on racial inequality and minimizes the causal weight of such means by which inequality might reproduce itself over time, instead preferring to ascribe contemporary inequality to contemporary ills of politics, policy, and society (Thernstrom and Thernstrom 1997). Nevertheless, the mechanisms by which racial inequality is transmitted across time remain contested and obscure (Bleich 2005; Lieberman 2008; see generally Pierson 2004). Although few of the essays in this volume address the question explicitly, as a collection they focus precisely on a range of causal mechanisms by which racial inequality can be said to be built into American institutions, offering an innovative window onto this issue and allowing us to pose questions about processes as they develop over time in an analytically useful way.

Thinking about racial inequality as something that evolves over time also sheds light on a conspicuous choice that the editors and contributors made in developing the volume: the almost exclusive focus on black-white inequality. With a few exceptions, the contributions to the book address the contours and causes of inequality regarding African Americans and do not address the expanded meaning of race in American politics and society that has followed the opening up of the country's borders to immigration from the non-European world. We offer several justifications for this choice, while fully acknowledging that we miss a great deal of important nuance and variation in contemporary racial inequality. For most of American history, the black-white color line has been the defining axis of inequality in American society. Our contributors focus almost exclusively on black-white inequality in American institutions, structures, and processes, and the mechanisms that generate and reproduce inequality that we uncover have evolved around that feature of American life. Analytically, then, a historical focus on black-white inequality can reveal much about the contours and processes of American racial inequality more generally.

Racial and ethnic diversity in the United States has indeed proliferated in the past half century. Latinos (counted together) now constitute the largest minority group in American society, and Asian Americans also account for a fast-growing segment of the population. These groups, increasingly constructed as racially and ethnically distinct, have emerged in a society whose political institutions, markets, and civil society have been organized largely around the black-white divide (King and Smith 2005). The position of nonblack minority groups, too, has been largely defined in relation to the black-white color line, through what Claire Jean Kim (1999) has described as a process of "triangulation." Issues of inequality across this expanded panoply of racially defined groups have essentially been overlain across already existing patterns and mechanisms of black-white inequality.

Thinking in this way about the unfolding of broader patterns of racial inequality in a more multiracial context might lead us to consider racial inequality in light of recent advances in the theory of institutional change, invoking mechanisms such as layering, drift, and conversion that tend to occur when multiple institutional systems interact (Hacker 2004; Thelen 2004; Mahoney and Thelen 2010). These kinds of approaches have proved particularly fruitful in thinking about systems in which continuity and change intermingle and in which change comes about through unexpected and often imperceptible means, an apt description of the conundrum of contemporary racial inequality. The studies collected here suggest that this could be a powerful approach not only to understanding the history of

racial inequality in the United States but also to assessing our contemporary condition in a world of greater diversity and complexity in race relations.

The first group of chapters begins to address some of these questions, by describing some key moments in the historical trajectory of racial equality and analyzing some of the key historical processes that drove the shifting political economy of racial inequality. Rodney Hero begins by describing the contemporary landscape of racial inequality and parsing the postracist moment, setting it in historical context. Dorian Warren's chapter situates the transformation of racial inequality in the broader evolution of the American political economy and offers a novel periodization scheme that links politics, economics, and race. Building both on King and Smith's (2005) argument about racial orders in American political development and on Charles Tilly's (1998) framework for understanding durable inequality, Warren reveals the deeply racialized structure of the American labor market over time and suggests that racial ascription and class dynamics are coequal forces in shaping markets and distributing economic opportunity (see also Warren 2010). He shows, moreover, how the twinned politically structured forces of racial exclusion and economic organization have shifted over time to create a series of distinct racial and economic orders that define both the mechanisms that tend to perpetuate racial and class inequality and the opportunities for mobilization to challenge inequality.

In his chapter, Desmond King questions why and, pertinently, when racial inequality becomes an especially salient issue in American politics. Under what historical conditions do American policymakers perceive racial inequality as a problem worthy of attention, and what kind of responses are they likely to construct? King builds on his earlier collaborative work (King and Smith 2005, 2011; King and Lieberman 2009) to show how the apparatus of the American state is situated within a system of competing racial policy alliances that perpetually contend for dominance and largely structure American politics. For much of American history, the dominant racial alliances were hostile to (or at best neglectful of) racial equality. In the mid-twentieth century, with the pro-equality forces momentarily dominant, the weight of federal policy shifted toward the protection of rights and the promotion of racial equality, and King's chapter focuses on the civil rights moment of the 1960s as a key pivot in the state's role in shaping America's racial terrain, but one that was produced in often surprising and unexpected ways. King's essay elicits from this history a configuration of conditions that seem to be necessary for the state to take on the challenge of racial inequality and then maps those same conditions

onto some of the very limitations of state power that have vexed analysts and advocates ever since.

