EMBEDDING THE COLOR LINE

The Accumulation of Racial Advantage and the Disaccumulation of Opportunity in Post-Civil Rights America

Michael K. Brown
Department of Politics
University of California, Santa Cruz

David Wellman
Department of Community Studies
University of California, Santa Cruz

Abstract

This article investigates why deeply entrenched racial inequality persists into the post-civil rights era in the United States. It challenges individual-level explanations that assume persistent racial inequality is the result of either White bigotry, which is diminishing, or the failure of Blacks to take advantage of the opportunities opened up by the civil rights legislation of the 1960s. We propose an alternative explanation for durable racial inequality. Contemporary color lines, we argue, result from the cumulative effect of racial discrimination and exclusion, a process in which Whites accumulate racial advantages to the detriment of African Americans and Latinos. These cumulative inequalities are produced and sustained by competition between racial groups to acquire and control jobs and other resources, and by institutional practices and public policies. Individual choice in the form of *intentional racism* has little to do with the persistence of racial inequality. Our analysis suggests that Americans' current understanding of the concept of equality of opportunity is out of sync with the realities of durable racial inequality, and needs to be revised.

Keywords: Racial Inequality, Equality of Opportunity, Labor Market Discrimination, Residential Segregation, Race and the Welfare State

Racial inequality remains deeply entrenched in American society forty years after the passage of civil rights legislation. If the facts are not in dispute, the reasons why racial inequality persists are a matter of passionate debate. Striking down Jim Crow laws finally settled the question of whether White Americans could ignore the Civil War

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amendments to the Constitution while condoning inhuman treatment of African Americans on either side of the Mason-Dixon line. The civil rights legislation of the 1960s guaranteed that African Americans had the same *formal* rights and privileges under the Constitution as White Americans, but it settled little else.

Martin Luther King, Jr., understood that treating Blacks and Whites as equal under the law would remain a hollow promise unless the challenge of Black poverty and income inequality was met. Similarly, W. E. B. Du Bois recognized that the economic and social status of Black freedmen after the Civil War mocked the freedom granted by the Reconstruction amendments to the constitution. *What did freedom mean?* asked Du Bois. “Not a cent of money,” he wrote, “not an inch of land, not a mouthful of victuals—not even ownership of the rags on his back. Free” (cited in Balfour 2003, p. 34). After the civil rights victories of 1964 and 1965, Lyndon Johnson posed Du Bois’s question anew in his commencement speech to Howard University graduates. “Freedom is not enough,” Johnson proclaimed. “You do not wipe away the scars of centuries by saying: Now you are free to go where you want, and do as you desire, and choose the leaders you please.” Johnson’s speech, often taken to be the high watermark of Great Society liberalism, demanded “not just freedom, but opportunity . . . Not just equality as a right and a theory but equality as a fact and equality as a result” (Johnson, cited in *Public Papers* 1966, pp. 635–640).

Johnson did not promise African Americans the modern equivalent of “forty acres and a mule”; instead, he tried to pave the road to “equality as a result” with education and job training programs and a call to confront the “collapse” of the Black family. Although Johnson was well aware of the corrosive effects of a long history of racial oppression and domination, his speech embodied what Du Bois called the “American Assumption”—the idea that “wealth is mainly the result of its owner’s effort and that any average worker can by thrift become a capitalist” (Du Bois 1935[1992], p. 183). Yet today Johnson is hardly remembered as a champion of individual effort and responsibility. “Equality of results” is the pejorative label applied to any policy assumed to give away jobs or benefits regardless of merit.

Ironically, Johnson’s rhetoric and policies have been appropriated by people hostile to his agenda and to those he was trying to help. All too many White Americans ascribe persistent Black poverty and large gaps between Black and White income, wealth, education, and job skills to African Americans’ indolence and a dysfunctional culture. In this view, racial inequality is not produced by systematic discrimination that privileges White Americans and restricts African Americans to the margins of society. Instead, persistent racial inequality is attributed to African Americans’ failure to take advantage of the opportunities that Whites extended to them through the civil rights and social legislation of the 1960s, or else to the “prejudiced” acts of individual White Americans.

This explanation of enduring racial inequality lies at the core of an emerging orthodoxy on race that is held by some political elites and intellectuals, and a broad cross section of White Americans. It locates racial inequality solely in individual behavior and choice. While seductive, this explanation is an inadequate account of the paradox of racial inequality a generation after passage of the civil rights laws. In this essay, we put forth an alternative explanation and consider the policy implications for efforts to undo durable racial inequality. Instead of assuming that racial inequality is the result of prejudiced individuals or the failures of individual African Americans, we argue that contemporary color lines are embedded in culturally and economically produced systems of advantage and exclusion that generate privilege for one racially defined group at the expense of another. It is time, we think, to replace the attribution of America’s persistent color line to intentional discrimination and the dysfunctional behavior of Blacks with a historical-structural account that emphasizes the legacies of discrimination and the subtle ways in which those legacies are perpetuated. Our historical approach questions the Great Society's conception of equality of opportunity, and suggests that the conventional distinction between equality of opportunity and equality of results obscures the underlying causes of racial inequality and subordination.

INDIVIDUALIZING POST-CIVIL RIGHTS RACIAL INEQUALITY

An individual-level explanation of racial inequality is plausible because fewer Whites express bigoted attitudes since the successful abolition of the state-sponsored racial oppression of Jim Crow, and, in addition to other signs of Black economic success, there is palpable evidence of a growing Black middle class. In this context, the political elites and writers who have elaborated the new orthodoxy on race and racial inequality make several claims. They deny that racial discrimination is a serious problem today, insisting that the economic divide between Whites and Blacks is exaggerated. They also maintain that White Americans are receptive to demands for racial equality and to the idea that racial gaps in income and poverty cannot be explained by White racism.[1] Indeed, some writers argue that White opposition to civil rights policies such as affirmative action expresses differences over fundamental principles of the American creed, not racism or hostility to racial inequality (Sniderman and Piazza, 1993, p. 26; Sniderman et al., 2000).[2] And, finally, race remains an issue in the view of some of these writers only because of the manipulative, expedient behavior of Black nationalists and the civil rights establishment (Thernstrom and Thernstrom, 1997).

While the sentiments contained in this new orthodoxy originated in a small number of conservative think tanks, they migrated first to portions of the academy and then to the public. A wide cross section of White Americans—Republicans and Democrats, conservatives and liberals, young and old—are receptive to this new assemblage of beliefs about race and racial inequality, partly because it reinforces deeply held cultural values about hard work, opportunity, and self-reliance (McClosky and Zaller, 1984, pp. 86–94; Shklar 1991, pp. 62–101).[3]

The new orthodoxy represents a major change in the way Americans think about race and racial inequality. Instead of locating the main causes of racial inequality in a historical-structural, state-based account, it looks for them in the willful actions of self-interested and self-motivated individuals on either side of the color line. In this view, race in the post-civil rights era is a problem of individual (mis)behavior.

