Race in the American Mind: From the Moynihan Report to the Obama Candidacy

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In 1965 Daniel Patrick Moynihan observed that the "racist virus in the American blood stream still afflicts us." The authors assess the tenor of racial attitudes in white and black America across the ensuing four decades. Their core conclusion is paradoxical. On one hand, a massive positive change in social norms regarding race has taken place that dislodged Jim Crow ideology and now calls for integration and equality as the rules that should guide black-white interaction. On the other hand, negative stereotypes of African Americans, cultural (not structural or discrimination-based) accounts of black disadvantage, and deep polarization over the appropriate social policy response to racial inequality yield an ongoing legacy of tension and division. The authors link these trends in attitudes to broader changes in society (i.e., racial segregation, job discrimination, rates of intermarriage), patterns of intergroup and interpersonal behavior, and national political dynamics.

Keywords: Daniel Patrick Moynihan; racial attitudes; stereotypes; segregation; discrimination; inequality; Barack Obama; Colin Powell

The Moynihan Report was written at a time of enormous social tumult around race. The civil rights movement was approaching its zenith. Black activists had already pushed successfully for the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Demonstrations, marches, and protests were the stuff of regular news coverage. Most Americans ranked civil rights as one of the most important problems facing the nation. As fraught as the issue of race was in early 1965, it is worth recalling that the Moynihan Report precedes by many months the Selma, Alabama, protests that would help propel passage of the Voting Rights Act later that year, as well as the explosive Watts riots of 1965 and the rise to great prominence of the "black power" slogan and so-called "black militants" in 1966 and thereafter.

The report itself became embroiled in bitter and intense controversy. Its attempt to bring careful social science thinking and evidence to bear on public policy and to focus our attention

on how to improve the material living circumstances of African Americans became lost in acrimonious challenges to its depiction of the state and internal dynamics of many black families. As the report acknowledged, the issues were changing from a core concern with basic civil rights protections to a new focus on equal opportunities and life chances. It likewise noted that black America's demand for full inclusion was not going to be silenced or curbed. And yet, the report became a lightning rod for contention.

It is not our purpose here to rehearse or parse these well-worn debates. However, Moynihan himself was well aware of the issue that hews close to our current preoccupations. As he wrote in the first page of the report as to why further progress for blacks would be difficult: "The racist virus in the American blood stream still afflicts us: Negroes will encounter serious personal prejudice for at least another generation."

Our purpose is to analyze, if you will, this virus. We seek not to provide an assessment of those times, the report itself, or its legacy. We focus instead on one critical aspect of the fundamental social context in which the report was written and in which its legacy has played out: namely, how Americans—especially but not exclusively white and black Americans—think and feel about the matter of race. Our main argument here will be twofold.

First and most centrally, we offer a story of complexity. Despite the tendency in lay discourse and much social science work to rely on simple phrases or sweeping characterizations, "racist America" versus "the end of racism," we believe attitudes and beliefs about race have long been internally complex and have only become more so since the time of the Moynihan Report. It is in some respects misleading to ask whether people are more or less prejudiced than in the past, since the answer often depends on the domain of life, the specific social context, as well as other individual factors at play, not to mention the exact standard for assessing "prejudice" one chooses to impose. Second, and without apology or excuse, we are comfortable asserting that dynamics, conditions, and patterns of belief and behavior remain that should trouble us as a nation and that continue to make the terms *prejudice* and *racism* important and deeply meaningful facets of the American social, cultural, and political landscape.

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In a way, the tone we wish to set is that of a recent editorial by economist and *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman. In referring to the 2007 events in Jena, Louisiana, and subsequent protests he wrote, "The reality is that things haven't changed nearly as much as people think. Racial tension, especially in the South, has never gone away, and has never stopped being important. And race remains one of the defining factors in American politics" (Krugman 2007). And yet, just a few paragraphs later, Krugman declared, "It would be wrong to suggest that the nation has made no progress. Racism, though not gone, is greatly diminished: both opinion polls and daily experience suggests that we are becoming a more tolerant, open society" (Krugman 2007). Both statements are true. We hope to flesh out a way to understand these contradictory claims.

