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# Racial Orders in American Political Development

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**A**merican political science has long struggled to deal adequately with issues of race. Many studies inaccurately treat their topics as unrelated to race. Many studies of racial issues lack clear theoretical accounts of the relationships of race and politics. Drawing on arguments in the American political development literature, this essay argues for analyzing race, and American politics more broadly, in terms of two evolving, competing “racial institutional orders”: a “white supremacist” order and an “egalitarian transformative” order. This conceptual framework can synthesize and unify many arguments about race and politics that political scientists have advanced, and it can also serve to highlight the role of race in political developments that leading scholars have analyzed without attention to race. The argument here suggests that no analysis of American politics is likely to be adequate unless the impact of these racial orders is explicitly considered or their disregard explained.

**W**hether race is the “American Dilemma,” racial inequities have been and remain confounding features of U.S. experience. Has racial injustice been a great aberration within a fundamentally democratic, rights-respecting regime? Has the United States instead been an intrinsically racist society? Has racial discrimination been the spawn of psychological or cultural pathologies, or a tool of class exploitation, or a political “card” to be played in power games, or something else?

One might expect political science in the United States to be the center of debates, if not answers, on such questions. But American political scientists have historically not been much more successful than America itself in addressing racial issues. We seek to do so by connecting theoretical frameworks emerging in the subfield of American political development, including King (1995), Lieberman (2002), Orren and Skowronek (1994, 1996, 1999, 2002), and Smith (1997), with insights from scholars of race in other areas of political science and other disciplines (e.g., Dawson and Cohen 2002, Omi and Winant 1994, and Wacquant 2002). We argue that American politics has historically been constituted in part by two evolving but linked “racial institutional orders”: a set of “white supremacist” orders and a competing set of “transformative egalitarian” orders. Each of these orders has had distinct phases, and someday the United States may transcend them entirely—though that prospect is not in sight.

This “racial orders” thesis rejects claims that racial injustices are aberrations in America, for it elaborates how the nation has been pervasively constituted by systems of racial hierarchy since its inception. Yet more than many approaches, it also captures how those injustices have been contested by those they have injured and by other political institutions and actors. It does

not deny that the nation’s “white supremacist” racial orders have often served vicious economic exploitation or that their persistence reveals psychological and cultural pathologies. Instead it provides a framework to organize empirical evidence of the extent and manner in which structures of racial inequalities have been interwoven with economic as well as gender and religious hierarchies and social institutions.

But more than many scholars, our approach analyzes the “political economy” of American racial systems by stressing the “political,” not the “economy.” We see all political institutional orders as *coalitions of state institutions and other political actors and organizations that seek to secure and exercise governing power in demographically, economically, and ideologically structured contexts that define the range of opportunities open to political actors*. “Institutional orders” are thus more diversely constituted and loosely bound than state agencies; but they are also more institutionalized, authoritatively empowered, and enduring than many political movements. *Racial institutional orders* are ones in which political actors have adopted (and often adapted) racial concepts, commitments, and aims in order to help bind together their coalitions and structure governing institutions that express and serve the interests of their architects. As in any coalition, the members of a racial order support it out of varied motives. Economic aims are central for many, but others seek political power for its own sake, or to quiet social anxieties, or to further ideological goals. Leaders hold them together by gaining broad agreement on the desirability of certain publicly authorized arrangements that predictably distribute power, status, and resources along what are seen as racial lines. Hence these alliances necessarily combine what scholars have often treated as distinct “ideational” and “institutional” orders (cf., e.g., Lieberman 2002, Orren and Skowronek 2004, and Smith 1997). And though the racial institutions they create at least seem to serve many members’ economic interests, their coalitional nature means that their unifying aim must be power for many purposes, not just profits (cf. Goldfield 1997, 30–31, 91).

By presenting racial orders as political coalitions, we build on Omi and Winant’s (1994) depiction

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of “racial formation” as a product of many elite-led “racial projects” (53–76). But in their account, political actors or “intellectuals” attacking or defending the dominant racial ideology drive racial transformations (86). Like many other scholars of American political development, we treat political entrepreneurs *and* the preexisting institutional orders in which they operate as the key independent variables shaping all political change, including racial development. We also disagree that, despite some forces working at cross-purposes, the American state has preserved “an overall unity” as a “racial state,” granting “no political legitimacy” to “oppositional racial ideologies” or “competing racially defined political projects” (80, 84). Instead, we see the American state as comprised of multiple institutional orders, including competing racial orders with conflicting ideologies. Though the rival orders have always had unequal power, to understand change we must recognize both that competing racial orders have long existed and that all have included some governing institutions. No American racial “project” has gone far without aid from some such institutions, and no racial conflict can be grasped without seeing how these institutions have shaped the sincere aims of the actors involved and their strategic calculations. Rather than seeing racial change as many sociologists do, as “the product of the interaction of racially based social movements and the state” (Omi and Winant 1994, 88; Wacquant 2002, 52), we see it as the product of the interaction of opposing racial orders, as well other political orders, all of which include some state institutions and some nonstate political actors and organizations.

The balance of power in those interactions has shifted over time in part because, like most politically constructed coalitions, America’s racial orders have been complex and breakable. Most political actors possess partly conflicting identities and interests, and there are always many goals they might like to pursue. But because preexisting contexts define the problems and options actors face, politics usually involves choosing sides among two or three major approaches to what are widely seen as the dominant issues of the day, even if the prevailing approaches and issues do not express one’s concerns fully. To accomplish much at all, American political actors have generally felt compelled to join either their current form of white supremacist order or its more egalitarian opponent. This means, however, that the competing racial orders have always included some members whose alignment was tentative and alterable, while others in each era have at least sought to remain unaligned or to forge a third direction. Because of the limits of politics, the latter choices have usually meant effectively aiding one order more than the other, or becoming politically unimportant, until exceptional circumstances have opened up new coalitional options and policy directions.

In the antebellum era, for example, many supported institutions of white supremacy as buttresses to African American chattel slavery and the acquisition of Native American lands. Others simply wanted institutional protections against aggrieved nonwhites, or a socially recognized superior status, while some displayed

psychological aversions, even genocidal impulses, toward people “of color.” Though most of these white supremacists sided with slavery when it was the issue of the day, some did so reluctantly, and others opposed it, temporarily allying with advocates of an egalitarianism they did not share. Given these internal tensions and changing demographic contexts, in order to sustain a coalition powerful enough to control key governing institutions, antebellum white supremacists sometimes had to modify prevailing legal definitions of “whiteness,” “blackness,” and other racial categories. They slowly concluded that they had to label all with any African ancestry “black” and accept the Irish and many other immigrants as “white” (Jacobson 1998; Williamson 1984, 17–21). Yet they remained largely unified around the goal of maintaining the U.S. as a “white man’s nation.”

The internal tensions among those championing egalitarian changes over the content of egalitarian goals and the means for pursuing them have been greater still. American discourses and institutions promising equal rights burgeoned in opposition to British aristocracy. Initially few British colonists thought them inconsistent with African slavery. But from the start, many black and some white Americans did; and some who opposed slavery favored full racial equality. Yet they worked in alliance with many more who were antislavery advocates of less extreme forms of white supremacy, such as “tutelary” status or colonization for nonwhites. And throughout history, many who have rejected all versions of white supremacy still have differed on whether priority should be given to seeking economic equity, equal political status, or cultural recognition. Hence even when they were allied on issues such as ending slavery or segregation, advocates of racial change have disagreed over whether their ultimate goal should be full integration or some form of more egalitarian racial pluralism. Over time there have been major shifts in the degree and kinds of egalitarianism that have predominated among reformist institutions and actors, defining the phases of the nation’s transformative egalitarian racial orders.

Changes have occurred in part because individuals positioned on the margins of racial orders, in relation either to the aims or to the power structures of those orders, have sometimes switched their dominant allegiances at critical junctures. Such was true of Andrew Johnson, who was ardently antislavery but otherwise did not favor altering systems of white supremacy; and Harry Truman, who had never been a strong racial egalitarian but who concluded for domestic, international, and personal reasons that it was wiser to ally with antisegregationist northern Democrats than white supremacist southerners (Klinkner with Smith 1999, 77–79, 206–224). Some important political actors have even operated in two conflicting racial orders at once, though in different ways, as in the cases of Booker T. Washington and Franklin D. Roosevelt. Washington’s Atlanta Exposition speech helped legitimate the rise of Jim Crow laws, but his power was always marginal within the Jim Crow order, and he secretly funded lawsuits to oppose it (Harlan 1983, 32–33). To sustain his

New Deal coalition and his own centrality, Roosevelt let many New Deal programs be structured in ways that placated and even strengthened white supremacists. But he did not share their aims; so he sought to extend economic relief to black Americans, to support their legal causes, and to appoint them to higher offices when he could (McMahon 2003, 97–202).