Anthony Chen and Lisa Stulberg similarly view the 1960s as a pivotal moment in the transformation of the terrain of racial inequality. They explore the origins of affirmative action in selective universities and challenge the conventional view that the violent urban unrest of the 1960s was primarily responsible for the opening up of university admissions policies in the ensuing years. Rather, they find that internal organizational forces and not external threats of disruption were primarily responsible for the rise of racially attentive admissions practices aimed at expanding opportunities for minority students and diversifying the population of schools that had been bastions of white privilege. Like King, in his exploration of the American state's capacity to challenge racial inequality, Chen and Stulberg probe a set of historical conditions under which selective universities, a key cog in the machinery of rigid privilege and exclusion and of economic mobility and opportunity in the American political economy, might act either to perpetuate or challenge racial inequality.

Finally, considering history and context provides a window onto another important thread that runs through the volume, the changing status and meaning of the rhetoric of color blindness. The concept of color blindness has a long and varied career, and we cannot do full justice to its intellectual genealogy here (see Thomas 2002; Haney López 2007). Nevertheless, we can observe that its meaning and valence have changed dramatically in recent decades, from a liberal aspiration in the era of Jim Crow segregation to a conservative rhetorical device frequently mobilized to evade collective responsibility for the persistence of racial inequality and to oppose policies, such as affirmative action, designed to tackle racial inequality head on.

Chen and Stulberg's argument about the origins of affirmative action in higher education also highlights this transformation, showing how the organizational imperatives of elite institutions in the 1960s led to the recognition that color blindness in admissions was insufficient to achieve equality, revealing an ideological context quite distant from a more current setting, where the rhetoric and appearance of color blindness often mask the race-laden processes of contemporary American life, some of which our contributors chronicle. More generally, the temporal arc of all the essays in the volume starkly frames this generational political and ideological transformation and offers a powerful answer to the tendentious claim—all too often accepted as self-evident—that color blindness is a timeless liberal virtue that inherently produces fairness and equality (Appiah and Gutmann 1996). Our central analytical theme, the unequal con-

sequences of apparently racially neutral institutions, helps to puncture this mythology of color blindness, which has become central to American political discourse, never more so than in the Obama era.

The Role of Attitudes

The persistence of racial inequality in this postracist era, when explicit racism and intentional racial discrimination have declined, if not entirely disappeared, frames our central puzzle and suggests the need to reframe long-standing questions and conclusions about the role of attitudes in shaping racial inequality. One inference that has become increasingly common in recent decades is that the absence of discrimination implies a newly level playing field and that, in a new era of “meritocracy,” continuing racial gaps must therefore reflect actual deficiencies of “merit” on the part of those who are less successful (Lemann 2000).

As the sociologist Lawrence Bobo (Bobo, Kluegel, and Smith 1997; Bobo and Smith 1998) has documented, since the civil rights breakthroughs of the 1960s many white Americans have come to presume that the end of state-sponsored legal segregation and the prohibition of discrimination have created a truly color-blind public sphere, making it seem reasonable to infer that inequality results neither from racism nor from structural barriers to minority achievement but from the incapacity of minorities themselves—a phenomenon that Bobo calls *laissez-faire racism*. Similarly, Martin Gilens (1999) has shown that similar beliefs about chronic poverty and the apparent undeservingness of the black poor, reinforced by specific cultural beliefs held by whites about African Americans (that blacks are lazy and lack a work ethic, for instance), undermined support for the New Deal welfare state in the decades following the 1960s, paving the way for the welfare reforms of the 1990s, which have had disproportionately punitive effects on people of color (Soss et al. 2001; see also Katz 1989).

A parallel version of this approach focuses on the self-destructive patterns of life in the ghettos and barrios of American inner cities—joblessness, broken families, welfare dependence, drugs, crime, and violence, among others. To some analysts, these characteristics of inner-city poverty reflect a set of pathological cultural and behavioral traits of minority groups that have been abetted by public policies that encourage dependency and isolation, particularly the welfare programs associated with the War on Poverty of the 1960s (Sowell 1978, 1994; Murray 1984). In the extreme, this argument takes on a biological cast, from the pseudoscience of Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray (1994; see Gould 1996) to debates about the existence of race in the shadow of the Human Genome Project (Risch et al. 2002; Cooper, Kaufman, and Ward 2003; Foster and Sharp

2004). However, other scholars, such as William Julius Wilson (1996), have portrayed those attributes of inner-city life not as group traits that are somehow innate but as cultural adaptations to a political economy that has left those neighborhoods and their residents behind, with poor education, few jobs, and no reasonable economic prospects (Anderson 1999; Venkatesh 2006). Wilson's response suggests that such explanations for racial inequality, which attribute inequality to individual or collective pathologies of minorities themselves without setting those cultural patterns in a structural context, amount to nothing more than a canard.