This explanation for racial inequality is rooted in three core assumptions. First, it assumes that individual prejudiced acts are the primary cause of racial inequality. Thus, the thinking is, as prejudice diminishes, so will the racial gaps in economic well-being. Prejudice in this account does not refer exclusively to crude bigotry. Some writers focus on negative judgments based on subtler, even more or less "accepted" stereotypes—for example, the idea that African Americans are lazy or prone to violence. Glenn Loury (2002), for example, argues that stigmatization, not discrimination, perpetuates racial inequality. In his view, people act (rationally) based on limited information and condensed assumptions about the behavior of individuals. He suggests that these hardened stereotypes induce the behavior depicted by the stereotype and lead to stigmatization—he names it a "spoiled collective identity"—which persists even though outright expressions of prejudice are currently rare.[4]

Second, it assumes that discrimination is not a powerful determinant of Black economic success in *competitive* labor markets because rational employers will effectively sort out productivity differences among workers. Purportedly, discrimination has a short life-span because employers would have to pay White workers higher wages if they acted on their prejudices and discriminated against Black workers. In other words, victims of discrimination would always have access to jobs since some employers would refuse to act on their prejudices and hire Black workers at a lower wage. Moreover, since presumably employers efficiently sort out the competent from the incompetent, investments in human capital are rewarded. Thus, studies of labor market discrimination assume that differences in income or occupational status reflect real differences in individual human capital. Once differences in education and job skills are removed, they argue, any remaining differences in wages or occupational status are the result of "discrimination," suggesting that Black economic advancement over time is due largely to educational gains.

Finally, the emerging orthodoxy assumes that, once legal barriers have come down and racial prejudice disappears, any remaining racial gaps in income, poverty, or occupation that remain stem from African Americans' or Latinos' individual choices about work, leisure, residence, marriage, and law-abiding behavior. But this does not necessarily mean that racial inequality will disappear simply because Jim Crow laws are abolished, anti-discrimination laws are enforced, and prejudiced attitudes decline. Instead, the assumption is that people will climb or fall off the ladder of economic success depending on their individual effort, qualifications, and self-discipline. Economic mobility is obviously tied to individual motivation and choices: the fate of individuals rests squarely on their own shoulders. Focusing on the individual, while ignoring the historical economic and social context, enables proponents of the new orthodoxy to dismiss statistics ordinarily interpreted as evidence of racial inequality, explaining them instead as a reflection of an individual's choice to stay in school or not, to work hard or not, to get married rather than give birth to a child out of wedlock, or to use drugs or not. The assumption is that these choices reflect deeply ingrained cultural values that will change slowly over time as Blacks overcome a "development gap." Tamar Jacoby (1998, pp. 9, 539–540) refers to this as "acculturation." In the post-civil rights era, the notion that Blacks are the "cultural architects of their own disadvantage," as Lawrence Bobo and Ryan A. Smith (1998, p. 212) pungently put it, is "free market racism."

Empirical studies of labor markets provide the strongest evidence for the idea that racial inequality—continued racial gaps in income, wages, and occupational status—is produced by a relationship between declining discrimination and Black failure. Many analysts think that labor market discrimination is a matter of history, and thus civil rights laws are an anachronism. Labor market discrimination disappears, in this view, because of the sharp decline in prejudiced attitudes over the last fifty years and strong enforcement of civil rights laws, notably the employment discrimination provisions of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Because intentional discrimination has more or less disappeared, or at least greatly diminished, any contemporary gaps in employment, wages, or occupation, according to this view, are the result of African Americans' failure to acquire the necessary cognitive skills and work habits to compete in labor markets. What appears to be racial inequality, according to adherents to the new understanding of race, really reflects entrepreneurs hiring and rewarding skilled workers. James Heckman sums up the conclusion of many proponents when he says that "the goal of achieving black economic progress is better served by policies that promote skill formation, like improving family environments, schools and neighborhoods [rather than] strengthening the content and enforcement of civil rights laws—the solution to the problem of an earlier era" (Heckman 1998, pp. 101–102). The solution, in other words, lies in restoring human capital. Lyndon Johnson could not have said it any better.

Similarly, some writers insist that the persistence of residential segregation in major metropolitan centers results from African Americans' decisions to live with other African Americans. Thus, ethnic group loyalty, not White racism, is the main cause of segregated neighborhoods (Thernstrom and Thernstrom, 1997, pp. 219–230). In fact, the Thernstroms argue that residential segregation has diminished greatly in major city centers largely because Whites have changed their attitudes and are now willing to live in proximity to Black families.[5] If Blacks pay higher interest rates than Whites or obtain less favorable mortgages, in their view, it is because they are less credit worthy, not because banks and loan companies discriminate.

THE FALLACIES OF AN INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL EXPLANATION

The new conventional wisdom regards racism as a remnant from the past, for most individual Whites, with rare exceptions, no longer express openly bigoted attitudes or racial hatred in opinion polls. The evidence invoked for this understanding of race indicates that its proponents are using a historically specific concept of racism, which assumes that it is intentional, crude, explicitly supremacist, and typically expressed as individual bias (Wellman 1993). Even though this narrow concept of racism has been discredited, it remains salient to a broad cross section of White Americans and deflects attention from the underlying causes of White advantage and Black disadvantage in the post-civil rights era (Bobo 2000, p. 159). But the most pernicious, intractable cases of racial inequality cannot be explained by Whites' biased attitudes or by Blacks' dysfunctional behavior. Focusing exclusively upon the specific intentions and choices of individuals regarding racial discrimination cannot account for the emergence and persistence of racial inequalities in the United States. There are three reasons for this.

First, there are significant racial disparities that cannot be reduced to White racial bias or so-called Black irresponsibility. A dramatic example is the well-documented disparity between Blacks and Whites in access to health care and in the treatment of serious diseases. The National Cancer Institute (NCI) recently reported that cancer death rates are increasing much faster for Blacks than for Whites, sometimes by as much as 20 to 100 times. Even though the incidence of breast cancer is lower among Black women, they are more likely to die of the disease than White women. Moreover, according to the NCI Director, "Black men have a cancer-death rate about 44 percent higher than that for white men" (Gornick et al., 2001; McBarnette 1996, pp. 51–52). These discrepancies result from differential access to screening, prevention, and treatment. One of the chief reasons Black women are more likely to die of breast cancer is that they are not diagnosed until the disease has reached an advanced and more lethal stage (Yood et al., 1999).[6] For operable non-small cell lung cancer, the rate of surgery for Black patients was 12.7% lower than for Whites with the same diagnosis. The authors of this study concluded that "the lower survival rate among black patients . . . is largely explained by the lower rate of surgical treatment among blacks" (Bach et al., 1999, p. 1198).