Despite these complexities, in particular settings it is not hard to discern what were commonly seen as the main proposals on the nation's agenda that promised to increase or decrease racial equality of conditions in the near term. Scholars can recognize that issues such as slavery, Jim Crow segregation, and racially targeted aid programs have at different times been the central disputes around which political battle lines have formed. Hence in each era scholars can identify empirically the main institutions and actors allied to sustain the then-dominant forms of white supremacy, thereby comprising that period's "white supremacist" order, and the leading institutions and actors working for more egalitarian racial conditions, its "transformative egalitarian" order. The existence and analytical utility of these racial orders are not discredited by the presence of internal tensions in the orders, including marginal and "dual" members who may change sides, by some who seek to stay unaligned, or by the fact that the orders modify their goals and members over time. Rather, these features add to their explanatory force. The processes of change wrought by the problems leaders face in sustaining these orders amidst internal tensions, by the conflicts of the orders with each other, by the defection of actors and institutions from one order to its rival, and by their interactions with other actors and institutions comprising American life, all have been engines of significant political development.

The "racial orders" approach is a theoretical framework that can enable empirical studies of racial systems to falsify hypotheses. If a racial order works against the economic interests of many participants, as antebellum laws banning free blacks in Old Northwest states arguably did for many employers and even white workers, as Jim Crow laws clearly did for transportation companies, and as race-based immigration restrictions probably did for many wealthy supporters, it is hard to claim their economic aims drove that order. And if the systems of economic and political inequality sanctioned by a racial order come to be greatly modified, as in the shattering of the interweaving of white supremacy and slavery before the rise of *de jure* segregation systems, it is implausible to deny that the order has undergone true development. Thus this approach can also help scholars map the stages and extent of the nation's real but incomplete progress toward racial equity and the political contests through which progress has come. And insofar as our framework can unify and strengthen empirical findings on racial developments, it can also vindicate the claim that these contests have been fundamentally political.

To sketch the argument developed here: at the nation's founding, a political coalition of Americans

formed that gained sufficient power to direct most governing institutions, and also economic, legal, educational, residential, and social institutions, in ways that established a hierarchical order of white supremacy, though never without variations, inconsistencies, and resistance. That order was so bound up with the institutional order of chattel slavery, which it legitimated, as to seem identical to it—but never wholly so. White supremacist structures often subordinated putatively free Native Americans and many "nonwhite" immigrants as well as African Americans. And again, this order also always included some white racists, whose numbers grew over time, who opposed slavery, seeing it as the source of a dangerous black presence. Their hope was to "get shut of the Negro," not to be his master.

Yet at least from the time the Declaration claimed that all men are created equal, the nation also displayed an incipient "transformative egalitarian" order, one that some soon applied to racial hierarchies. This order had its governmental institutionalization in legal guarantees of equal rights that were sometimes implemented in judicial rulings and legislative statutes, often under the pressure of religious groups, black and white. Initially, to be sure, this political order was far weaker than white supremacist actors and institutions. Conflicts between proslavery and antislavery forces, not white supremacists and racial egalitarians, formed the central axis of, especially, late antebellum politics. But in context, the antislavery alliance was undeniably a force for egalitarian racial transformation; and though some of its partisans were strongly racist, and most were only moderately egalitarian, some opposed white supremacy in Congress, on state courts, and in state legislatures. The triumph of the antislavery forces greatly strengthened the position of these more racially egalitarian actors and the institutions they occupied.

After the Civil War, this revised transformative alliance built new constitutional, administrative, political, economic, educational, and social institutions to promote greater racial equality. Most important were the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, along with new schools, political organizations, and civic associations for blacks. But the allies and institutions that made up the "white supremacist" racial order were far from eradicated. They eventually regained dominance in the modified form of the Jim Crow system of segregation and disfranchisement that largely prevailed until the civil rights era of the 1960s. Substantial further development came only when, in light of new national and international political contexts, some who had long been complicit in white supremacy, especially northern Democrats, chose from mixed tactical and moral motives to join heightening black resistance to those arrangements. Gaining executive, judicial, and finally legislative support, proponents of the nation's resurgent "transformative egalitarian" racial order succeeded in discrediting explicitly "white supremacist" policies definitively and expanding their own institutional order more than ever. But despite these triumphs, still-valorized "antitransformative" institutions

of racial inequality have continued to play major roles in American life, while leaders of “transformative egalitarian” institutions have struggled more than ever to decide what further changes should be pursued.

Useful as this framework is for making sense of racial development, our main claim here is that a “racial institutional orders” approach helps explain many features of American politics that may appear *unrelated* to race, such as congressional organization, bureaucratic autonomy, and modern immigration priorities. We conclude that the internal developments, clashes, and broader impacts of American racial orders have been and remain so central that all scholars of American politics ought always to consider how far “racial order” variables affect the phenomena they examine. Analysts should inquire whether the activities of institutions and actors chiefly concerned either to protect or to erode white supremacist arrangements help to account for the behavior and changes in the nation’s political institutions, coalitions, and contests they study. Any choice not to consider racial dimensions requires explicit justification.

This is so precisely because racial orders have been constitutively interwoven with many other highly significant institutional orders, including gender and class hierarchies. Still, we recognize that African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans, like all others, have had political concerns that are best captured by stressing their membership in other such orders, not their racial positioning (Reed 2004). We hope that the framework we advance here will aid the study of all these political orders, providing us with ways to identify and measure their profound intersections with racial institutions and conflicts. We suspect that these intersections will show how the unusual prominence of racial orders in America’s development has also given distinctive shape to its gender and class systems.

Claims of “distinctiveness” call for comparative analyses. A racial orders approach can aid such work. For example, Anthony Marx (1999) has persuasively contended that efforts to limit combat among whites explain why South Africa and the U.S. elaborated formal white supremacist institutions much more than Brazil did. But Marx’s framework, like those of important recent sociological works (Bonilla Silva 2001; Wacquant 2002), has no explicit category for what we term “transformative egalitarian” orders. Focusing on those orders reveals the linked roles of governing institutions and social movements in bringing change and thus specifies more fully the conflicting power structures that prompted the compromises Marx discusses. Our framework also highlights key differences between national racial systems. The institutionalization of formal segregation laws in one part of the United States, combined with only *de facto* segregation elsewhere and formal national promises of civic equality, meant that opportunities for American racial egalitarians were in some respects greater than in South Africa. Though our discussion is narrower here, a racial orders approach can strengthen broad-ranging analyses of intersecting systems of class, gender,

power, and inequality in the United States and elsewhere.

## PLACING RACE IN AMERICAN POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

Work on race has exploded in political science in recent decades. Yet leading scholars still see a “need for a firm theoretical foundation on which to conduct empirical research” into American racial politics (Dawson and Cohen 2002, 488–89). We reach the key concept of our theoretical framework, “racial institutional orders,” by combining arguments for the prominence of America’s racial traditions in the nation’s “multiple traditions” (e.g., Goldfield 1997, King 1995, and Smith 1997) with the “multiple institutional orders” approach to political development advanced by Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek and also explored by historical institutionalist scholars (e.g., Lieberman 2002 and Pierson and Skocpol 2002). To clarify this framework, we begin with “institutions,” then “institutional orders,” and then “racial” institutional orders.

We follow Orren and Skowronek (2004, 82–85) in defining “institutions” as organizations that (1) have broad but discernible purposes, (2) establish norms and rules, (3) assign roles to participants, and (4) have boundaries marking those inside and outside the institutions. A “political” institution seeks to control individuals and institutions outside as well as within its bounds. A “governing” political institution has widely recognized mandates to compel outsiders to follow its authority. “States” are congeries of “governing political institutions,” but state institutions and actors are often in many ways at odds with each other, not unified. Hence we focus not on “the state” but on often-clashing “institutional orders”—orders that fail to encompass the entire state and that include things outside the state.

We extend Orren and Skowronek’s framework by defining an “institutional order” as a coalition of governing state institutions, nonstate political institutions, and political actors that is bound together by broadly similar senses of the goals, rules, roles, and boundaries that members of each order wish to see shaping political life in certain areas. Such orders contain constitutional provisions, statutes, and administratively made or judge-made rules that formally establish and govern those areas; legislative bodies, executive agencies, and/or courts involved in implementing those legal doctrines; and all political parties and civil groups that make their positions on how the areas should be managed central to their activities. Such groups are usually drawn from the economic and social actors and organizations regulated and partly constituted by an order’s rules.

“Racial” institutional orders seek and exercise governing power in ways that predictably shape people’s statuses, resources, and opportunities by their placement in “racial” categories. The orders rarely originate such categories. But their proponents often modify inherited racial conceptions to attract new supporters while retaining old ones and stigmatizing opponents.