Attitudinal and cultural explanations of these kinds tend to look for cause-and-effect relationships between the beliefs and behavior of individuals—whites, blacks, or other minorities—and outcomes, so that a series of individual decisions and actions cumulate into macro-level patterns of racial inequality. But given the growing gap between the individual-level indicators of intentionality, prejudice, and discrimination, on one hand, and societal patterns of inequality, on the other, such explanations are no longer tenable in isolation. By contrast, explanations rooted in structural features of the society or political economy can help us probe how racially imbalanced outcomes are possible even in the absence of racial intentions and can result even from the most scrupulously color-blind of objectives. One common critique of post-civil rights race policy has been that in the absence of explicit discrimination or prejudice, the emphasis on race-targeted policies that seek to confer advantages to African Americans and other minorities are the culprit in the persistence of inequality because they undermine the fundamental liberal commitments to color blindness and equality (Thernstrom and Thernstrom 1997; Sleeper 1997).

These views fail to consider that ostensibly race-neutral policies and processes often have the effect of perpetuating and reinforcing racial inequalities in the normal course of their operations and even if none of the people involved acts with racially biased intent (see Lieberman 2005). Moreover, this view places inordinate faith in the dominance and beneficence of American liberalism as a force for racial equality. But history does not bear this faith out. As Rogers Smith (1997) has shown, American liberalism has perpetually contended with alternative political traditions that do not share the liberal commitment to equality across racial lines. And liberalism itself has been prone to a racially exclusionary outlook. In the contemporary era, when explicit defenses of white supremacy are generally outside the bounds of acceptable political discourse (even for the right, which used to embrace such arguments openly), the liberal rhetoric of color blindness that animated the civil rights revolution has been increasingly appropriated by an antigovernment, promarket conservative political culture that is at best indifferent (and at worst hostile) to demands

for racial equality (Morgan 1975; Horton 2005; King and Smith 2005; Steele 1990; MacLean 2006).

Several of our contributors take on the challenge of describing the new terrain of racial attitudes and mapping the changing and increasingly complex connection between attitudes and inequality. Phillip Goff directly addresses a fundamental conundrum of the contemporary era, which he calls the “attitude-inequality mismatch”: the persistence of racial inequality, especially in criminal justice policy and policing behavior, in the face of declining racial prejudice. Goff observes both that racial prejudice is inherently hard to measure, especially in the post-racist context, and that the notional relationship between individual prejudice and collectively unequal outcomes is hard to observe. Like the *laissez-faire* racism construct, this somewhat muddled field creates the impression that in the absence of explicit racial prejudice, apparently racially biased policing is simply the natural consequence of neutral procedures and thus reflects real underlying differences in levels of criminality between, say, blacks and whites. Goff shows, by contrast, that a range of attitudes about identity and circumstance can lead to police behavior that cumulates into manifestly unequal patterns of treatment across racial groups.

Valerie Purdie-Vaughns and Richard Eibach approach this set of questions from the opposite perspective. They explore the impact of public events on the construction of attitudes through the identification of an “Obama effect,” the impact of the symbolism of Obama’s status as the first black president on the social construction of African American identity. Building on important work in social and cognitive psychology, Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach focus on schools as a key setting where cognitive development and political socialization occur and connect processes of attitude formation with broader societal and political development. Their study identifies Barack Obama’s election as a source of racial pride for young African American schoolchildren, and they explore its possible connection both to rising academic achievement and to a declining sense of urgency around a policy agenda focused on issues of racial equality. Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach zero in on some of the critical micro-level underpinnings that converge in complex ways to shape patterns of racial inequality. These chapters suggest, however, that though attitudes remain important to the reproduction and texture of racial inequality, they are far from sufficient to account for patterns of inequality. Not only have race-laden attitudes themselves changed but also the connection between attitudes and outcomes is no longer as linear and apparently straightforward as it once was. The next section of the collection focuses on the institutional and structural factors that bend this connection in new ways.

Institutional Mechanisms

In his most recent book, *More Than Just Race*, William Julius Wilson (2009) argues passionately and compellingly that the choice often posed between culture and structure as explanations of persistent racial inequality is a false one, that these two kinds of causes have reinforced one another, and that neither the cultural nor material hypotheses of previous generations of scholarship are sufficient to account for contemporary patterns of racial inequality. But even Wilson's persuasive deconstruction and reconstruction of the roots of racial inequality leaves open questions of the mixture of structural and cultural causes that lie behind the persistent racial gap that remains in American society, the precise mechanisms that underlie these causal relationships, and the conditions under which these mechanisms do and do not operate to produce and perpetuate racial inequality.