There are also significant differences in access to sophisticated diagnostic and treatment procedures for coronary heart disease, strokes, and related ailments after controlling for age and other medical conditions (Oddone et al., 1999, pp. 1350, 1353–1354). Ironically, amputation of a lower limb is the one advanced procedure that Blacks receive more often than Whites. African Americans are more likely to have such "last resort" procedures because of inadequate treatment of hypertension and diabetes—illnesses that reflect inadequate care and treatment (Gornick et al., 1996; Gornick et al., 2001, p. 138). These disparities persist even when access to treatment is identical, as it is for Medicare recipients, or when income is controlled. In other words, race *is* the major explanation for these differences in treatment, but not racial prejudice pure and simple or intentional discrimination.

Professional and collegiate sports provide another example of why individual-based explanations for racial inequality are inadequate. Executives in modern professional sports rarely express blatant and crude expressions of individual prejudice. Moreover, it is unlikely that anyone would accuse Black or Latino athletes of failing to realize their full potential. In fact, a study of lifetime pitching and batting averages by sports sociologists at Northeastern University shows that Black players have to out-hit and out-pitch their White counterparts by substantial margins in order to win and keep their jobs. Mere journeymen can have long and profitable careers as long as they are White, but, among African Americans, only exceptional players will succeed (Staples 1998). Sports are the one arena where one can find unambiguous measures of merit—a baseball player can both hit and catch, or he cannot. Nonetheless, one finds a deep and persistent discrepancy in the proportion of Black and White coaches in the athletic industry, despite an abundance of talented Black athletes and assistant coaches.

It may be somewhat difficult to find Black medieval historians; it is not difficult to find Black coaches. There is a large pool of potential Black coaches for professional football and baseball franchises, which includes many former star players and highly experienced assistant coaches (Brown et al., 2003, pp. 49–50). Yet in 2001, 66% of head coaches in the National Basketball Association were White in a league where almost 80% of the players were Black. Similarly, in the National Football League, where 66% of the players were Black, 90% of the head coaches were White. The situation was not much different in college sports, where about 80% of head basketball coaches of Division I-A teams were White and 93% of head football coaches were White, despite the fact that African American men make up well over half of all college basketball and football players (Lapchick and Matthews, 2001). There may be other explanations for some of these discrepancies, but it is hard to maintain that race has nothing to do with them. This case, like that of health care, is worth pondering precisely because it is difficult either to blame Blacks or to discern blatant racism in them.

Individual-level explanations of racial inequality are inadequate for a second reason. Studies of labor market discrimination usually assume that an individual's educational qualifications and skills are not related to discrimination. But as any survey of education reveals, the allocation of educational resources in the United States is by no means race neutral. One indication of this comes from a recent study of students' performance on the California High School Exit Examination. Schools from which less than 70% of students in the class of 2006 passed the English Language Arts and Math tests were significantly more likely to be overcrowded, to lack fully credentialed teachers, particularly in math classes, and to be classified as substandard schools eligible for state relief under California law. 60% of these "low pass rate schools" were segregated—more than 90% of the students were non-White—compared to 2% of "high pass rate schools." It is estimated that about 30% of Black and Latino students have not passed the test and therefore will not be allowed to graduate (Rogers et al., 2005). As this example indicates, a credible explanation of durable racial inequality must therefore abandon the artificial distinction between discrimination within markets and a pre-market realm in which discrimination, if it exists, is irrelevant to a person's capacities and experiences.

Third, one cannot ignore the legacy of past discrimination and oppression—how the dead hand of the racist past chokes those living in the present. Racial inequalities accumulate over generations, exploding any distinction between the effects of past and present racism. The best illustration of cumulative racial inequalities is found in recent work on racial imbalance in the distribution of wealth. Melvin Oliver and Thomas Shapiro (1997) argue that the large differences between Black and White wealth represent the "sedimentation" of racial inequality: the residue of Jim Crow, labor market discrimination, and federal housing policies.

There is no reason to assume that individuals are the only appropriate unit of analysis. This approach, as Ruth Milkman and Eleanor Townsley (1994, p. 611) explain, "fails to capture the depth with which gender [or racial] discrimination and the norms associated with it are embedded in the economic order—in fact, they are embedded so deeply that a willful act of discrimination is not really necessary to maintain gender [or racial] inequality." A more fruitful perspective sees race as a relationship between groups, with durable racial inequality as a system of power and exclusion in which Whites accumulate advantages at the expense of Blacks and Latinos. In this view, individual choice in the form of *intentional racism* has little to do with the persistence of racial inequality.

THE THEORY OF RACIAL ACCUMULATION AND DISACCUMULATION

Toward an Understanding of Durable Racial Inequality

Our analytical framework addresses each of these problems with individual-level explanations. It starts with the idea that racial inequalities are cumulative, both generated and sustained by the collective action of groups that acquire and hoard racial privileges. This framework also focuses on the racial implications of public policies and the practices of intermediary institutions. We call this the theory of "accumulation and disaccumulation."

Durable color lines are produced when Whites accumulate racial advantages over time through labor market discrimination, institutional mechanisms, and public policies. The flip side of this is the denial of jobs, resources, and economic opportunity to African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans—a process of *disaccumulation*. By "accumulation," we refer to the way in which very small economic and social advantages compound, just like the interest on an ordinary banking investment, and can have large cumulative effects over many generations. But if the idea of accumulation is straightforward, there is a parallel and symmetrical idea that is usually ignored. This is the idea of *dis*investment and, over time, what might be called "*dis*accumulation." A debtor who fails to make timely payments incurs penalties that increase the amount of the debt. We call this a form of "negative accumulation" or "disaccumulation." Just as access to skilled trades or government subsidies assists in the accumulation of economic advantage, exclusion from well-paying jobs or governmental benefits can compound over time, resulting in disaccumulation.

The process of disaccumulation can produce two related consequences. It may work to deny groups access to an equal share of the fruits of economic growth—for example, Blacks may make income gains but still lag behind Whites. Disaccumulation may also reverse economic gains. A prime example of this occurred during the Great Depression of the 1930s, when Blacks suffered occupational losses in manufacturing and skilled crafts jobs because of virulent labor market discrimination

(Brown 1999, pp. 68–69). Segregated housing markets and redlining provide further illustrations of how accumulation and disaccumulation can lead to economic losses over time. Because fewer Blacks can obtain mortgage loans, and when they do obtain them they do so on less favorable terms, the value of the housing they purchase is lower on average than the value of housing purchased by Whites. "White flight" compounds the problem: the value of Black housing declines as Whites move out, making it more difficult for new Black buyers to obtain loans at reasonable rates of interest. The circle is completed when banks redline Black neighborhoods, leading to a downward spiral of disinvestment. African Americans, as a consequence, accumulate less wealth, with devastating consequences.