At times “white” has meant most northern Europeans, all Europeans, most Middle Easterners, and those with one-eighth African or one-fourth Native American ancestry (Jacobson 1998; Kennedy 1959, 48). The shifting ways in which actors in racial orders institutionalize these categories partly constitute persons’ senses of racial identity.

In this approach, meaningful “development” occurs when one predominant order gives way to another, or when the prevailing order’s leading concepts of racial goals, rules, roles, and boundaries are substantially revised, as when most white supremacists felt compelled to abandon slavery or when most racial egalitarians came to insist on equal voting rights, not just civil rights. Such development can arise from struggles among partly dissonant groups within an institutional order, from the interactions of racial orders with other orders, such as labor and party systems, and from broad social, economic, and international changes, all of which may strengthen some participants in an order and weaken others, or add new players and policy challenges for the order to confront (Orren and Skowronek 2002, 747–54; Pierson and Skocpol 2002, 698–704). The “racial orders” framework does not postulate priority for any of these factors, though if scholars regularly take the institutions and actors comprising racial alliances into account, we may eventually be able to judge which causes have mattered most.

While the concept of an “institutional order” builds on work in the American political development subfield, our focus on racial orders is novel. The subfield grew out of the efforts of pioneering scholars including Bense (1984), Skocpol (1979), and Skowronek (1982) to “bring the state back in,” a quest that led to the “claim that institutions have an independent and formative influence on politics” (Orren and Skowronek 1986, vii). But little of that work addressed race, because for many, the impetus to grasp the roles of “states” and “institutions” came from dissatisfaction with analyzing politics in Marxist “class” or liberal “group” terms. Those approaches seemed unable to explain why America had weaker redistributive and regulatory programs than much of Europe. This new historical institutionalist literature thus had an economy-centered sense of “political economy.” Most writers also viewed American politics as shaped by a common though internally conflicted “liberal” political culture (e.g., Greenstone 1986, 1–49). To take one eminent example, Bense (1984, 4) argued that because its “common political culture” meant that “even the most serious ethnic or religious disputes have never seriously threatened to dismember the nation,” most U.S. “interregional competition,” including the Civil War, “should be interpreted as a struggle for control of the national political economy.” The role of racial cleavages in defining sectional identities, goals, and conflicts went unexamined.<sup>1</sup>

This founding stress on “economic conflicts plus relatively autonomous state institutions within a liberal culture” still characterizes some of the best recent American political development scholarship. But just as work on race has multiplied in other precincts of political science, so, too, have many of these scholars given race more attention (see, e.g., Frymer 1999; Goldfield 1997; Katznelson 1973, 1981; Kryder 2000; Lieberman 1998, 2002; McMahon 2003; Mink 1986; Valelly 1995). Yet though this valuable work has detailed the wide-ranging importance of race, it has only begun to produce theoretical frameworks adequate for analyzing race.

There remains a strong tendency in the American political development literature, tracing to Louis Hartz (1955), to theorize racial issues as ultimately products of the antebellum “master/slave” order (e.g., Ericson 1999, 2000; Greenstone 1993, 95–117; Orren and Skowronek 2004). This tendency endures in the “liberal culture” premise of much early American political development work, and for some major topics it is appropriate. The slave system was deeply interwoven with American racial patterns, and clashes over the extension of slavery formed the chief cause of the Civil War. Yet to grasp the politics of *race* in the antebellum era; to explain Reconstruction; to analyze later racial developments; and to see the impact of racial contests on American development generally, “multiple orders” analyses must encompass not only this “master/slave” order, but, especially, America’s racial orders.

Both evidence and parsimony lead us to posit two potent, evolving racial systems at work: first, the set of “white supremacist orders” created to defend slavery and also the displacement of the tribes. Even the Declaration of Independence sought to justify tribal subjugation (by denouncing “merciless Indian Savages”) and to avoid criticism of chattel slavery (by excising Jefferson’s language attacking the slave trade) (Ellis 2000, 81–119). From then on, fueled by the spread of slavery, by desires to justify westward expansion into tribal and Mexican lands as racial “manifest destiny,” and, at times, by anxieties about immigrants, political leaders extended the nation’s white supremacist order into spheres that eventually went well beyond master/slave relationships (Horsman 1981).

Along with the state and national laws that upheld the master/slave order, this white supremacist system was comprised by statutes at the national as well as the state level, in the north and south, that accorded even free black citizens restricted political, economic, and mobility rights (Berwanger 1967, 42–49, 140; Fuchs 1990, 91–93; Litwack 1961, 31, 70–93, 113–15). We stress that while most of the actors and institutions in the antebellum white supremacist order supported slavery, some did not, because the latter played pivotal political roles. In an 1857 Oregon constitutional referendum, 74% of Oregon voters rejected permitting slavery in their state, but 89% favored excluding all blacks (Berwanger 1967, 93). Analysts have struggled to explain such positions as somehow due to white workers’ economic interests, while terming those

<sup>1</sup> Some other examples of important works in the first decade or so of American political development work that give little attention to race include Gamm 1989, Hansen 1987, Orloff 1988, Sanders 1986, Sklar 1988, Skocpol and Finegold 1982, Tulis 1987, and Valelly 1989.



views a misguided, racist “blind spot” (Goldfield 1997, 79–80, 92, 108–111). Though worker fears of cheap competitors surely played a part, so great an antiblack vote in a state seeking immigrant labor indicates that many saw all nonwhites as undesirable (Fuchs 1990, 24; Hutchinson 1981, 24, 35–39). A racial orders approach suggests they did so not only from misconceived economic motives but also out of beliefs in black inferiority, fear of racial strife, and desires to reserve power for those with whom they identified racially. On many racial measures these Oregonians could side with slaveholders, unless and until the issue became slavery and blacks in their own backyard.

The core of the antebellum white supremacist order included much of the Senate and most presidents, products of electoral systems that overrepresented the slave states; most of the state officials in those states; and all proslavery Whigs and Jeffersonian, then Jacksonian, Democrats. The more tenuous members were white supremacist but antislavery Whigs and Free Soil Democrats. The order also included politically active church and scholarly leaders who justified slavery and white rule (Bay 2000; Takaki 1993, 173–76). This institutional order had a broadly shared goal, extending white domination. It had rules and norms, including racialized slavery laws and other denials of equal rights, that assigned different political, economic, and social roles to whites and various nonwhites. And it had boundaries, for there were always rival institutions and actors.

This white supremacist order made explicitly racial identities seem natural and vital to millions. It habituated many it privileged as “white” to think of their racial status as a primary feature of their lives (Du Bois 1992, 700–01). Its imposed inequalities gave many white farmers and workers as well as slaveholders a sense of economic dependency on the maintenance of racial restrictions that seemed to make their lands, jobs, and wages more secure. It also generated in many a sense of racial entitlement, which most defended in religious and biological terms. It did all these things by creating politically powerful institutions in which all whites could officially share, along with public policies that advantaged whites in relation to blacks, even if some whites benefited far more than others. All of this made most whom governing institutions deemed “white” resistant to radical transformations in the white supremacist order, even those who wished to see slavery and blacks expunged from America.

Yet U.S. history displays a rival, expanding “transformative egalitarian racial order” that built on doctrines and institutions of equal rights also present from the nation’s inception. The American revolutionaries rejected monarchy and aristocracy for democratic republics, and systems of primogeniture and entail for greater individual powers over property. Then they created many new political, economic, and cultural institutions to pursue the broad goals of “equal rights” and “equality before the law,” and that provided greater equality to European-descended men than ever before. Its rules and roles called for courts that upheld equal justice, a comparatively broad suffrage, market systems

promising equal rights to all participants, equal opportunities for worship, and general adherence to the natural rights doctrines used to support these claims (Kesler 1998, 13–23). The fuel to ignite those doctrines and institutions into conflict with white supremacist ones came largely from “free labor” economic and political interests, but also from the moral indignation that slavery fostered in virtually all blacks and some whites. Of the two great antebellum slavery issues, the most decisive conflict, opposition to the expansion of slavery, was predominantly driven by “free labor” commitments; but outrage against southern efforts to recapture fugitive slaves came chiefly from allied racially egalitarian reformers (Foner 1988, 75–87, 124–26, 543–47; Takaki 1993, 129–30; Wiecek 1977, 153–62, 216–48).

Through this alliance, specifically racial egalitarian principles won limited institutionalizations in the antebellum years, and then growing numbers of activist invoked them to champion black rights. These institutions included, first, the Revolutionary-era laws ending slavery in the north and promoting manumission in the south, and the congressional ban on slavery in the Northwest Territory; then, beginning with the 1820 Missouri controversy, congressional advocacy and some judicial rulings claiming Article IV “privileges and immunities” of citizenship for free blacks; then the statutory and procedural obstacles to the return of fugitive slaves erected by some northern legislatures and courts, prodded by more egalitarian white and black churches and antislavery organizations (Goldfield 1997, 93–104; Morris 1974, 94–120, 219–22; Zilversmit 1967, 135–42). Even if white abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison had trouble accepting blacks like Frederick Douglass as equals, together their efforts were enough to spark repressive responses. The Northwest states banned entry of free blacks, and all states denied them full civic equality. Still, in most northeastern states blacks kept their political, educational, and economic statutory rights and used them to work for more (Berlin 1974, 225–29, 316–33, 360–64; Litwack 1961, 70–75, 84–104, 153–70; McFeely 1991, 175–77).