We need, then, an account of what the sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2003) has called "racism without racists": the ways in which social relations, political institutions, and other features of American society often advance the interests of whites and thus reproduce existing patterns of inequality (see also Williams 2003; Katznelson 2005). Here is the central puzzle of the postracist society: how do institutions that are, on their face, scrupulously racially neutral have systematically racially imbalanced consequences, resulting over time in the replication of old lines of racial inequality or the construction of new ones, even as still others seem to dissolve? Earlier studies have documented the deeply race-laden character of much of American politics, its tendency to divide the population along racial lines without saying so explicitly. But the notion of race-laden policy goes beyond the merely incidental unintended consequences of ostensibly neutral arrangements to suggest that there might be more systematic sources of racial bias built into the structure of political, social, and economic structures and processes and that these structures might reflect more hidden racially structured power arrangements—class conflicts, party coalitions, political institutions, markets, political and social attitudes, and the like—whose characters are shaped by racial distinctions. Moreover, such arrangements can be expected to affect whites and people of color differently in the course of their normal operations, whether or not the people who designed them or inhabit them intend that result (Lieberman 1998; King and Smith 2005).

This perspective reverses the distorting presumption of color blindness that has come to dominate the American understanding of racial inequality and suggests that we cannot always take the appearance of color blindness at face value. American history is, in fact, full of instances of ap-

parently color-blind arrangements that mask deeply racially unequal consequences. Jim Crow voting restrictions, for example, such as poll taxes, literacy tests, and the “grandfather clause,” were adopted precisely because they were facially race neutral (and so did not violate the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which prohibits race-based voting qualifications) but could be applied to limit black registration (Valelly 2004). Moreover, as Melanie Springer (forthcoming) shows, other kinds of voting rules had similar effects over the course of the twentieth century, limiting black ballot access despite the appearance of neutrality. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 recognized precisely this feature of voting restrictions by requiring certain states to submit any change in voting or registration procedure, no matter how apparently trivial, for preclearance by the Justice Department. This procedural hurdle essentially places the burden of proof on the states to show that its voting procedures will not work to the detriment of minority voters, rather than expecting disadvantaged voters to demonstrate bias after the fact.

A parallel example is the role of occupational testing in employment discrimination law. Many employers use aptitude tests to screen job applicants and candidates for promotions, and many such tests generate biased results: white applicants tend to score higher than minorities, making the preponderance of whites in higher-ranking positions inside organizations appear to be the natural result of qualities that make them better fit for these jobs. But after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed employment discrimination, the Supreme Court held that occupational tests that have a “disparate impact” on white and nonwhite applicants should be presumed to be discriminatory unless the employer can show that passage of the test is a “bona fide occupational qualification” for the position, once again turning around the burden of proof and puncturing the complacent syllogism of color blindness (*Griggs v. Duke Power Co.*, 401 U.S. 424 [1971]).⁴ These examples and many others (some of which are addressed in this book) point toward a research agenda that moves beyond discrimination, understood as a set of intentional acts rooted in attitudinal prejudice, and understands racial inequality as the consequence of social, political, and economic structures as much as the agency of whites.

This outlook is reminiscent of an older tradition of identifying institutional racism in American political life. Stokely Carmichael, who coined the phrase in the late 1960s, distinguished between “individual racism” and “institutional racism.” While the former referred to overt acts of discrimination and prejudice, the latter “originates in the operation of established and respected forces in the society, and thus receives far less public condemnation than the first [individual] type” (Carmichael and Hamilton 1967, 4; see also Knowles and Prewitt 1969; Katznelson 1971, 1972). But

social scientists did not take up the challenge of institutional racism in a concerted way. In the wake of urban unrest of the 1960s and the economic decline of cities in the 1970s, debates about racial inequality came to focus on the urban “underclass” and its apparent pathologies, a line of inquiry that directed scholars away from the underlying structural sources of inequality (Wilson 1987; Katz 1993). But like the heyday of the institutional-racism thesis in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Obama era is a moment when hope for progress mingles with anxiety over unfulfilled promise. The postracist puzzle of contemporary American society, the stubborn stickiness of racial inequality despite the decline of the factors that apparently accounted for it in the past, calls us back to the institutional-racism perspective and its distinction between overt and covert—individual and structural—sources of racial bias still has something to offer.