Accumulation and disaccumulation are not only relevant to the distribution of wealth. They apply to a wide range of social and economic phenomena. Limited access to adequate health care and treatment, for example, contributes to disaccumulation in communities of color. Poor health undermines a student's school performance, makes it difficult for a worker to hold much less excel at a job, and imposes significant financial costs on families. The effect is cumulative, beginning with birth itself. Black mothers frequently have poor prenatal care, which translates into higher rates of infant mortality or low birth-weight, which in turn results in severe mental and physical disabilities that impair school and work performance.

Cumulative inequalities are created and sustained by racial group competition and institutional practices. Although individuals can and do discriminate, labor market discrimination is more of a group phenomenon, and is better understood as a classic case of what Charles Tilly (1998) calls "opportunity hoarding," which occurs when members of a group monopolize access to privileges or valuable resources. Economists refer to this as the "noncompeting groups hypothesis" (Darity and Mason, 1998, pp. 85–86). The point is that the game is rigged well in advance of any bigoted act of discrimination.[7]

This process is ubiquitous in labor markets. It sometimes occurs quite passively, when networks of family, friends, or ethnic clans control access to jobs through informal ties and recommendations to employers. For years, the Irish dominated many big-city police departments through such tightly knit networks (Wilson 1967). But there is ample evidence of the practice in manufacturing and other industries as well (Sugrue 1996, chapter 4). Discrimination is often unobtrusive, a matter of rewarding one's White friends and neighbors and thereby excluding Blacks. However, opportunity hoarding is not always so passive. It can entail vigorous efforts by members of one group of employees to dissuade employers from hiring members of another group through intimidation and a campaign of harassment against unwanted workers. These practices are usually justified by stigmatizing excluded workers—the myth that Black workers were incapable of using machinery is the classic instance of this.

Racially based opportunity hoarding is not confined to labor markets. The fierce opposition of many Whites to race-based admissions policies of elite colleges and universities, or even selective primary schools, is motivated by fears that group advantage has been lost. Even though few Whites are actually affected by affirmative action admissions policies, many strongly believe that their collective well-being is threatened (Kinder and Sanders, 1996, p. 85). What they fear losing are the cultural and social advantages that can only be acquired at elite universities—such as meeting "the right people" at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton (who can and often do provide a substantial boost to one's career). When critics of affirmative action tell Black students who have been denied admission to the University of California at Berkeley that "there is nothing wrong with attending UC Riverside," they ignore the fact that *who you meet* at Harvard, Yale, or Princeton—or at Berkeley, Ann Arbor, or Madison—is integral to the accumulation of economic and social advantage.

Racial competition thus extends beyond tangible labor market privileges to competition for positional goods. Fred Hirsch (1978) argued long ago that distributional conflict in affluent societies increasingly centers on socially scarce goods: the elite kindergarten, the house in the exclusive gated community, the elite golf club, and other goods that define one's status relative to other groups. Unlike material goods, which become more plentiful as economies grow, the quantity of positional goods is static. Competition for these goods accelerates with economic growth. Since racial inequality reflects a commitment to maintain the relative hierarchy of White over Black, racial group competition is one of the social forces driving the struggle to acquire positional goods. One can see this quite clearly in the persistence of segregated housing markets. Housing is not only an element of one's net worth; it is a measure of one's social worth. Consequently, in addition to "keeping up with the Joneses," status-conscious Whites strive to maintain their social superiority over Blacks and other non-White groups. It is no surprise, then, that Whites perceive Black neighbors "to be a direct threat to their social status" (Massey and Denton, 1993, p. 94).

The intensity of racial group competition fluctuates with economic changes and class inequalities. Discrimination, William Darity, Jr., and Samuel Myers, Jr., write, is "endogenously linked to the employment needs of non-Black males" (Darity and Myers, 1998, p. 58; Wellman 1997, pp. 322–323). When the job opportunities for Whites diminish because of an economic downturn or deindustrialization, labor market competition between Black and White workers heats up. Similarly, the advent of the "winner take all" society and the hypercompetition for advantage—the scramble for access to elite institutions, the need to give two-year-olds French lessons, the relentless insecurity of American workers—unleashes a struggle for scarce positional goods and opposition to race-conscious policies. Whites who believe that affirmative action threatens their children's chances for admission to an elite university are inclined to be hostile to race-conscious admissions policies (Kinder and Sanders, 1996, pp. 62–63).

Racial inequalities are also generated and sustained by the routine practices of intermediate institutions and by putatively "race-neutral" public policies that privilege Whites. The organizational practices of corporations, law firms, banks, athletic teams, labor unions, the military, and educational institutions may generate or maintain racial inequalities, intentionally or *unintentionally*, over long periods of time. The collusion of federal housing administrators with the real estate and mortgage lending industries in creating segregated housing markets is well documented. An equally disturbing case is how institutional practices in hospitals, insurance companies, and nursing homes perpetuate and augment racial disparities in health care and mortality. Even though the 1964 Civil Rights Act prohibits distribution of federal funds to institutions that discriminate, the private nursing home industry remains segregated. This is largely because for-profit nursing homes are reluctant to accept Medicaid patients, particularly elderly Blacks. Another example is the effect of screening and reporting practices of hospitals and clinics. As David Barton Smith (1999, pp. 319–320) explains,

> At least some of the reported differences in rates of drug addiction, sexually transmitted diseases, and possibly even infant mortality reflect differences in the screening and reporting practices of the settings in which care is provided to blacks as opposed to those catering to whites. Such screening and reporting is

> more likely to be a part of the *standard operating procedures* of the more urban clinic settings where blacks disproportionately receive their care. In effect, these differences in procedures amount to an institutionalized form of racial profiling.

We do not doubt that some of the racial differences in treatment result from racially biased discretion, rather than standard operating procedures or organizational policies. Health care professionals, insurance claims adjusters, and hospital officials have wide discretion in deciding on treatments and other aspects of care. Discretion is a fact of life in complex organizations, but one that is influenced by racial perceptions, which may be incorporated into shared understandings of appropriate treatments for different groups. This is very similar to racial influences on patterns of decision making endemic to the criminal justice system. But such discretion takes place in a context defined by the process of disaccumulation.

Embedding Racial Inequality

Our theoretical framework explains how seemingly intractable racial disparities in schooling, jobs, income, poverty, incarceration, and other realms have become embedded in society and the economy. It illuminates how the cumulative, interlocking effects of White control of labor markets, implementation of seemingly impersonal organizational practices, and decisions about federal social policies have created a profound imbalance in economic opportunity and well-being between Whites and people of color. In other words, countless decisions by individuals, whether as members of groups intent on protecting their labor market privileges, or as administrators implementing loan policies or decisions on federal social policies, produce racialized patterns of accumulation and disaccumulation in which prejudice and intentional discrimination play a small role. As a result, racial inequality is embedded into the fabric of post-civil rights movement American society.