Racial Attitudes in America: Progress and Stagnation

The second half of the twentieth century was a period of "steady and sweeping movement toward general endorsement of the principles of racial equality and integration" (Bobo 2001, 294, 269). By principles of racial equality and integration, we are referring to those questions in surveys that ask Americans about the basic rules that should govern black-white interactions (Schuman et al. 1997): in essence, such questions as whether we as a society should segregate or integrate on the basis of race, and whether we should actively discriminate or treat all without regard to racial background. While blacks have a long tradition of endorsing principles of racial egalitarianism and integration, this has not been the case for a substantial segment of the white population. By the early 1970s, however, the vast majority of whites endorsed equal access to employment and the integration of public transportation. The positive shift in white attitudes toward public school integration took longer, but by the mid-1990s, whites showed near-universal endorsement of this principle as well. Despite these positive changes, whites continued to show less support for equality of access to housing and remained particularly opposed to interracial marriage. Together, these trends suggest that the greatest shifts in whites' racial attitudes occurred with respect to the most public, impersonal domains of society (Bobo 2001; Schuman et al. 1997).

Overall, however, these improvements in whites' racial attitudes are sweeping and robust, illustrating a favorable shift "in fundamental norms with regard to race" (Bobo 2001, 273). Despite frequent forecasts of an impending "white backlash," the available national sample survey data for the post–World War II period yield no real evidence of a turn backward at the level of racial principles. Faced with broad evidence of such a steady and socially pervasive change—across regions of the country, age groups, and educational levels—Schuman and colleagues (1997) concluded that

> what has changed over the past half century is the normative definition of appropriate relations between blacks and whites. Whereas discrimination against, and enforced segregation of, black Americans were taken for granted by most white Americans as recently as the World War II years, today the norm holds that black Americans deserve

the same treatment as whites, and in addition, that racial integration in all public spheres of life is a desirable goal. (Pp. 311-12)

Unfortunately, this real racial progress is juxtaposed with clear and convincing evidence of persisting racial tensions: a substantial portion of the white population still holds negative stereotypes of blacks and other minorities, and whites and minority groups have decidedly different views about the persistence of racial discrimination as well as the causes of racial inequality in American society. These trends no doubt contribute to the persistence of feelings of social distance between whites and racial minority groups, in addition to feelings of alienation among blacks, Latinos, and Asians (Bobo and Hutchings 1996; Bobo and Zubrinsky 1996; Hutchings et al. 2006).

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Negative racial stereotypes and beliefs about racial inequality

Although the proportion of whites who negatively stereotype blacks and other minorities has declined significantly, negative racial stereotypes remain the norm in white America. Between half and three-quarters of whites in the United States still express some degree of negative stereotyping of blacks and Latinos. A smaller share of whites expresses negative stereotypes of Asians (between one-tenth and two-fifths). An important change in modern racial stereotyping is the way that many whites express their views. In previous eras, many whites categorically asserted that blacks and other minorities were biologically inferior; it was socially acceptable to say so. Now, however, racial and ethnic stereotypes are typically expressed more in terms of degrees of difference, rather than as categorical group distinctions. Critically, these perceptions rest upon more cultural and volitional explanations of minority group inferiority. For example, rather than viewing blacks as less intelligent, one might assert that they tend to be lazy and lack motivation, or that their group subculture is deficient. Yet, even perception of small, qualified differences between groups can become the basis for consequential patterns of discrimination and the maintenance of group social distance (Jackman 1994). Further complicating the issue, whites are not alone in their proclivity for negative racial stereotyping—racial minority groups also hold negative

stereotypes, both of whites and of each other (Bobo 2001; Bobo and Massagli 2002; Charles 2006).