In its earliest formulation, the institutional-racism perspective tended to be descriptive (and even a bit polemical). But in the intervening decades, new analytical tools and methods have evolved in the social sciences that are oriented toward addressing precisely the challenge that institutional racism addresses: how do we expose, model, and test the subterranean effects of race in contemporary American society? Political scientists and sociologists have shown how various kinds of institutions—from formal governing arrangements and organizations to taken-for-granted cultural understandings—shape and constrain patterns of human behavior and interaction and help construct social identities and define political rationality. Social psychologists have shown how patterns of interaction between individuals and their surroundings can influence behavior. And historians have now begun to integrate the writing of social, cultural, and political history to show how lived human experience both shapes and responds to the world of politics and policy. Although the contributors to this volume represent a broad range of disciplines, methods, and analytical orientations, they share the conviction that we need to move beyond discrimination to understand how racial inequality can result from the ordinary workings of American society. Armed with this new repertoire of social-scientific approaches, analytical tools, and methodological techniques, they address some of the most pressing arenas of racial inequality, from education and employment to criminal justice and health.

The State Several key institutional settings frame the contributions to this volume. The American state, first, is a key site of race-laden policy. The close connection between racial inequality and the state is not, of course, a novel observation; many scholars have documented the role that race has played in building and shaping the American state (Lieberman 1998; Marx 1998; King and Smith 2005; King and Lieberman 2009). For most of Amer-

ican history, the state protected and enforced segregation and white supremacy, as in race-based immigration restriction and the segregation of the federal workforce (to say nothing of its protection of slavery), but more recently it has become a powerful, if selective, force for racial equality (King 1995, 2000). What is clear is that the state is closely linked to patterns of racial identity and inequality; to paraphrase Charles Tilly (1975, 42), race makes the state and the state makes race.

What remains relatively unexplored and unexplained, however, is how to account for variation in the state's capacity and inclination to protect civil rights and promote racial equality—over time, across policy domains, and across geography, among other sources of variability. Some of the mechanisms by which the American state's ability to enforce racial equality are well known: federalism, administrative fragmentation, and institutional rules. But the recent gathering legitimation crisis of the American state that a number of observers have noted has implicated other kinds of often-hidden mechanisms that affect the way American politics and policy address the challenges of racial inequality: growing economic and ideological polarization, extreme sensitivity to organized interests, the repurposing of color-blind rhetoric to challenge civil rights policies, and the growing prominence of a variety of private, subterranean, and obfuscating means of exerting public authority (Jacobs and King 2009; Mettler 2011; Morgan and Campbell 2011; Horton 2005; Clemens 2006; Lieberman 2009). This crisis of the state has been especially acute in response to economic crisis under conditions of extreme political polarization, but as Lawrence Jacobs and Desmond King (2009) point out, it has been brewing for a long time and is particularly deeply rooted in racial antagonism. These mechanisms of state action and their consequences for racial equality are among the most compelling questions in the study of race in American society, and the first group of chapters in this volume begin to address pressing questions about how the American state shapes the politics of race.

King's chapter in particular connects recent advances in the study of the American state to the challenges of racial inequality. How and when, he asks, does the state mobilize its strong coercive apparatus behind efforts to ameliorate racial inequality, and how can the variation in the state's efforts be accounted for? King identifies the 1960s as a pivotal moment in the development of the state's potential capacity to address racial inequality, laying the groundwork for the political analysis that follows in subsequent chapters. By illuminating the rare circumstances under which racial inequality in the United States has come out of the shadows and presented itself as a problem worthy of concerted effort and overt policy, King underscores the importance of probing the features of the state that ordinarily tend to limit its scope as a force for racial equality.

More often, however, the state and its policies have the effect of generating and reproducing inequality despite their apparently race-neutral intentions, and a number of chapters examine the workings and effects of some of these policies. These contributions invoke and illustrate an important set of causal pathways for the reproduction and even hardening of racial inequality through the action of the state and the operation of public policies. State institutions and public policies can shape and reinforce attitudes, create economic incentives for market behavior, affect patterns of political organization, and interact with other social and economic forces to shape and constrain future possibilities for reform. These pathways correspond closely to the mechanisms of policy feedback that have received a great deal of recent attention in the historically oriented social sciences: the means by which policies enacted at one point in time can shape and reshape politics over time (Pierson 1993; Hacker 2002; Campbell 2003; Mettler and Soss 2004). Many of the contributions to this volume usefully employ this framework and show how it can help unravel knotty and seemingly intractable puzzles of cause and effect. As an analytical approach that is centered on examining the unfolding of political and social processes over time and exploring how causal patterns can become embedded, and even hidden, in the everyday workings of politics, society, and the economy, policy feedback seems especially well suited to further explorations of the politics of racial inequality and the “stickiness” of race.