We can demonstrate the power of our framework by illustrating how changes in the structure of racial labor market competition and the racial consequences of federal social policies since the 1930s have contributed to the accumulation of White privilege and the disaccumulation of African American opportunity. Although robust economic growth and civil rights legislation combined to open new economic opportunities for African Americans, White workers were able to hoard the best jobs and perks for themselves. White opportunity-hoarding in labor markets had long-term consequences, contributing directly to high Black unemployment rates since the early 1950s. At the same time, public policy decisions dating back to the New Deal, by design or otherwise, not only benefited White Americans but also contributed systematically to disinvestment in Black communities. In fact, public policy decisions augmented Whites' advantages in labor markets, reproducing Black economic disadvantage in the welfare state. These inequalities reverberate in other realms such as education and, importantly, the criminal justice system. Indeed, when one examines the impact of the decisions made by police, prosecutors, and judges on Black communities, the dire consequences of cumulative racial inequality become readily apparent.

A SHORT HISTORY OF RACIAL LABOR MARKET COMPETITION

Black and White workers alike gained from the robust economic growth between 1940 and 1970; both also experienced stagnant or declining wages after that point.

But neither the gains nor the pain of economic change have been randomly distributed. Despite the ups and downs of the economy over the last sixty years, Black wages have lagged behind White wages, and all Black men, regardless of their education, social class, or job skills, have experienced more unemployment than White men. Even when Black workers made substantial economic gains, Whites did better. Between 1947 and 1959, the absolute median income gap between Black and White workers grew from about $7,000 to about $11,500. It remained there until the economic boom of the 1990s.

How Black economic progress can coexist with widening racial inequality is explained not by prejudice or character flaws, but by changes in the structure of labor market competition. African Americans made enormous economic gains at two crucial moments in recent history, when they shifted from one sector of the economy to another. In both cases, these shifts were aided by tight labor markets and government intervention, which diminished the power of racial labor market competition. But White control of labor markets limited Black gains, and each transition was followed by intensified competition that undercut the efforts of Black workers to move up the economic ladder.

The first shift occurred in the 1940s, when southern Black sharecroppers left the fields for northern industry. World War II's tight labor markets and pressure by New Dealers, fueled by a threatened protest march, cracked open blue-collar jobs that had been closed to Black workers. As they moved into unskilled jobs in factories, Black workers scored wage gains but confronted job ceilings and segregated seniority lists. Few Blacks made it into the ranks of skilled workers, particularly in the South, where 48% of all Blacks working in manufacturing were employed. They made up just 3% of all skilled craftsmen in the auto industry; there were only twelve Black craftsmen in southern auto plants (Northrup 1970, pp. 93, 404–405, 448). Black educational gains, the cornerstone of labor market discrimination theory, did not always translate into wage or occupational gains, an indication of rigid job ceilings and competition with White workers. Educated Blacks experienced higher rates of unemployment compared to similarly educated White workers. By comparison, poorly educated Black workers' unemployment rates were almost equal to lower-skilled White workers. Although Black workers made some inroads into White-collar occupations at the time, White workers garnered more of these jobs and, as a result, the occupational gap widened (Brown et al., 2003, pp. 70–73).

African Americans broke open the door to professional, managerial, and skilled blue-collar jobs in the 1960s, the second key change in the structure of labor market competition. Again, tight labor markets and government policies drove this change. Fundamental to this second change in labor markets was the entry of Blacks into the growing number of public sector jobs, mainly in state and local educational institutions and social welfare agencies. Over one-half of Black male college graduates and three-fifths of Black female college graduates worked in the public sector by 1970 (Carnoy 1994, pp. 162–165). Federal affirmative action policies were the driving force behind wage and occupational gains in the private sector. These policies were responsible for desegregating workplaces and equalizing wages in the South (Heckman 1990, pp. 242–246). And they contributed to Black employment gains in the private sector. Jonathan Leonard (1984, p. 151) has concluded that Black employment grew faster than White employment in firms with federal contracts during the 1970s. He estimates that about 7% of Black employment gains in manufacturing and one-third of occupational gains were due to federal affirmative action policies. It is clear that antidiscrimination policies altered the terrain of racial labor market competition. Whites did not lose out, however. Rather, federal policies shifted the demand for Black workers, relative to Whites, and consequently growth in White employment lagged slightly behind that of Blacks (Leonard 1990, pp. 50–51). Both educated middle-class and unskilled low-income Black workers, it should be noted, shared these employment and occupational gains.

Beginning in the 1980s, the structure of labor market competition reversed as manufacturers eliminated skilled blue-collar jobs and moved factories overseas while the Reagan administration rolled back affirmative action policies. In the intensified labor market competition of the decade, Black workers lost ground while White workers gained. Black unemployment increased relative to Whites' and the wage gains of the 1970s were eroded. This was especially true of college-educated Black workers, whose median wages dropped from 80% of White wages to 72%, and who were three times as likely to be unemployed as college-educated White workers. Many low-income Black workers lost the blue-collar jobs they acquired in the 1970s and moved into low-paying service-sector jobs. Low-income White workers were similarly affected, but they were more likely to land in better-paying White-collar jobs. Martin Carnoy's (1994, pp. 95–99) meticulous study of 1980s labor markets found that the proportion of Black and Latino workers in low-paying jobs increased dramatically, while their proportion in high-paying jobs dropped. And after the Reagan administration put the brakes on federal affirmative action policies, the gains made by Black workers in the 1970s evaporated in firms with federal contracts; it no longer made a difference whether Black workers were employed by contractors or non-contractors.

This short history of racial labor market competition belies any notion that labor market discrimination is simply a matter of prejudiced employers treating equally qualified workers differently. Neither the gains nor the losses experienced by Black workers can be explained by their success or failure in getting educated or acquiring necessary job skills. Indeed, at key points—the 1950s and the 1980s—educated Black workers lost out to Whites. A better explanation for these changes is opportunity hoarding. Whites gained relative to Blacks because they were able to rig labor markets in advance and control access by segregating seniority lists, defining required credentials, and otherwise limiting the access of Black workers.

Opportunity hoarding in labor markets has had cumulative effects, embedding racial inequality into the economy. The Black workers who were victimized by segregated seniority lists in pre-civil rights manufacturing firms became chronically unemployed by the 1970s. In the South, Herbert Northrup pointed out, Black workers lost their jobs when the "jobs in which Negroes were concentrated were eliminated and the displaced Negroes were not permitted to bid into or to exercise their seniority in all-white departments" (Northrup 1970, p. 418). The automation of northern industries had similar consequences for Black workers (Sugrue 1996, p. 144).