When southern demands forced antislavery white supremacists to decide whether to side with more racially egalitarian actors and institutions to stop slavery’s spread, many did so. Exemplary here is Pennsylvania Democrat David Wilmot, author of the proviso that sought to ban slavery in the western territories. Wilmot feared slave competition with “free white labor,” thought blacks inferior, and hated the notion of sharing power with them. He wrote privately that whites should never be “ruled by men,” white or black, “brought up on the milk of some damn Negro wench” (quoted in Berwanger 1967, 125–26). But faced by slavery’s expansion, he became a Republican and, while urging peace with the south, supported President Lincoln as a wartime Senator before withdrawing to a judgeship.

Lincoln’s Republicans, the center of the late antebellum transformative alliance, came to power championing only an end to slavery in the territories and the equal claim of all races to the limited rights of the

Declaration of Independence; but those views were enough to spur southern secession. Lincoln preferred war to slavery's expansion (Greenstone 1993, 245–85). The war's polarizations and the key military contributions of blacks then pushed Lincoln and many others farther. Believing that, “as He died to make men holy,” they were called to make men free, Republicans passed statutes and constitutional amendments at the state and national levels that banned slavery and elaborated a far more extensive and egalitarian racial order. After white southerners showed at the war's end that they still sought to oppress the ex-slaves via new Black Codes, many angry northerners even supported black voting rights. Though few whites saw much economic benefit in paying to aid the freedmen, by the late 1860s the electoral needs of many white Republicans, the interests of their black partisans, and the moral goals of the now-prestigious reform groups all pushed hard for political equality (Kousser 1974, 27–29, 241–42; Valelly 1995). After the fifteenth Amendment in 1870, the expanded egalitarian order centered on new constitutional guarantees of formal racial equality in political as well as economic and civil rights. Its proponents included many congressional Republicans, new Reconstruction agencies like the Freedmen's Bureau and the Freedmen's Saving Bank, many Republican state officials including black officeholders, religious reform groups, and the numerous new black schools and civil groups they helped create (Du Bois 1992, 220–32, 599–600; Goldfield 1997, 115–23; W. Nelson 1988, 123–47).

Those developments are made more comprehensible by adding a “racial orders” stress on power and ideological goals to the more traditional emphasis on economic interests embodied in the effort of Orren and Skowronek (2004, 133–43) to explain the politics of this period in terms of allies of former masters contesting with allies of former slaves. That approach has difficulty making sense of the pivotal actors who were antislavery but also white supremacist, like the great foe of Reconstruction, President Andrew Johnson, and others in the new coalition he sought to form. It is hard to use Johnson's economic interests to explain why he sided with his old opponents, the former masters, against the slaves he had once supported. But when seen as an effort to build a new, nonslavery white supremacist order, his conduct was not foolish. Slavery was no longer on the agenda. Preserving white supremacy against egalitarian reformers was. Most white southerners, most Democrats, and even many Republicans welcomed a chance to stop the equal rights crusaders' assaults on white privilege. Johnson simply moved too crudely and abruptly to succeed (Foner 1988, 216–27, 247–51).

Nonetheless, from 1867 on, many voters showed renewed willingness to support white supremacist Democrats. Even after defeating Johnson and enfranchising blacks, many Republicans decided by the early 1870s that they could advance their power and economic interests best by largely relinquishing support for African Americans, beyond maintaining black voting rights. Yet in so doing, they permitted hostile white supremacist forces to strengthen; and they were also

on the unpopular side of the leading nonracial issue of the day, whether money policies would favor credit-seeking farmers and workers, or creditors. Amidst declining electoral fortunes, and after a last gasp effort to protect black voters, the Federal Elections Bill of 1890, only helped the Democrats win in 1892, most Republicans defected entirely to the resurgent white supremacist order. Many joined the Democrats in repealing Reconstruction-era election laws in 1894, and Republican justices upheld *de jure* segregation in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537 (1896) (Foner 1988, 488–511; Gillette 1979, 18–49; Logan 1965, 43–75, 140–41).

The modified white supremacist order they constructed included not only antiblack Jim Crow measures but also similar laws and practices aimed at Mexicans in the Southwest, Asians in California, and Native Americans in many western states, as well as, first, Chinese exclusion, then racially justified imperial conquest and governance of Filipinos, Puerto Ricans, and various Pacific Islanders, and eventually race-based immigration quotas (Fuchs 1990, 80–86, 110–22; Ngai 1999). These other forms of domination and exclusion differed in some ways from the Jim Crow system and could reasonably be viewed as relatively autonomous racial orders. But they were created via alliances of western whites and northern imperialists and immigration restrictionists with the southern architects of black segregation, and much of their ideological content defined how far those they subordinated should be treated like blacks (Jacobson 1998, 203–45; Takaki 1993, 148–49, 209–13; Williams 1980).

Equivocally before, but overwhelmingly after 1892 up to the 1930s, this “second-phase” white supremacist order encompassed majorities in all three branches of the federal government, virtually all southern and many western officeholders, and many other local officials and police forces. It centered on some national and many state and local statutes, executive policies, and judicial doctrines that enacted explicit forms of racial apartheid, race-based immigration and naturalization restrictions, and exclusionary housing, educational, and employment practices, along with titulary race-neutral vagrancy laws, tenant farming rules, criminal statutes, and voter registration and jury selection systems administered to maintain white supremacy (and used also to disempower poor whites where they failed to cooperate). The order was supported by new intellectual justifications for the “tutelary” subordination of less “civilized” and “evolved” nonwhites (Almaguer 1994; Fuchs 1990, 96–98; Oshinsky 1996, 40–41). That content, and the formally neutral measures, show how the American systems of white supremacy had to be restructured because of the successes of the transformative egalitarian order in institutionalizing enduring bans on overt racial subordination. But restructured as it was, this system of segregation, disfranchisement, and immigrant exclusion remained a white supremacist order that made largely formal, limited concessions to the more egalitarian institutions and actors that opposed it.



Yet just as the Civil War egalitarians did not succeed in removing all institutional bases for the resurgence of the white supremacists, so their new system did not eradicate the postwar egalitarian racial order. The constitutional provisions and some national and state statutes remained available for judges willing to apply them. Often dissenters and sometimes even majorities did so, as when the Supreme Court upheld birthright citizenship for Chinese Americans and struck down laws that overtly banned blacks from juries and prevented whites from selling housing to blacks (*U.S. v. Wong Kim Ark*, 169 U.S. 649 [1898]; *Rogers v. Alabama*, 192 U.S. 226 [1904]; *Buchanan v. Warley*, 245 U.S. 60 [1919]). Both the Declaration and the Reconstruction amendments and statutes also were central to the rhetoric and the tactics of black protest organizations such as Ida Wells-Barnett's Negro Fellowship League, William Monroe Trotter's New England Suffrage League, and the NAACP, founded in 1909 and soon focused on winning court decisions and legislation that could realize the egalitarian principles therein proclaimed. They had white allies among journalists like Oswald Garrison Villard, urban social workers like Jane Addams, some church and labor leaders, socialists, and some Republican legislators like Congressman Leonidas Dyer, who pushed for antilynching legislation (Nieman 1991, 122–30). But white supremacists dominated Congress, the executive branch, and most courts, so transformative egalitarians won little more than sporadic judicial victories in these years.

In the early 1920s hundreds of thousands of alienated African Americans supported Marcus Garvey's separatist Universal Negro Improvement Association, which rejected white supremacy, yet at times made common cause with segregationists (Cronon 1969, 189–95). If, in creating a network of black vocational schools, Garvey's hero Booker T. Washington tried to operate in both racial orders at once, Garvey strove instead to create a third, black institutional order. Both men inspired millions of African Americans. Still, their public acceptance of racial separatism helped legitimate the Jim Crow system, leading W. E. B. Du Bois to charge that they were on balance aiding white supremacy (Balfour 2003; Franklin and Moss 1988, 244–50). On a racial orders analysis, it is hard to disagree.

But WWI and industrialization created new demands for black labor. The ensuing migration of blacks to northern industrial cities made them a potentially important voting bloc and generated new activist African American organizations, including the National Negro Congress, Philip Randolph's Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, and some interracial CIO unions. The Depression then brought many northern liberals into national offices, and the Communist Party launched efforts to win rights for black Americans such as the famous "Scottsboro Cases." All these developments strengthened transformative egalitarian forces (Franklin and Moss 1988, 339–48; Meier and Rudwick 1976, 314–32). Many New Dealers in the Congress, the new executive agencies, on courts, and in northern

state and local governments wished to include black Americans in the economic restructuring they were pursuing.