One particularly important thrust of the policy feedback approach in recent years has emphasized the role that public policies themselves play in reshaping the political terrain, with unintended and often poorly understood consequences. The observation that policies shape politics is an old one, dating back to foundational works in political science by Theodore Lowi (1964) and E. E. Schattschneider (1935) before him. More recent work has extended this theme to consider the variety of ways that policies can themselves structure the politics of inequality by shaping opportunities for political action, creating group interests, and defining ideological and cognitive categories (Pierson 2006; Hacker, Mettler, and Soss 2007). But the impact of public policies as a form of state action also occurs in interaction with other social and economic forces, and these interactions and their consequences form the core of the analyses collected here; this is a key theme of Warren’s chapter, which situates the American state in a “racialized political economy” in which state and labor-market institutions interact to structure politics along racial lines.

Vesla Weaver’s contribution is a case in point. She shows how criminal justice policies have evolved over time to produce and sustain the mass incarceration of African Americans, particularly young black men. In large measure, as Weaver has documented elsewhere, the tremendous increase

in the number of black men in jail is the result of a deliberate and racially motivated law-and-order political strategy that conservative policy makers deployed to undermine the civil rights gains of the 1960s (see also Weaver 2007; Weaver and Lerman 2010). But here she documents not just how policy makers framed criminal justice deliberately as a reaction to the civil rights revolution but also, and more precisely, how a set of policy enactments interacted with structural transformations of the economy that produced social dislocation and extreme black male joblessness in American cities. Overlaying this social and economic background, state action created self-reinforcing feedback effects that have not only solidified but also deepened racialized patterns of policing and incarceration.

In a related chapter, Devah Pager documents the consequences of mass incarceration, showing how severely felony convictions handicap black men in the labor market by fueling and reinforcing racial stereotypes that find expression in hiring behavior that can appear race neutral, thereby contributing to the stickiness of racial disparities in employment. For Pager, the key mechanisms at work are similarly at the intersection of criminal justice policies that result in disproportionately high criminalization among African American men and patterns of attitudes and behavior and in the labor market so that, as she puts it, “criminal records serv[e] as a principal mechanism for the sorting and stratifying of opportunities.” The carceral state that Weaver describes affects not just the incarceration of young black men but also spills over, through the operation of the labor market, to shape broader patterns of racial stratification and inequality.

Similarly, Devin Fergus shows how a seemingly obscure set of tax and insurance policies penalize residents of disproportionately minority residential neighborhoods, amounting to a “ghetto tax” that imposes severe economic handicaps on poor blacks and Latinos. Again, these policies reinforce racial inequality without being overtly racially drawn, and they operate through the layering of public policies on top of a configuration of economic and social conditions—in this case, severe residential segregation by race—that channel and shape the consequences of state action. Like criminal justice policies, the ostensibly race-neutral commercial policies that Fergus depicts both invoke and reinforce the assumption that as long as markets are free of overt discrimination, unequal racial outcomes of these policies must at best be incidental and at worst constitute evidence of the incapacities of minorities themselves. But these chapters deflate this view and show that the racial consequences of these policies are stable, systematic, and predictable.

Markets The market economy is a second race-laden institutional arena that our contributors take up. Economic inequality—whether measured

by income, wealth, employment, or nearly any other economic indicator—is particularly acute across racial lines, suggesting that Americans of color, particularly African Americans and Latinos, fare poorly in markets. Economic inequality has been rising steadily in the United States since the 1970s, and its causes and political and social consequences have increasingly been a focus of some of the most important and innovative research in the social sciences in recent years (Piketty and Saez 2003; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006; Soss, Hacker, and Mettler 2007; Bartels 2008; Gelman 2010; Hacker and Pierson 2010). The Occupy Wall Street protests of 2011 and their offshoots and imitators around the country (and the world) focused widespread attention on economic inequalities and on the economic stagnation of the American middle class and brought the plight of “the 99 percent” into the American political vocabulary.

But this body of research has not generally addressed the critical racial component of inequality in the United States, and while the Occupy movement brought ample attention to the universal and cross-racial challenges of economic crisis, it also reignited a common and perpetually unresolved tension on the American left between class and identity politics (Lowndes and Warren 2011). For one thing, its focus on the growth of inequality over the past few decades has occluded the relatively stable racial gap in economic outcomes that have been a persistent feature of the American political economy for decades regardless of the overall level of inequality. In the years immediately after World War II, median black family income was nearly twice that of white families. That ratio declined steadily but slowly over the postwar decades but has remained at roughly 1.6:1 since the mid-1990s. (Latino incomes have actually shown the opposite pattern since the Census Bureau began reporting them in the early 1970s: relative to whites, the median Latino family income declined through the 1990s and has been relatively stable since then.)⁵

On top of this relative stagnation of minority incomes, the Great Recession that began in 2008, which wreaked havoc on the American working class generally, has been especially catastrophic for African Americans and Latinos, for whom unemployment rates have risen to depression-like levels in many metropolitan areas (Austin 2011a, 2011b). Certain features of the recent economic crisis, and the limited federal policy response—in particular, the collapse of state and local government finance and the mortgage and foreclosure crisis—have fallen especially sharply on already precarious minority communities (Johnson 2011). Moreover, the convergence of economic and political polarization that has coincided with the growth of inequality also coincides with racial cleavages in American politics and society, rendering it difficult to disentangle race from class to declare one or the other category more fundamental as an organizing framework for

the polity (King and Smith 2011). In his contribution here, Rodney Hero shows that racial inequality constitutes a large proportion—in many states, the lion's share—of overall class inequality, further underscoring the importance of connecting concerns of race and class and considering the role of markets in defining racial inequality.