THE COLOR LINE IN THE WELFARE STATE

White control of labor markets is only one part of the story of how racial inequality became embedded in the economy. The cumulative effects of opportunity hoarding were reinforced by public policy decisions beginning with the New Deal; these policies augmented Whites' labor market advantages and compounded Blacks' disadvantages. Although it is true that African Americans and other racial minorities benefited from the New Deal and the Great Society, federal social policy also did as much to reinforce racial hierarchies as it did to promote racial equality. One should not assume that federal policies benefited only Blacks and Latinos or were colorblind. White Americans received more from the New Deal than a measure of economic security; federal social policies laid the foundation for the creation of the post-World War II middle class. And many of these same policies excluded Blacks or severely restricted their future opportunities.

When the Depression ended, most Whites were living in poverty; almost two-thirds of them lived below the poverty line. In contrast, 93% of Black families lived in poverty. During the American postwar economic boom, poverty rates dropped precipitously for both groups. But the poverty gap between Blacks and Whites actually widened, growing from 1.44 in 1939 to 4.07 in 1973 when the boom was over. By the late twentieth century, Blacks were still three times as likely to be in poverty as non-Hispanic Whites, even though they made enormous income gains as a result of the civil rights movement. The median Black family income more than doubled between 1960 and 2001, narrowing the relative income gap between Black and White families. Over the same period, however, the *absolute* median income gap grew by 55%, and Whites' net worth increased dramatically while Blacks' net worth stagnated.[8] There are many reasons why Whites experienced substantially greater economic gains than Blacks, but a critical ingredient in their success was the enormous boost they received from federal social policies. These policies both helped Whites up the economic ladder and prevented them from falling off. For African Americans, on the other hand, federal social policies magnified and reproduced the negative consequences of labor market discrimination and contributed to Black disaccumulation.

In this regard, veterans' and housing policies were decisive. The G.I. Bill was a powerful vehicle of upward mobility for White working-class men. The postwar readjustment allowances enabled them to move from working-class jobs to skilled blue-collar jobs, managerial positions, and into the professions. Almost one-third of those veterans who received a readjustment allowance landed a professional or managerial position. Indeed, by the 1950s, veterans had higher incomes, better housing, and more wealth than non-veterans. Black veterans, however, got the short end of the stick in the G.I. Bill sweepstakes. Rampant labor market discrimination meant that Black veterans' educational benefits rarely translated into good jobs. This was most apparent in the South, where almost two-thirds of African Americans lived. Southerners received a disproportionate share of veterans' benefits, but returning Black soldiers, who made up one-third of all southern veterans, got little out of these programs. Blacks were shunted into low-wage, low-skill jobs regardless of their education or skills, while southern White veterans walked away with professional jobs. As a consequence, Black veterans' incomes lagged substantially behind those of White veterans (Brown et al., 2003, pp. 75–77).

Housing subsidies and benefits added to these occupational advantages, as Whites, it is well known, were the main recipients of subsidized veterans' mortgages and federally guaranteed home loans. Together the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and the Veterans Administration (VA) funded over one-third of all mortgages between 1945 and 1960, fueling White families' exodus to the suburbs. Blacks received just 3% of FHA and VA loans, which made up 30% of all Black mortgages. Whites depended far more on federally subsidized and guaranteed loans: the FHA or the VA underwrote 42% of Whites' mortgages. This disparity was produced by FHA rules that redlined Black neighborhoods and allocated federal mortgage money to White suburbs. Moreover, those Black families fortunate enough to receive an FHA or VA loan, could only use it to buy segregated housing. Things did not change much even when federal housing policy was aimed at Blacks in the 1960s. Blacks got more

FHA loans, but mainly to purchase or rehabilitate homes located in rigidly segregated neighborhoods. Many of the new housing policies enacted by Congress during the 1960s preserved ghetto walls instead of dismantling them (Brown 1999, p. 286; Quadagno 1994, pp. 104–115).

Federal housing policy was only one tool among many that propped up segregation. Southerners, in particular, used federal funds to build segregated hospitals, schools, and other facilities. Until 1964, many federal grant programs explicitly allowed distribution of federal funds to "separate but equal" facilities. By the time these stipulations were declared unconstitutional, southerners had managed to build eighty-nine segregated medical complexes that provided southern Whites with the best medical facilities the federal government could buy. Meanwhile, African Americans did without. In the North, businessmen teamed up with state and local politicians to build their own version of racial apartheid in big cities. Local politicians latched on to public housing as a way to move Black residents from prime downtown properties slated for "renewal." Because Whites violently resisted integration, most public housing was built in Black neighborhoods, often on abandoned industrial sites. Segregation deepened in northern cities as a result and the consequences were predictable (Brown et al., 2003, pp. 78–79, 92–93; Hirsch 1983).

These policies produced cumulative results, which augmented White incomes while simultaneously disinvesting in inner-city communities. This is a prime example of how disaccumulation reversed Black economic progress and sustained racial inequality. Veterans programs and federal housing policies insured that Whites would accumulate wealth or substantial housing equity, if nothing else. A government survey investigating fraud in veterans' pensions discovered that the net worth of one-fifth of the men receiving a non-service-connected pension exceeded $10,000, no minor sum in the 1950s (Brown 1999, pp. 182–183). At the same time, income and wealth was sucked out of Black neighborhoods in big cities. Private investors followed the lead of the FHA and withdrew mortgage money from federally redlined neighborhoods. Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton comment that "the lack of loan capital flowing into minority areas made it impossible for owners to sell their homes, leading to steep declines in property values and a pattern of disrepair, deterioration, vacancy, and abandonment" (Massey and Denton, 1993, p. 55). Employers moved jobs out of these neighborhoods, and doctors and hospitals, important inner-city employers, followed Whites to the suburbs during the 1960s and 1970s. Hospital closings and relocations were concentrated mainly in Black neighborhoods (Smith 1999, p. 176).

White workers and their families are also better protected than Blacks or Latinos by the safety net of unemployment assistance and social transfers when the economy turns sour or when people fall on hard times. Even though Black workers of all ages and educational levels are two to three times more likely to be unemployed than White workers, they are less likely to receive unemployment insurance. In 1996, for example, only 23% of the Black unemployed received unemployment benefits, compared to 38% of unemployed White workers. Moreover, federal income transfers do more to lift Whites out of poverty than to help Blacks, which is another reason why the racial poverty gap has gone more or less unchanged. These transfers reduce Black poverty by about one-third while reducing it for Whites by one-half (Brown et al., 2003, pp. 98–100). Black and Latino workers are also far more likely to not have health insurance—between 2001 and 2003, an average 20% of Blacks and 33% of Latinos did not have health insurance coverage of any kind for the full year. In contrast, only 11% of non-Hispanic Whites were without health insurance during the same period (U.S. Census Bureau 2004, p. 18, Table 6).