But aided by the seniority system, white supremacist representatives of the one-party Democratic south held many key congressional posts and were strongly represented in FDR's executive branch and the courts. They also dominated many of the state and local governments that implemented most New Deal programs. Hence proponents of Jim Crow were able to gain exclusionary concessions from Roosevelt and racially liberal New Deal policymakers in the design or administration of programs like old age insurance, unemployment compensation, housing aid, the Civilian Conservation Corps, and new labor laws. The concessions meant that these new institutions largely maintained the white supremacist order, embittering activists like Randolph, who concluded that whites should never provide movement leadership (Bates 2001). African Americans did benefit from many New Deal programs over time, and through some of his appointments to administrative agencies and, particularly, to the judiciary, FDR made the nation's conflicting racial orders less unequal in power. But he shaped political development most with regard to the nation's economic and federalist structures, not its racial ones (Katznelson, Geiger, and Kryder 1993; Lieberman 1998; McMahon 2003; Quadagno 1994).

Change came in the post-WWII years through further migration of blacks to the north; a convergence of litigative, lobbying, and militant protest actions by leading black groups including the NAACP, the Urban League, the Southern Christian Leadership Council, and others; and Cold War pressures to make the nation less vulnerable to Communist criticism. In this context many northern Democrats in Congress, and first Harry Truman and later Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, along with the Warren Court, decided that both national and partisan interests could best be served by repudiating racial segregation and disfranchisement and white supremacist ideologies and reviving the Reconstruction amendments and statutes (Dudziak 2000). The manner in which, in response to domestic and international pressures, key actors and institutions joined the transformative egalitarian order seems even more central to explaining change than the heightened "resource mobilization" or the adoption of new concepts of "black identity" by "minority movements" rightly stressed by scholars using "social movements and the state" frameworks (e.g., McAdam 1984 and Omi and Winant 1994, 98–99).

White supremacists in Congress, and in many state and local offices, and some judges resisted ferociously, but these altered political contexts left them more isolated and less powerful. The resulting civil rights congressional and state laws, the executive endorsements they received, the expansion of civil rights enforcement and administrative capacities they authorized, and the supportive judicial rulings of the era all constituted genuine development in Orren and Skowronek's terms. They brought the nation's transformative egalitarian racial order to predominance, for it now encompassed

the national legislative, executive, and judicial branches and included many new officials and institutions, including the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the HEW Office for Civil Rights, and the Department of Labor's Office of Contract Compliance. And though the struggle had centered on the rights of blacks, egalitarian institutions and actors soon expanded their aims to include women, Latinos, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and the disabled (Skrentny 2002, 8–20).

Yet though overtly white supremacist policies were discredited and egalitarian principles widely proclaimed, many whites north and south remained protective of arrangements that the Jim Crow system had generated, especially de facto residential and school racial segregation, various legal limits on national powers to interfere with state and local practices, and the overrepresentation of whites at the top of most American political and economic institutions. In addition, many white and some black supporters of egalitarian change were troubled by the disruptions and resistance those changes engendered. Once again, some white reformers felt anxious that they might lose control of the extent and pace of social transformations. Many others felt daunted or exhausted by the costs of continuing the changes the civil rights era had begun, much less by the greater ones posed by expansions of those efforts to more and more groups. In ascendancy, the modern transformative egalitarian alliance soon became more uncertain of its agenda than its predecessors had ever been. The chief beneficiary of these discontents was the Republican Party. The GOP added to its traditional base the support of pro-segregationist George Wallace Democrats as well as formerly Democratic “neo-cons” who felt the Sixties had gone too far. Conservatives created a coalition that, aided by Ronald Reagan's charisma, eventually came to power in all three federal branches, led by southern and western Republicans such as Newt Gingrich, Trent Lott, William Rehnquist, and both the elder and the younger George Bush (Carter 1996; O'Reilly 1995).

One can easily find in modern conservative ranks many actors and institutions who once opposed desegregation and modern civil rights laws, as Bush and Rehnquist did, and who still oppose policies promising near-term decreases in material racial inequalities. Still, it is not correct to portray this coalition as merely a continuation of the old white supremacist orders. The transformative egalitarian order, once nearly invisible, then constitutionally enshrined but politically dominated, is now authoritative in American law and many governing agencies. As a result, the terrain of the clashes between America's rival racial institutional orders has shifted. Most institutional occupants of what we see as the current descendant of “white supremacist” racial orders steadfastly and sincerely reject that label—so it is appropriate to describe their contemporary variant as an “antitransformative” racial order. As Swain (2002) documents, there remain overtly white supremacist forces in American life, but though they provide some support to the modern anti-transformative order, they do not define it.

Nonetheless, one major contribution of the “racial orders” framework is to compel recognition of a disturbing reality. The contemporary “antitransformative” alliance does have a widely recognized racial agenda, though a negative one. Its actors and institutions oppose measures explicitly aimed at reducing racial inequalities. Because many of the institutionalized inequities in schooling, jobs, education, and political offices created by the Jim Crow order still endure, this opposition helps maintain many superior white statuses and privileges for the near term, however much some who espouse “color-blind” policies hope for greater equality in the long run. It is also likely that others are attracted to such policies precisely because they may slow alterations in segregated, unequal arrangements.

Because racial egalitarians cannot accept that negative racial agenda, the context between today's orders has come to center largely on clashes between transformative egalitarian actors and institutions who support many kinds of direct action to reduce material racial inequalities in the near term—including most Democrats, many administrative agencies, some federal and state judges, many educational institutions, some corporations, and many liberal and minority reform groups—and an antitransformative order united by rejection of such actions, including most Republican national and state elected officials and partisans, many federal and state judges, and conservative religious, ethnic, corporate, and activist groups. In that contest, each of today's racial orders has strengths and weaknesses. The widespread resistance to racial change means that American political actors can still make appeals to white interests when discussing policies like affirmative action, racial profiling, housing and school desegregation, and economic aid to minority communities. But with egalitarian precepts more deeply institutionalized, they now must generally do so indirectly or covertly (Gilens 1999; Kinder and Sanders 1996; Mendelberg 2001). Rhetorical allegiance to egalitarian ideals has become de rigueur—even though that often means reinterpreting civil rights slogans such as “color-blindness” and “equality of opportunity” to justify resistance to changes in unequal racial statuses. Many Americans who honestly reject white supremacy are receptive to those reinterpretations, feeling that principles of equal justice and practical realities limit the ways in which governments can legitimately and effectively pursue a more racially egalitarian society (Sniderman and Piazza 1993). Many still wish to see entrenched racial disadvantages reduced; but this rejection of direct efforts leaves few options for doing so. The main recent policy response has been unprecedented levels of mass incarceration, overwhelmingly of nonwhites (Wacquant 2002). That has not prevented significant reversals in racial arenas such as school desegregation, with a smaller percentage of blacks now attending majority white schools than at any time since 1968, with white students the most segregated of all groups, and with the Supreme Court voiding most forms of affirmative action (Frankenberg, Lee, and Orfield 2003, 4, 6; *Gratz v. Bollinger*, 439 U.S. 249

[2003]). Though these are victories for antitransformative forces, they do not generate faith that racial problems are fading.

Those victories do show that while many of the newer egalitarian institutions and policies of the 1960s and early 1970s continue to work for greater racial equality, the problems facing modern transformative egalitarian forces are great. They have struggled in the last quarter-century to find a unifying agenda. Today's African American activists pursue many different "black visions" of civic equality and community flourishing (Dawson 1994, 2001). For some like Louis Farrakhan, the transformative order of the civil rights era has failed, so other, more separatist or Black Nationalist routes to greater prosperity must be sought. Though the Nation of Islam's control of governing institutions is too limited to form a rival racial order, its leaders often opt out of working with the modern racially egalitarian coalition. Critics call those choices misguided, self-marginalizing acquiescence to antitransformative forces and urge a traditional civil rights agenda. But with much of that agenda formally accomplished, black leaders face heightened, often conflicting demands to focus more on suppressed concerns of class, gender, and sexual orientation, rather than race alone (Cohen 1999; Reed 1999, 2004).

The new immigrant groups from Asia and Latin America, moreover, confront modern versions of old pressures to situate themselves in relation to today's transformative egalitarian and antitransformative racial orders. If they seem to embrace the latter, by seeking to be seen as "model minorities" within what they affirm to be a just system of equal opportunities, they face condemnation from many civil rights organizations and their allies. If they seem to choose the former, by joining in calls for reparations, group rights, and multiculturalism, they risk getting locked out of avenues to social mobility that, for many, were what coming to America was all about (Smelser, Wilson, and Mitchell 2001; Waters 2001). If they, too, seek somehow to opt out of American racial politics or to build orders of their own, again those choices may end up helping existing systems of racial inequality to remain largely unchanged.