Another area of concern is a persisting racial divide in beliefs about both the prevalence of racial discrimination and the causes of racial inequality. On one side of the perceptual divide are whites, who are increasingly less inclined to believe that blacks and other minorities face structural barriers to upward mobility. Rather, if blacks cannot get ahead, whites increasingly blame blacks themselves for a lack of effort, motivation, or will (Bobo 2001; Hunt 2007; Kluegel 1990). Between 1977 and 2004, the proportion of whites fully embracing this perspective increased from 21 to 27 percent; alternatively, the share of whites asserting that persisting racial discrimination is the main cause of inequality remained constant at 20 percent during this period; 12.6 percent of whites said access to a good education is the primary barrier to blacks' upward mobility in 2004, nearly double the figure in 1977 (Hunt 2007, 401). Similarly, between one-fifth and one-quarter of whites believe that blacks and Latinos face "a lot" of discrimination in the labor market; even fewer (less than 10 percent) believe that labor market discrimination is a problem for Asians (Bobo 2001, 281-82).

On the other side of this perceptual divide are blacks—as well as Latinos and, to a lesser degree, Asians—who tend to view racial discrimination as systemic, pervasive, and therefore deeply implicated in minority disadvantage. Upwards of two-thirds of blacks as well as 60 percent of Latinos believe that structural barriers inhibit their groups' upward mobility, compared to only 10 percent of Asians (Bobo 2001; Bobo and Suh 2000; Zubrinsky and Bobo 1996). Adding complexity to these trends, however, is evidence of increasing conservatism among blacks: between 1977 and 2004, the share of blacks asserting purely motivation-based explanations for their group's inequality nearly doubled, from 6 to 11 percent. During this same period, those asserting purely structural explanations for black disadvantage declined by roughly a third, to 41 percent (Hunt 2007, 401).[1] Furthermore, research by Hunt (2007) reveals a clear tendency among Latinos to "occupy a distinct middle ground," falling between whites and blacks in their support for the individual and structural explanations for minority disadvantage (see also Bobo 2001).

The implementation gap

The persistence of antiminority stereotypes combined with these clear-cut differences in opinions about racial discrimination and inequality affect political attitudes in meaningful ways. This is especially true regarding support for progressive social policies. Specifically, Kluegel and Smith (1982) find that the more one's beliefs about the fundamental causes of racial inequality are rooted in cultural or volitional deficiencies (and less in structural barriers), the less likely one is to support government intervention aimed at eradicating racial disparities.

Support for progressive social policies also varies by the type of integration involved: following trends in the liberalization of whites' racial attitudes detailed at the outset, whites' support for intervention tends to be highest when targeting the most public and impersonal domains of societal life (e.g., access to public

transportation). Alternatively, efforts to integrate more personal spaces like neighborhoods and schools are more likely to face resistance from whites. Thus, in the early 1970s, the vast majority of whites favored integrating public transportation and believed that blacks should have equal opportunities in employment. As recently as 1988, however, only half of whites expressed support for a law barring racial discrimination in the sale or rental of housing (Bobo 2001; Schuman et al. 1997).[2]

Similar patterns emerge regarding affirmative action. While a majority of whites in the twenty-first century embrace racial equality in principle and believe in increasing the human capital characteristics of disadvantaged groups, their increasing inclination to blame blacks themselves (or Latinos) for their disadvantaged status results in what we call an *implementation gap*: whites are increasingly unwilling to support public policies such as affirmative action that they believe offer unfair advantages to a group of people they believe are unwilling to help themselves (Bobo 2001; Schuman et al. 1997). Blacks, in contrast, tend to express support for a broader range of affirmative action policies. This is in part because these policies are viewed as compensation for past discrimination, but also because such initiatives are perceived to represent important strategies for combating ongoing discrimination (Schuman et al. 1997). Nonetheless, both whites and blacks shy away from policies involving quotas (Bobo and Kluegel 1993; Kluegel and Smith 1982; Steeh and Krysan 1996).