Like the state, the market affects patterns of racial inequality not in isolation but in interaction with other structural forces in the American political economy. The relationship between economic inequality and racial inequality is largely a function of the structure and operation not just of various interconnected markets but also of the relationship between market forces and other political arrangements and social forces, as Pager and Fergus observe in their chapters. A recurring theme in the volume, then, is the political economy of racial inequality—the variety of ways in which these interconnected forces tend to systematically exclude people of color from the high end of successful, dynamic markets and connect them instead to broken or dysfunctional markets. These contributions, in turn, emphasize another recurring theme, the importance of a cross-disciplinary approach to understanding racial inequality and the limits of more specialized studies (in both disciplinary and substantive terms) that tend to obscure important configurations of causal forces that are essential to squaring the circle of racial inequality in the contemporary postracist era. Dorian Warren's chapter emphasizes precisely the political embeddedness of markets. Markets are, he shows, sites where the public and private sectors interact to shape human behavior and societal outcomes. Warren's contribution brings markets into an analytical framework for explaining racial inequality and shows how markets and politics interact to create particular patterns of inequality.

The interaction of markets with politics and a range of other social forces is central to a number of other contributions. Devin Fergus, for example, chronicles the adoption and consequences of a California law allowing ZIP-code profiling of risk for auto insurance underwriting, which had the effect of sorting black and Latino drivers into higher-risk, and therefore more expensive, insurance categories. Mirroring neighborhood-based redlining in real estate, ZIP-code profiling provides a powerful example of a politically constructed market mechanism with profound racial consequences (see Jackson 1985). Fergus (along with Devah Pager, who highlights the link between criminal justice policy and the labor market) shows that the market does not work by itself but rather filters the effects of public policy and other kinds of state action and social forces.

Similarly, Naa Oyo Kwate shows how apparently neutral and apolitical market forces such as the advertising and marketing of products such as fast food and alcohol are effectively targeted at minority urban neighbor-

hoods, exposing poor residents to social and economic forces that exploit both race and class inequalities and result in degraded health outcomes. Markets thus interact with a variety of other forces of social and racial exclusion, such as patterns of unionization, industrial organization, and geographical isolation as well as public policies and structures of political power, to create powerful forces of inequality embedded in the American political economy. As with the emphasis on the state and public policy, our contributors help to puncture the common illusion that markets are inherently racially neutral as long as they are not explicitly discriminatory, a common conceit in neoclassical models of the economy (Becker 1971). In contrast, our contributors emphasize the embeddedness of markets in political, legal, and social structures and suggest a variety of pathways through which market forces shape racial inequality—particularly the way markets are shaped by legal and political forces and the ways their effects can be systematically augmented and redirected by geography.

BEYOND STATE AND MARKET

Beyond the state and markets, a range of other institutional settings and processes have been found to be particularly influential in shaping patterns of racial equality and inequality. The voluntary sector has been an important venue, both reinforcing patterns of segregation and inequality and providing minority communities with critical organizational and social resources to challenge segregation and inequality (Skocpol, Liazos, and Ganz 2006). The church has also been a key institution that has influenced the incorporation of African Americans into American politics and society and contributed to the contours of racial equality and inequality (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Harris 1999). And, as several of our contributors point out, education has long been a central platform for struggles over racial equality in American society.

Education is, of course, a key element of what T. H. Marshall (1964) called social citizenship, which offers an important potential counterweight to patterns of economic inequality in a market-based society. Education has also been a key arena of the struggle for racial equality and inclusion in the United States, from the long legal battles over segregation to confrontations in Little Rock and on Southern university campuses, to conflicts over busing and other policy schemes designed to integrate American schools and provide equal opportunity. Education has been at the frontier of the political conflict over affirmative action in American politics and law, from Bakke (which established the diversity rationale for affirmative action) to the University of Michigan cases (which affirmed it) to *Fisher v. Texas* (in which it is coming under challenge once again) (Re-

gents of the University of California v. Bakke, 438 U.S. 265 [1978]; Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin 631 F.3d 213 [5th Cir. 2011]). And racial inequality in education outcomes—especially the gap in standardized test scores—has long been an important area of research and policy concern (Jencks and Philips 1998; Fryer and Levitt 2004; Card and Rothstein 2007).