And with antitransformative forces more united against most changes than egalitarian actors and institutions are in pushing for any changes, both political parties have incentives not to pursue policies that whites find threatening too ardently or openly (Frymer 1999). As a result, if antitransformative forces feel compelled to use the language of egalitarianism, transformation-minded actors and agencies often feel driven to craft policies in tortured ways. This is especially so with regard to the "dividing line" issue of this era, race-targeted remedies. Many advocates now justify such policies by urging the pursuit of "diversity" for its own sake. But there can be many kinds of diversity; logically if not politically, a focus on racial diversity must be defended as a means to get past otherwise intractable racial inequities. Yet the power of each rival racial order today is sufficient to cause many to fear either to affirm or to abjure directly goals of more equal

racial conditions. Thus egalitarian norms now bar the deployment of overtly white supremacist language, but when it comes to concrete policies, the modern racially egalitarian order often lacks the power to overcome its antitransformative opposition (Lieberman 2002; Sabbagh 2004; Schuck 2003, 160–69; Skrentny 1996, 2002).

We hope it is clear at this point that, just as a racial orders framework helps explain much about America's past, many key features of what analysts have deemed today's "postsegregation era" (Reed 1999) or period of "advanced marginalization" of African Americans (Cohen 1999) can be illuminated by viewing them as clashes between the modern, internally conflicted "transformative egalitarian" racial order and the resurgent "antitransformative" racial order. But valuable as those contributions are, they may be the lesser part of the intellectual gains that can come from a racial orders approach. From the nation's inception to the present, the impacts of these orders have not been confined to each other. The white supremacist and egalitarian transformative orders have also interacted with most of the nation's other "multiple orders," with far-ranging consequences for many aspects of American life that may seem distant from race. The frequent failure to grasp these connections may well represent the greatest weakness of political science in grasping the place of race in American politics.

## THE UNSEEN IMPACTS OF RACIAL ORDERS

Many features of the U.S. political system, from national powers over commerce and other economic concerns, to states' rights and voting rights, to structures of congressional representation, to immigration and naturalization, the scope of free expression, criminal justice procedures, and much more, have never developed apart from pressures to alter or to maintain the nation's racial ordering. The pattern continues today. The operations of the federal civil service; the organization of Congress; the content of major pieces of social policy during the New Deal and the War on Poverty; the opposition to "big government," "tax and spend programs," and "welfare" from the Reagan administration on; and the activism of modern courts, among other matters, have all been driven in major ways by battles over how far racial hierarchies would be kept or changed.

When political scientists ignore these impacts, or analyze them without a suitable theoretical framework, they often neglect or misunderstand the conduct of actors who are responding to the tensions and opportunities generated by America's racial orders. As a result, not only are these writings inadequate in their discussions of race, but they fall short in their accounts of the apparently nonracial topics they address.

Because it is the literature on which we build, we illustrate these shortcomings with some otherwise outstanding early and recent contributions to the American political development field. No example is more revealing than Ira Katznelson's justly influential works

on urban politics, which dealt with race more explicitly than any other early subfield writings. Katznelson nonetheless adopted explanatory frames that made a politics of class, constrained by an overwhelmingly liberal political culture within a decentralized state, fundamental for explaining the conditions of American cities.

In *City Trenches*, Katznelson (1981) located the distinctiveness of American politics in its separation of the politics of work, where class conflicts prevailed, from the politics of community, dominated by “ethnicity, race, and territoriality, rather than class” (6, 19). Race thus often appeared functionally equivalent to ethnicity and territory and distinct from class and workplace issues. And insofar as Katznelson saw race as distinctive, he treated the experiences of African Americans as the exception that proved the rule of the generally class- and culture-determined patterns of American politics. As Katznelson put it, “with respect to race, especially, as opposed to ethnic divisions among white workers, the distinctive character of the black experience . . . has created fissures in American society that are as deep as, and often deeper than, those of class . . . [It is the] one immense exception” (12).

Despite its immensity, Katznelson (1981) went on to embrace Louis Hartz’s account of the liberal national character of America, which minimized the significance of racism, in order to explain why in America, class conflicts were generally workplace matters and were moderated even there by a cultural consensus on market institutions within a liberal polity (14–17). He gave little attention to workplace racial clashes. Thus instead of making race a center of analysis, Katznelson’s work/community dichotomy perpetuated the Hartzian presumption of its marginality to the main, class- and culture-centered line of development in the U.S. political economy.

To its credit, *City Trenches* did place the politics of community, ethnicity, and race on an equal basis with those of workplace class divisions. Katznelson also did not deny that white workers often supported bans on hiring blacks and formed segregated or exclusionary unions (Kelley 1990; B. Nelson 2001). But he left largely unaddressed just how and why the “exception” of race had so often gone “deeper” than class in shaping even conduct at work. Our answer is that membership in the white supremacist order has long given workers a share of power, status, and ideological valorization, as well as apparently more secure, if often meager, economic rewards. The fact that white workers long not only accepted but insisted on racial workplace and union configurations strongly suggests that, rather than being either consequences or variations of class structures, politics long made racial hierarchies constitutive features of the American political economy. By sometimes equating race with ethnicity and most often stressing ethnicity as the organizing framework for unions, parties, and urban politics, Katznelson did not bring out the full character or scope of the nation’s white supremacist order.

In more recent work, Katznelson has provided valuable evidence of the role of that order in shaping con-

gressional behavior and New Deal policymaking (e.g., Katznelson, Geiger, and Kryder 1993). And even in *City Trenches*, Katznelson gave much more attention to race than some of the most justly celebrated recent works in American political development, studies that have documented the evolution of major institutions including the federal bureaucracy, congressional structures, and immigration policy. Though these works afford a wealth of valuable insights, many nonetheless exhibit several deficiencies.

First, they do not employ theoretical frameworks that ask whether the governing institutions and political behavior they examine have been involved in explicitly racial conflicts. Second, partly as a result, their historical narratives often omit glaring ways in which racial orderings have shaped the institutional goals, structures, procedures, and political actions they examine, as well as the ways in which those institutional features and actions have worked to perpetuate or reconfigure American racial patterns. Third, many scholars neglect, in particular, both the internal and the external politics of political communities defined and subordinated through racial categories. Because African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and others have been disempowered historically, scholars tend to ignore them as politically irrelevant, either acquiescent or ineffectual. But precisely because racial orders have been so important in the United States, the politics within such communities, and their often masked resistance to the larger orders in American life, have always mattered greatly (Kelley 1994, 35–53; Yu 2001).

## Bureaucracy

From the post-Reconstruction years on, federal departments such as Agriculture, Interior, Treasury, State, and the Post Office bestowed upon African Americans two sorts of experiences. First, they discriminated against blacks in hiring practices, routinely segregated them, and confined them to low-level positions. Discrimination came via measures such as the “rule of three,” whereby for every opening, the U.S. Civil Service Commission provided a list of three eligible applicants to the hiring department, which then picked one. In this way an African American candidate could be on the list three times without being selected. From 1914, the same commission attached a photograph to each name included in the list of three eligible, with predictable effect. No African Americans rose to senior office.

Second, federal departments helped to devise, implement, and monitor the segregationist order legally in place between 1896 and 1954. Before the 1950s, federal officials, especially middle-rank bureaucrats, assiduously upheld “separate but equal” arrangements or introduced them where they had not existed. The Federal Bureau of Prisons, for example, from the 1920s to the 1950s repeatedly sought to ensure that penitentiaries guaranteed segregated accommodations, eating, and working arrangements (King 1995). The War Department was also a notorious enforcer of segregation

during WWII (Kryder 2000). We believe, then, that federal bureaucracies were profoundly shaped by and active in constituting America's post-Reconstruction racial structure, in ways that a racial orders analysis can bring out.

Contrast in this regard Daniel Carpenter's *The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy* (2001), a sterling example of American political development themes and methods. Carpenter deploys quantitative analyses as components in three comparative historical narratives that provide powerful support for his central claim. He argues that executive agency bureaucrats achieved policymaking autonomy from "politicians and organized interests" earlier and more extensively than many scholars have seen (4).

Yet Carpenter largely omits from his analysis the politics that led to the overwhelming confinement of African Americans to lower-level positions in the postal service; the failure of the Agriculture Department to confront, and its frequent complicity in, the exploitation of black tenant farmers; and the Interior Department's toleration of practices that limited African Americans access to public lands while it also transferred Indian lands to public and private white hands.<sup>2</sup> Such patterns strongly suggest that these bureaucrats either were not autonomous from the white supremacist order and its efforts to resist racial transformations or were choosing to assist it. Either way, the case for bureaucratic autonomy and its significance cannot be made fully unless those issues are addressed. This point applies to the whole literature "bringing the state back in." Scholars have failed to reflect on how far the internal structures and goals of "autonomous" agencies have been constituted by racial orders.