Ethno-racial alienation

An important though troubling consequence of racial group differences in beliefs about discrimination and the sources of inequality is that these perceptual differences also contribute to feelings of social distance and alienation between various racial/ethnic groups (Bobo 2001; Bobo and Hutchings 1996; Bobo and Zubrinsky 1996; Charles 2006). One understudied dimension has been characterized as racial or ethnic alienation. Interest in the sense of racial alienation grew out of the wave of research following the "race riots" of the late 1960s when there was a more intensive focus on the thinking and feelings of African Americans (Schuman and Hatchett 1974). Little in the way of national reliable trend data is available. Previous research has pointed to several potentially important patterns. Substantial fractions of the African American population affirm the idea that blacks as a group simply have not been treated fairly in American society. Some evidence suggests that dimensions of this alienation may have risen during the course of the 1990s (see Bobo 2001).

Moreover, racial/ethnic alienation falls into a clear rank order, with African Americans most likely to express such views, followed by Hispanics, and next Asians; least likely are non-Hispanic whites (see Bobo 2001, 286). Fuller multivariate examination of such sentiments suggests that these views are not much affected by socioeconomic status indicators such as education or income, but instead seem to capture collective sentiments rooted in distinctive racial-ethnic historical and social experiences (Bobo and Hutchings 1996; Hutchings et al. 2006).

Racial Attitudes in Core Domains of Life

To this point we have mainly emphasized trends and patterns in popular racial attitudes. To be sure, this is an important matter, but how might these attitudes influence group relations in specific domains of social life and in terms of more concrete social behaviors? There is a long history of debate over the link between attitudes and behavior. We do not attempt a full examination of that debate here, but we do examine how racial attitudes affect such critical domains of life as access to housing and to jobs? How might these attitudes affect close interpersonal relations? What role do they may play in our political lives?

Housing and segregation

We are not as segregated as we were in the late 1960s. Toward the close of that decade, the average level of racial residential segregation was 85. This means that 85 percent of the black (or white) population would have had to move to achieve a completely even, integrated mixture of the population in the United States (Massey and Denton 1993). During this period, more than half of whites in national surveys (56 percent) agreed with the statement that "white people have a right to keep Negroes out of their neighborhoods if they want to, and Negroes should respect that right." The most recent national data show the average level of residential segregation to be about 62, a 23-point decline.[3] Similarly, the number of whites who agree with the attitude statement about keeping blacks out of their neighborhoods fell below 20 percent in the mid-1990s and continues to edge downward.

Forty years later, however, blacks in twenty-nine U.S. metropolitan areas—home to 40 percent of the total black population—experience "extreme, multidimensional, and cumulative residential segregation" (Denton 1994, 49). Equally troubling is that this is nearly double the number of hypersegregated cities on record in 1980.[4] Throughout the twentieth century, blacks were unique in this experience, which contrasts sharply with the more moderate (and temporary) segregation experienced by other groups (Denton 1994; Massey and Denton 1993). According to new analysis by Iceland and Wilkes (2004), Latinos in both Los Angeles and New York are also experiencing hypersegregation from whites. In general, though, both Latinos and Asians are less segregated from whites than blacks are, although both groups have become more segregated since 1980 as immigration from Asia and Latin America skyrocketed (Charles 2006). There is good reason to suspect that the racial attitudes detailed above play an important role in maintaining residentially segregated neighborhoods.

The institutional practices that created racially segregated neighborhoods—redlining, restrictive covenants, blockbusting—were outlawed by the Fair Housing Act in 1968. Yet a growing body of research finds the persistence of more subtle forms of racial discrimination in the housing market (Bobo 1989; Charles 2006; Cutler, Glaeser, and Vigdor 1999; Yinger 1995). Since the mid-1950s, audit studies have been extremely valuable in detecting these more subtle forms of housing

market discrimination.[5] Both national- and local-level studies suggest that racial discrimination continued to be a dominant feature of the housing market during the 1980s (Galster 1990). In a review of fifty local studies, Galster (1992) concluded that blacks and Latinos suffered discriminatory treatment in half of their interactions with real estate agents and landlords. This finding was confirmed by evidence from the 1989 HUD-sponsored Housing Discrimination Study (HDS). Discriminatory treatment took many forms, including differential access to information about housing units, special rental incentives, and outright denial (being told the unit is no longer available). Geographic steering was also quite common: for every four visits to a real estate agent, black and Latino home-seekers were steered away from predominantly white areas 40 and 28 percent of the time, respectively. Whites, on the other hand, were often steered away from racially mixed communities. Both types of steering are prohibited by law (Yinger 1995).