But beyond these direct struggles over integration and equality, education is also an arena where a variety of forces combine to influence inequality in often hidden and indirect ways, and our contributors examine several aspects of education and again consider a range of mechanisms that contribute to racial inequality in this sector. Several contributions focus on education as a key sector in their accounts of racial inequality. For Chen and Stulberg, higher education is embedded in a complex institutional setting that touches state, market, and civil society. Exploring the forces that led selective universities to challenge their own racial exclusivity provides yet another angle of vision on the question of mechanisms by which racial inequality can be both perpetuated and, at times, challenged, bringing questions of organizational structure and culture to the center of our inquiry (see Dobbin 2009). Similar questions about organizational setting animate other contributions as well: Dorian Warren on patterns of mobilization and organization around the proposed opening of Walmart stores in low-income neighborhoods in Chicago, or Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach's account of the Obama effect.

Education necessarily stands in here for a wide swath of American society that is shaped by, but not identical to, states, markets, and the political economy. Across a wide range of sectors of society and political economy, policy domains, and analytical frames, the work collected here shares the common aspiration to move beyond discrimination in accounting for the stubborn persistence of racial discrimination. Our contributors identify a range of casual mechanisms—cognitive, organizational, political, and economic, among others—that plausibly underlie that puzzle in all its grim particulars. We have deliberately sharpened and exaggerated the distinctions among levels of analysis, disciplinary origin, and varieties of causation that our colleagues deploy to sample the kinds of models that can fruitfully be brought to bear on this fundamental question. These mechanisms, of course, do not operate separately and independently in the world, as the richness and catholicity of the chapters that follow clearly demonstrate.

Collectively, this collection seeks to catalogue some of these mechanisms. But perhaps more important, it also aims to build the foundation of an analytical vocabulary that cuts across disciplines, sectors, and policy domains—precisely in order to locate some of these areas of overlap—and will afford more precise understanding of when and how racial bias can

occur without its most common antecedents, prejudice and discrimination.⁶ Progress toward this analytical goal will help us begin to explore how these mechanisms might shape outcomes and to suggest guidelines both for future research and for evaluating and designing policy instruments that might help ameliorate racial inequality in the same subterranean way.

The remainder of the volume is organized around these themes. The first section explores the historical setting of the posttracist era. The chapters by Hero, King, and Chen and Stulberg, and Warren consider the historical specificity of the contemporary era and examine some of the important historical forces that have produced the distinctive configuration of politics, economics, and society that defines racial inequality in the twenty-first century. The following sections focus on these key factors that continue to shape racial inequality in new ways: attitudes and individual behavior in part 2 (Goff and Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach), politics and the state in part 3 (Weaver and Pager), and economics and markets in part 4 (Fergus and Kwate). Taken together, this collection of essays helps us to understand and unravel the processes that sustain racial inequality in the posttracist era of American race relations.

NOTES

1. Data are from exit polls and the American National Election Study. Exit polls as reported at cnn.com/election; ANES at electionstudies.org.
2. We adapt this concept from Ira Katznelson, who analyzed it in a public panel discussion at Columbia University that opened the conference at which these papers were presented. "Inequality in the Age of Obama," A Roundtable Discussion, May 20, 2010, School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University.
3. In the University of Michigan affirmative action cases of the early years of this century (*Gratz v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 244 [2003]; *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 306 [2003]), more than sixty amicus curiae briefs were filed in support of the university's admissions policies, which used race in a variety of ways to achieve a diverse student body. Among the filers were nearly ninety major private and public universities and law schools, sixty-eight major corporations, and fourteen active and retired military leaders (including several former secretaries of defense and members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff). Compiled from material posted by the University of Michigan at www.umich.edu/~urel/admissions/legal/amicus.html.
4. In 2009 the Supreme Court revisited, but did not fully overturn, this ruling in a case involving the New Haven, Connecticut, Fire Department, which discarded a carefully designed promotion test after it was administered when the

results revealed that only white firefighters passed. The Court ordered New Haven to reinstate the test and promote the white firefighters despite the disparate impact. The case became a flashpoint of controversy in the confirmation hearings of Justice Sonia Sotomayor, who had ruled the opposite way when the case came before her as an appeals court judge (*Ricci v. DeStefano*, 557 U.S. 557 [2009]).

5. Income data are from the U.S. Census. Reported at www.census.gov/hhes/www/income/data/historical/families
6. At the same time, we acknowledge that the collection skirts an equally pressing analytical question: When do these mechanisms *not* produce racially biased outcomes? Further progress in sorting out the causes of persistent racial inequality will have to address this selection issue.

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