When considering the efforts of Woodrow Wilson's Postmaster General Albert Burleson to squash union organization among postal workers (Carpenter 2001, 170–71), for example, it would be illuminating to explore the degree of autonomy we should attribute to Burleson's role in entrenching segregation among postal employees. Was it a "divide and conquer" tactic? Was it done at Burleson's discretion, or in response to powerful white supremacist congressional committee members, or the ardently segregationist president, or other political actors? It would also be valuable to consider how far the employees thus organized on race lines helped secure the "white supremacist" order. The roles of Burleson and his agency appear not inconsiderable in these regards. The Postmaster General advocated increased segregation to President Wilson's cabinet in April 1913, complaining on behalf of white mail clerks: "It is very unpleasant for them to work in a car with negroes where it is almost impossible to have different drinking vessels and different towels, or places to wash." Burleson then promoted measures "to segregate white and negro employees in all Departments of Government" (quoted in Cronon 1963,

32). This policy was adopted throughout the federal government (NAACP 1913; Weiss 1969, 64–65).

If the Postmaster General had autonomy in this sphere, then his use of it contributed substantially to patterns of segregation throughout the federal government, in ways that helped define racial practices throughout American society. That is a feature of bureaucratic autonomy that seems worth noting. And if these bureaucrats were not autonomous in these regards, if they were complying with powerful southern congressmen, the president, or other officials, then Carpenter's argument is seriously undercut.

The same questions about the character of government complicity in white supremacist arrangements can also be asked of the Department of Agriculture, for like the Post Office it was, at the time of segregation's spread, an old department that had long been engaged with African Americans. We might also ask whether segregation in labor unions, specifically, should be seen more as a cause of discriminatory governmental employment practices, more as a result, or as equally shaped by a broader white supremacist order. Conversely, we might ask whether the persistence of patronage appointments instead of civil service positions in public employment worked to strengthen the white supremacist order. But no such questions surface in Carpenter's work, because the relationship of bureaucratic autonomy to racial hierarchies is not raised. Mostly race does not make it into the index, let alone the text. Hence his case for bureaucratic autonomy and its significance is less compelling than it otherwise might be.

## Congress

The political importance of Congress to the United State's racial orders hardly needs elaboration, so its interactions with those orders might seem an inescapable theme of most congressional studies. Many scholars have explored, for example, the antebellum concern to maintain structures of power in Congress that would protect slavery, and the ways that territorial expansion challenged those structures (Weingast 1998). Yet Eric Schickler's *Disjointed Pluralism* (2001) is a historically sweeping and methodologically sophisticated account of institutional change within Congress that gives little attention to this dimension of congressional politics.

Schickler makes a strong case for understanding institutional change in Congress as "disjointed pluralism." He argues that a variety of actors, interests, and conditions, rather than any single engine of change, have long shaped congressional institutional innovations. Using careful criteria to select four periods of significant change from 1890 to the present, his analysis finds enduring tensions in conflicting efforts to centralize power in the parties and institutional leadership, among strong committees and their chairs, and in decentralizing initiatives from new members of the House or Senate wishing to use their chamber for policy or personal entrepreneurship (Schickler 2001, 5–18). There is no single direction in which those tensions have

<sup>2</sup> Carpenter (2001) makes one brief reference to discrimination against blacks in the postal service (74). For more on the racial patterns of farm and land policies, see Foner 1988, 542, 592–98; Fuchs 1990, 92–98; and Hoxie 1984, 44–72.

been resolved and no single winner in the processes of change.

However, it is striking how Schickler's approach leads him to underplay the powerful racial dynamics structuring many of the changes he discusses, as well as the consequences for America's racial ordering that each involves. All of his four periods (1890–1910, 1919–32, 1937–52, and 1970–89) coincide with racial conflicts that were brought directly into congressional politics and national policymaking. They were never peripheral and often central to the changes in congressional behavior Schickler documents, in terms of both causes and effects.

Schickler's theoretical framework has room for race chiefly as a "policy interest," which may be "ideologically" as well as sectionally based, though racial considerations also play into individual member "electoral interests" and "party interests" (Schickler 2001, 11–12). Though otherwise reasonable, this approach has the undesirable effect of fragmenting the "white supremacist" order and rendering it invisible. It fails to grasp theoretically the reality that individual and party ideologies, sectional, and electoral interests were significantly *constituted* in these periods by where individuals, parties, and the dominant forces in various regions stood on the great questions of whether and how America's racial hierarchies were to be preserved or dismantled. Hence it makes interests and actors appear more "disjointed" than they often were.

In Schickler's first period (1890–1910), patterns of speakership and committee powers shifted several times in important ways. First, Republican House Speaker Thomas Reed succeeded in increasing his office's powers and reducing those of the minority party in 1890. Then the Democrats gained a majority at the next election and dismantled his rules. Then after Republican electoral successes, a bipartisan coalition strengthened the Rules Committee to make the institution operate effectively again. Among other developments, the Speaker's powers then declined, only to be reasserted by Joe Cannon, only to have his powers restricted again to the benefit of the Rules Committee (Schickler 2001, 28–30).

In discussing these developments, Schickler does note that Republican Party interests led many to support a bill to protect African American voting rights in 1890, but that they were sharply divided, and that this was the one element of their legislative package they failed to enact. Nonetheless, the Democrats denounced this "force bill," among other centralizing measures, at the next election and won the majority that enabled them to repeal Reed's rules (Schickler 2001, 34–35, 42–43). We would explain those events as products of the internal conflicts and electoral decline of the postwar transformative egalitarian order. Schickler leaves them unexplained, and does not note their consequence: The Democrats went on to repeal the last vestiges of Reconstruction voting rights protections for blacks and the Republicans largely abandoned the cause of black voting rights (Kousser 1974, 27–29, 49, 241, 363; Valelly 1995). The GOP soon regained power but strictly as a party of economic interests, not civil rights.

Its members then cooperated to promote congressional efficiency on a fairly bipartisan basis—the same basis on which the nation moved to rebuild the white supremacist order in the form of segregation and race-based imperialism. With the not-so-coincidental sanction of the Court in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, segregation laws spread, the number of lynchings increased steeply, and annexations of Puerto Rico and the Philippines extended the American white supremacist order to new realms while helping to legitimate it at home. In sum, Republican efforts in 1890 to restructure Congress on behalf of its partisan interests, then aligned with the transformative egalitarian order, collided with the nation's white supremacist order in ways that contributed greatly to the shifts in congressional structure Schickler examines. Those shifts contributed in turn to a repositioning of the Republican Party in the nation's racial ordering, and the expansion of the white supremacist order, in ways Schickler does not examine.

The realities of this acquiescence by both parties in the Jim Crow system meant that during Schickler's second period, 1919–32, a key effort of resistance by transformative egalitarian forces, the vigorous NAACP-led campaign to enact antilynching legislation, found only a few official champions and no success (Zangrando 1980). Instead, bipartisan organizational reforms resulted in fewer but stronger committees, making seniority in terms of committee service, as well as chamber membership, a source of great power (Schickler 2001, 95–98). Though Republicans introduced these changes, much support came from white supremacist southern Democrats, who virtually always won reelection. The increased importance of seniority then embedded Congress even more firmly in the white supremacist order, so that legislative efforts to transform that order went for naught. In this period the rules of cloture and filibustering in the Senate were also cast. Both became bulwarks of white supremacy, used to dilute the 1957 civil rights bill and to pose the major hurdle to the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Schickler (2001) notes that in his third period, 1937–52, the Rules Committee became "the principal institutional power base in the House" for a "cross-party conservative coalition" consisting of "Dixiecrats" and conservative Republicans and that it enabled "southerners to block legislation that just might have driven them from the party" (163–66). He also notes that a 1949 liberal rebellion against the Rules Committee only ended up strengthening the power of committee chairs, where southern seniority conferred similar advantages (178). Yet he does not observe that it was consistently legislation threatening the white supremacist order, such as antilynching laws, voting bills and other civil rights proposals, and economic and welfare legislation that might benefit black farm and domestic workers that Dixiecrats opposed. Republican conservatives won their support through ally-ing with them in support of white supremacy. Or to put it more strongly, because race was its linchpin, Schickler's "conservative coalition" should be seen as an institutional component of the white supremacist order.



Schickler instead follows Bensel in presenting southern interests simply as collective “sectional interests.” Perhaps that vague phrase is appropriate, but if so, it needs defense, since it cannot by itself explain the Republican/Dixiecrat alliance. The Republican members of the coalition were, after all, not from the southern “section.” And “sectional interests” can easily be interpreted like Bensel in economic terms; yet it is at least arguable that southern conservatism on labor issues and other economic matters were really largely racial concerns (Gerstle 2001, 160–68). But race rarely surfaces in Schickler’s account of congressional policy preferences, party interests, or congressional structuring.