These disparities in benefits reflect the extent to which racial stratification is embedded in the U.S. welfare state. They represent a pattern in which people of color disproportionately receive limited means-tested benefits or are excluded altogether. Whites, on the other hand, are more likely to receive inclusive, better-paying social insurance benefits. This racially skewed distribution of social welfare benefits originated in two key provisions of the 1935 Social Security Act. First, most Black workers were initially excluded from the New Deal's social insurance programs when Congress excluded agricultural and domestic workers. This provision became less important when African American workers shifted from agriculture to manufacturing employment during the war, although Black women, most of whom worked as domestics, were statutorily excluded from unemployment compensation until the late 1960s. Consequently, welfare was typically their only alternative to severe poverty.

More detrimental to Black workers, however, are the wage-related eligibility requirements of social insurance, an apparently race-neutral provision. The architects of New Deal social insurance programs installed wage-related eligibility to reward long-term stable employment and exclude intermittently employed workers, whom they regarded as "malingerers." What they really did, however, was penalize the victims of labor market discrimination. Because Black workers receive lower wages relative to White workers and experience more frequent and longer spells of unemployment, Black workers are not only disproportionately excluded from social insurance, but they also receive lower benefit payments. For example, social security payments to Black workers are just 68% of payments to White workers, partly, we think, because of wage discrimination. In short, the wage-related eligibility provisions of social insurance reproduce the results of labor market discrimination in the welfare state (Brown et al., 2003, p. 99; Lieberman 1998, chapter 5).

As this historical narrative suggests, federal social policies have combined with White control of labor markets to promote White accumulation of economic advantages while contributing to Black disaccumulation through segregation and disinvestment. One can see the net effects of these social and political processes by comparing White wealth to Black poverty. Wealth, not just income, is vital. Dalton Conley (1999) has shown that wealth translates into educational and labor market advantages, and allows people to ride out troubled economic times. Differences in college graduation rates between Black and White students, for example, can be traced directly to differences in home equity. Wealth is also crucial for parents' ability to pass on occupational status (Conley 1999, pp. 72–73; Oliver and Shapiro, 1997, pp. 162–163).

White families have amassed substantially more wealth than African Americans, mainly because of their access to high-wage, high-status jobs, and to governmental policies that aided home ownership. White median net worth is ten times that of Blacks. Whites from all income quintiles, even those at the bottom of the income distribution, have a higher net worth than African Americans. In 2000, for example, the median net worth of White families in the bottom income quintile was $24,000; the median net worth of African American families in that income bracket was $57. On balance, African Americans possess fewer financial assets than Whites, and those assets are, on average, one-third the value of White financial assets. The major asset owned by Blacks is their home, which accounts for 61% of their net worth. For Whites, however, home equity is just 31% of their net worth (U.S. Census Bureau 2003, pp. 14–15, Tables H and I). But here is the rub: the median value of Whites' home equity is more than one and one-half times that of Blacks' home equity. The wages of discrimination and the legacy of two generations of federal housing policy are readily apparent in these figures. Even though Blacks made gains in home ownership in the 1990s, they gained very little wealth. Between 1995 and 2000 Whites' net worth rose by 62%, but Blacks' net worth increased by just 6% (U.S. Census Bureau 2001a, p. 3, Tables G, H, and I; Oliver and Shapiro, 1997, p. 106).

Because Whites get a greater share of their income from salaries, and can rely on accumulated wealth, they have a wider array of economic opportunities. Even poor Whites have options that elude poor Blacks. In this respect, African Americans, including middle-class Blacks, face a very different set of economic choices. The same policies that contributed to the accumulation of White wealth also facilitated segregation and encouraged public and private disinvestment in Black communities, both of which destroyed jobs and businesses and curtailed public services. As a result, public investment in inner cities has been stagnant or decreasing for most of the last thirty years, leaving many poor African Americans with few real economic opportunities other than low-wage jobs and, until recently, cash transfers. Given the long-run effects of accumulation and disaccumulation, it is not surprising that fewer Blacks are upwardly mobile than Whites. Tom Hertz's (2005) meticulous statistical analysis reveals a substantial mobility gap between Blacks and Whites. He reports that 17% of all Whites born into families in the bottom 10% of the income distribution failed to move up the economic ladder. Among Blacks, however, 42% of those at the bottom remained there (Hertz 2005, p. 164). The theory of accumulation and disaccumulation likely explains the origin of this mobility gap.

While Whites can rely on accumulated wealth to ride out economic trouble, Blacks must turn to federal transfer payments. Federal means-tested cash transfers like welfare and food stamps may do less than social insurance to lift people out of poverty, but for the Black poor they are a life preserver. Although these transfers do little to offset the enormous racial imbalance in salary income and wealth, they do raise the median income of African American households from 68% to 72% of Whites' median income (U.S. Census Bureau 2001b, p. 15, Table H).[9] Poor African Americans would be worse off without these means-tested transfers, but they pay a high price. Unlike social insurance, which Americans consider a legitimate payment owed to hard-working people, means-tested transfers are profoundly stigmatizing. In debates about welfare and poverty, critics have consistently portrayed Black women as lazy and promiscuous, casting Blacks as the chief icon for the undeserving poor. Those Whites who strongly favor cutting welfare payments to the poor are also convinced that African Americans are lazy (Gilens 1999, pp. 67–69; Soss et al., 2003).

THE FAILURE OF EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

African Americans look at the last forty years of American history with a profound sense of disillusionment. A large majority believes that racial equality is a pipe dream that will not be attained in their lifetime. Many White Americans, on the other hand, think that Blacks have already achieved a large measure of equality, and if they have not, it is their own fault. Most Whites do not see racial inequality; they see "welfare mothers" or "affirmative action babies"—a generation of African Americans who "with the connivance of government . . . take what they have not earned" (Kinder and Mendelberg, 2000, p. 61). As our analysis indicates, however, it is not possible to account for durable racial inequality in terms of individual behavior, whether it be raw bigotry or Black irresponsibility. Focusing exclusively on individuals obscures the real causes of durable racial inequality and makes it possible for White Americans to sincerely believe that their economic successes have nothing to do with their race; that whatever they achieved, they earned by dint of individual effort. The focus on individuals, which lies at the heart of the new racial orthodoxy, hides one of America's most profound historical secrets: the advantages that Whites gained through control of labor markets and federal social policies that favored Whites were possible because they never competed on a level playing field. Durable racial inequality for Blacks and Latinos is the price paid for the accumulated economic advantages of White America.