If we believe that southern and conservative interests stem from attachments to a racial order that cannot be analyzed as simply a class system or a sectional system, then more than Schickler acknowledges, his history provides evidence not just for “disjointed pluralism,” but for the special role of conflicting racial orders in shaping congressional structures during much of the twentieth century. A portrait of “racist-constrained pluralism” conveys a very different sense of congressional organization than his more open-ended “disjointed” pluralism. In sum, in theory Schickler employs an approach that fragments what are arguably manifestations of an interlocked white supremacist order into a variety of apparently separate interests, and in his historical studies he gives only slight attention to the interactions of congressional structuring with the nation’s clashing racial structures. The result may be to portray the congressional forest without recognizing the common seeds of many of its trees.

## Immigration

In common with too many other policy topics, immigration policies are often analyzed separately from domestic racial issues. Yet from the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, through the Johnson–Reed 1924 Immigration Act establishing race-based national origins criteria, to the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1952 affirming racial discrimination, domestic racial institutions and their proponents have interacted profoundly with immigration policy (Ngai 1999). For many, Chinese exclusion fit with displacing western American Indians. Constitutional endorsement of segregation sustained the legitimacy of racial naturalization restrictions. It is doubtful that the prorestriction immigration regime, initiated in 1882 and in place until 1965, could have existed without a white supremacist alliance in Congress of southern Democrats and western Republicans, a coalition that provided successive chairs of the two houses’ Immigration Committees. They gained further reinforcement from northeastern nativist elites. These “strange bedfellow” alliances show that the racial order promoted linkages across diverse political groupings that, in turn, helped maintain that order. Many southern segregationists had previously hoped that immigrants would bolster the southern economy without threatening white supremacy; but in the late nineteenth

century they concluded that their interests were better served by allying with nativist westerners and northeasterners, who were not nearly so wedded to domination of blacks but who needed votes to win immigration bans.

Because they joined western white workers, southern white landowners, and old money northeasterners, these alliances are not easily explained in class terms of employers versus employees or allies of former masters versus allies of former slaves. They are best seen as components of the resurgent white supremacist order of the late nineteenth century. Accordingly, opposition came chiefly from the embattled champions of the post-war egalitarian racial order like Massachusetts Senator George Hoar, whose party, class, racial, and regional origins were the same as those of many restrictionists, but who refused to join with those northeastern Republicans who were defecting to support for renewed white supremacist arrangements (Gerstle 2001, 14–43; Tichenor 2002, 103–8).

Yet many scholars persist in analyzing immigration in nonracial economic, cultural, and institutional terms. In *Dividing Lines* (2002), Daniel Tichenor provides the most thorough scholarly narrative of American immigration policy yet available, and his approach is suitably more complex. He explains the major shifts in policy in terms of four factors: the fragmentation of the U.S. polity that permits unequal patterns of access for lobbyists, the tendency for politically unusual coalitions to form around immigration policy issues, the influence of professional experts’ views in policy choices, and the effect of international crises. This framework enables a comprehensive account of U.S. immigration policies from the late eighteenth century to the present. However, because it does not include recognition of racial orders, it again fails to highlight how these patterns of unequal access, unusual coalitions, expert opinion, and responses to international pressures have often been products of racial aims, alliances, and institutional structures. Thus at times Tichenor does not bring out fully the roles that actors within those orders have played in shaping and contesting the politics of immigration and the ways in which immigration policies have in turn affected America’s domestic racial structures.

For instance, Tichenor (2002) recognizes that in adopting Chinese exclusion, post-Reconstruction Americans put national political institutions “in service to traditions of racial hierarchy.” He also traces that development to a “political alliance of the South and the West” dedicated to white supremacy (103–4, 113). But though Tichenor observes that “Jim Crowism” spread during this period, he stresses the institutional differences between national “acquiescence to state and local racial practices” in the case of segregation and the active national regulatory role in Chinese exclusion (113). Rather than highlighting how the southern and western alliance linked immigration and segregation laws into a more potent white supremacist order, this presentation makes these developments appear relatively distinct. Similarly, writing about the landmark Dillingham Commission on immigration, which

published a 42-volume study in 1911 after four years of research, Tichenor notes the Commissioners' judgment that African Americans occupied the most unsanitary and overcrowded urban dwellings (128–32). He does not, however, push through the implications of this comparison. To many the report suggested that American blacks were even more undesirable sources of disease and degradation than the most objectionable immigrants. Thus, though the eugenics-inclined Dillingham Commission focused on Eastern European immigrants, it too had throw-off effects for the nation's white supremacist order, reinforcing the hierarchies in which African Americans fared least well (Ovington 1911, 171).

Likewise, Tichenor's account of the national origins system implemented from the late 1920s through the mid-1960s highlights the influence of its founders' "xenophobic and racist intentions" (147). But Tichenor fails to explore African American political responses at the time, articulated at annual NAACP conferences and in the Association's lobbying, or the implications for black-white configurations of the law's racial "architecture" (Ngai 1999). The NAACP deplored the system of "race classification" embodied in the national origins quota system as "naïve and untechnical" (3), for good reason. That system expressed and reinforced the nation's domestic racial order, working with, for example, the Supreme Court's decisions upholding naturalization preferences for whites to maintain the vision of the United States as an essentially white country. Some white supremacists saw in immigration policy a chance to achieve greater national "whitening" and even contemplated the removal of all African Americans from the United States via either forcible or voluntary emigration. A bill passed by the Senate in 1914 but rejected by the House, after intense NAACP lobbying, sought to exclude all black immigrants and to permit the exclusion of African Americans who traveled abroad (King 2000, 153–55).

We also cannot adequately analyze the later overturning of the race-based national origins quota system without recognizing the important role played by civil rights advocates, again best understood as members of the then-ascendant "egalitarian transformative" racial order, rather than as a coalition bound strictly by class or ethnic allegiances. African American intellectuals and leaders argued strongly in 1965 that ending the national origins system was a necessary part of ending American racial discrimination (Yu 2001). Tichenor (2002) notes the NAACP's pro-immigrant stance and includes the "new civil rights zeitgeist" (205, 217) as a factor contributing to the 1965 policy shift. But in the absence of a racial orders analysis, that zeitgeist appears either exogenous to or a minor part of immigration politics, rather than a product of ongoing struggles between racial orders in which immigration rules had always been central.

And though the old quota system codified theories of racial and ethnic differences more explicitly than modern laws do, current policies have fostered discourses about the "new immigrants," principally Asian Americans and Hispanics, that perpetuate stereotyped

notions of racial identities. Contemporary debates repeatedly air implicit or explicit concerns about how these groups will fit into or reconfigure America's still-contesting racial systems. These, again, are consequences that, lacking a theoretical focus on how immigration interacts with racial orders, Tichenor does not explore. Claire J. Kim (1999) has argued persuasively that such immigrants often face a challenge of "racial triangulation," in which they feel compelled to gain a satisfactory position on a racial field defined chiefly in terms of black and white identities. In our view, such triangulation is both inescapable and perilous. It reflects pressures to choose sides between the nation's competing racial orders, with costs associated either with choice or with opting for "neutrality." The politics of immigration and new immigrants, like issues of bureaucracy, congressional structure, and many other topics, thus can be better grasped if we consider the roles of racial orders in shaping past and current political institutions, policies, and conduct.

## CONCLUSION

Today, racially inflected contests in courts, legislatures, electoral campaigns, and popular discussions over affirmative action; school and residential segregation; felon disfranchisement; majority-minority districts; racial profiling; the disparate racial impact of incarcerations and the death penalty; hate crimes; reparations for slavery; Native American rights; immigration policies; bilingualism; multiculturalism; "model minority" stereotyping; and racial discrimination in housing, auto, and credit markets, and in hiring and promotions, all still roil American political waters. Many putatively nonracial issues, such as restraints on free speech, vouchers for private schools, the revival of federalism, and disputes over public health, environmental, and social assistance policies, all continue to be shaped by race-related struggles. Few of these issues, or the wider developments with which they are linked, can be understood without exploring the enduring tensions between and within the nation's racial orders.

Our argument has not been that race explains everything in American politics, or even that race is always important for every dimension of American political development. Many of the apparently nonracial issues just listed, and many more, are indeed heavily shaped by other concerns. But we maintain that the internal dynamics of American racial orders, and their interactions with each other and with other aspects of American political life, have so often been so important that the question of what role race may be playing should always be part of political science inquiries. The failure of political scientists to deal adequately with race in their scholarship has been all too much a part of the failure of Americans to deal adequately with race in their common lives. That is why this failure is one that our discipline has a special need, and a special duty, to rectify.

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