Our analysis raises questions about the viability of the extant conception of equality of opportunity. After the civil rights revolution, most White Americans assumed that equality of opportunity policies would single-handedly undo the legacy of slavery and Jim Crow. But Lyndon Johnson's Great Society linked antidiscrimination laws with individual rehabilitation—the acquisition of job and educational skills—to remedy Black oppression. Thus this notion of equality of opportunity does not engage the harsh realities of durable racial inequality. Greater investments in K–12 schooling or other forms of human capital do not deal with the historically accumulated causes of racial subordination and inequality. The problem is not whether the victims of discrimination can be made fit for labor markets. Rather, it is whether the "comprehensive nature of discrimination . . . portends exclusion of an entire racial/ethnic group from this nation's future" (Darity 1996, p. 113).

The Great Society's conception of equality of opportunity, which derives from the New Deal, is flawed. When New Dealers first advanced the idea of equality of opportunity to justify public policies in the 1930s, they initially assumed that equality of opportunity depended on changing the balance of power between the weak and the strong, and providing individuals with a measure of social justice. This justification changed, however, with the creation of the rural relief policies of the Resettlement Administration and the Farm Security Administration. These policies were calculated to take "the landless, homeless, cashless farmer," as Aubrey Williams, a prominent New Dealer, described the policy, and "set him up with the nucleus of a self-perpetuating subsistence" (Williams 1934). This justification for New Deal rural relief policies replaced "antiprivilege egalitarianism" with the notion of "rehabilitation." When Roosevelt yoked equality of opportunity to rural rehabilitation, the policy no longer justified an assault on privilege. Instead, the focus was on uplifting poor Black and White sharecroppers.

A similar ideological transformation occurred in the 1960s. The civil rights movement instigated and led the assault on Whites' Jim Crow privileges, inspiring demands for inclusion and equality of opportunity among many citizens—for not only African Americans, but also Latinos, women, gays, and the disabled. Yet the Great Society proposed to address the legacy of slavery and Jim Crow by turning Black migrants into self-sufficient workers with educational and job training programs. Although conventional wisdom is that Lyndon Johnson's Howard University speech defined the distinction between equality of opportunity and equality of results, he said nothing more than that equality of opportunity depended on policies that would rehabilitate the victims of Jim Crow. Instead of severing any link between equality of opportunity and rehabilitation, Johnson integrated the two ideas into a policy agenda.

We do not doubt that policies designed to increase education and job skills are needed today, just as they were needed in the 1960s. But, standing alone, rehabilitation is not equality of opportunity. Disconnected from antiprivilege egalitarianism, rehabilitation ignores the structural-historical obstacles to equality of opportunity policy.[10] As our account of durable racial inequality suggests, it is not possible to eliminate racial inequality without public policies that will undo the legacy of White accumulation and Black disaccumulation. A meaningful conception of equality of opportunity therefore requires substantial redistribution of resources and jobs.

There is another problem. The idea of rehabilitation assumes that African Americans and Latinos are in a subordinated position because of individual inadequacies rather than systemic racial subordination and exclusion. This understanding of equality of opportunity equates race with deficiency. Thus, the failure of the Great Society is attributed to the failure of individual African Americans, Latinos, or poor women, not to political or policy failures. The idea that "each [person] should have equal rights and opportunities to develop his own talents and virtues" judges those who do not succeed harshly, especially when those opportunities derive from public generosity (Schaar 1981, p. 193). The seductiveness of the idea that persistent racial inequality is located primarily in the individual failure of African Americans is due in large part, we think, to Whites' belief that Africans Americans have failed to take advantage of the equality of opportunity provided by civil rights legislation. As a result, the core American value of individualism has become racialized—Whites' antipathy to Blacks or to color-conscious policies is now justified through the language of individualism.[11] Indeed, Whites, who think they have succeeded on their own, define themselves in opposition to Blacks who, they believe, do not share their values. Thus Whites identify themselves as successful individuals who are "not Black." While seeing "blacks' ties to the welfare state as being based on 'dependence' and 'individual failure'" may make White Americans feel good about themselves, this belief only "sustains whites' illusions about their own independence and obscures the advantages they receive from federal social policies" (Brown et al., 2003, p. 103).

The rehabilitation framework does not successfully engage or challenge durable racial inequality. Thus, if equality of opportunity policies are to have a significant impact on reducing racial inequality in the twenty-first century, the idea of rehabilitation must be dropped and the original attack on privilege reasserted.

Corresponding author: Professor Michael Brown, Department of Politics, University of California, Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz, CA 95064. E-mail: popcorn@ucsc.edu

NOTES

1. For representative statements of the new orthodoxy see Sleeper (1997), Jacoby (1998), D'Souza (1995), Steele (1990), and, perhaps most notorious, Thernstrom and Thernstrom (1997). These authors represent a diverse set of political positions. Sleeper is a self-identified liberal who believes that the "reality of social class divisions . . . are arguably more fundamental than racial divisions in perpetuating social injustice." D'Souza, Jacoby, Steele, and the Thernstroms are conservatives.
2. Sniderman's hypothesis has been the subject of rigorous empirical studies, which conclude that the evidence for the political principles argument is quite weak. For empirical critiques, see Kinder and Mendelberg (2000); Sears, Henry, and Kosterman (2000); Bobo (2000); Sidanius et al. (2000).
3. See, for example, the "Washington Post/Kaiser Foundation/Harvard University Racial Attitudes Survey," *Washington Post*, July 11, 2001.
4. Loury aims to abandon any explanation based on prejudice, but his approach remains anchored in individual racial beliefs. He claims he is interested in stigmatized images and the meaning attached to those images, not racial prejudice. But the distinction he draws between inferred meanings and prejudiced attitudes is very elusive. See Loury (2002, pp. 58–59, 73–74, 88).
5. In fact, the empirical evidence shows that many Whites are unwilling to live next door to African Americans. See Bobo and Zubrinsky (1996).
6. Even when access to health care is comparable, African Americans are diagnosed at a later stage and are 1.2 times more likely to die of breast cancer than Whites. See Yood et al. (1999).

7. See also Roithmayr (2004), who uses the economic theory of monopoly to develop an explanation of the origins and consequences of residential segregation that is similar to the idea of opportunity hoarding.
8. The absolute median-income gap stood at $20,469 in 2001, and compared to non-Hispanic Whites it is even larger—in 2001 it was $23,730. Moreover, the relative median income gap between Blacks and non-Hispanic Whites was 58%, a ratio that has remained unchanged for thirty years. U.S. Census Bureau (2002, Table F-5).
9. Means-tested transfers also raise the incomes of Latino families relative to Whites.
10. Both the Farm Security Administration and the "War on Poverty" inspired broad opposition and ultimately failed despite justifications based on core values of American liberalism. For an analysis, see Brown (2002).
11. David Sears and his colleagues conclude that the "conjunction of being black and violating fundamental individualistic values seems to be the lightning rod that attracts opposition to liberal racial policies." See Sears, Henry, and Kosterman (2000, p. 113).

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