Ten years later, results from the 2000 HDS send mixed signals regarding the persistence of discrimination in the housing market. Both blacks and Latinos received less unfavorable treatment than in the previous study; however, steering of black home-seekers away from predominantly white neighborhoods increased (there was no significant change in steering for Latinos) (Turner et al. 2002). Racial attitudes are in play here to the extent that individual agents and/or landlords act on their own negative racial attitudes or the perceived attitudes of the communities they serve.

At the individual level, members of racial/ethnic groups differ significantly with regard to both the meaning and preferred levels of racial integration. Whites, blacks, Latinos, and Asians all exhibit preferences for both meaningful integration and a substantial coethnic presence; however, preferences for same-race neighbors are not uniform across groups. Interestingly, whites exhibit the strongest preference for same-race neighbors, blacks the weakest. At the extreme are preferences for entirely same-race neighborhoods. This option is chosen by roughly 12 percent of whites and 3 to 4 percent of blacks and native-born Latinos; less than 1 percent of native-born Asians prefer entirely same-race neighborhoods.[6] The average white person prefers a neighborhood that is just over half white; this represents what whites mean by "integrated." For blacks and native-born Latinos, an integrated neighborhood is roughly two-fifths same-race; native-born Asians prefer a neighborhood that is about one-third same-race. Equally important, preferences vary by the race of potential neighbors and highlight a commonly understood rank-ordering of out-groups. Whites are always the most desirable out-group and blacks are always the least desirable. Thus, 20 percent of whites exclude blacks entirely from their neighborhoods, as do 15 percent of native-born Asians and 19 percent of native-born Latinos (Charles 2006).[7]

Active racial prejudice—negative racial stereotypes, feelings of social distance, and perceptions of racial group competition—is the primary factor driving preferences for neighborhood racial integration, and prejudice is therefore implicated in the persistence of racially segregated communities. The relationship between racial attitudes and preferences for neighborhood racial integration is strongest among whites, but it is also a key component of minority-group preferences. Minority groups' concerns about white hostility are also influential in understanding their

preferences for white neighbors—above and beyond traditional measures of prejudice. Moreover, neighborhood racial composition preferences are not at all tied to perceptions of racial/ethnic groups as economically disadvantaged or to neutral ethnocentrism as has been claimed (Bobo and Zubrinsky 1996; Charles 2003, 2006; Emerson, Chai, and Yancey 2001; Krysan 2002). Indeed, new research by Krysan and Bader (2007) shows that these clearly racial concerns are influential independent of any efforts to avoid economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. Finally, credible evidence indicates that our preferences regarding the racial composition of our neighborhoods are associated with the racial composition of our actual neighborhoods (Charles 2006; Ilandfeldt and Scafidi 2002a, 2002b).

The labor market

The facts of racial inequality in the labor market are well known. On average, African Americans continue to earn lower wages and have higher rates of unemployment than whites, even after accounting for objective differences in human capital characteristics and other important factors. In 1950, the average black male earned 52 cents for every dollar earned by a comparable white male; by 1975, black male earnings increased to 76 percent of whites', and this 24-cent gap in wages persists into the present (Holzer 2001; Massey 2007). Similarly, Western (2006) estimates that the jobless rate for black men between twenty-two and thirty years of age has remained constant at about 23 percent since 1980.[8] Differences in the human capital characteristics of whites and blacks (e.g., educational attainment, years of experience) explain part of these disparate outcomes; ample evidence, however, shows persisting racial discrimination in U.S. labor markets. Labor market discrimination takes two forms: *direct* discrimination occurs when employers simply refuse to hire workers from a particular racial/ethnic group; when employers screen and then exclude applicants on the basis of characteristics highly correlated with race (e.g., place of residence or surname), it is *indirect* or statistical discrimination (Massey 2007).

In a now-famous study of Chicago-area employers, Kirschenman and Neckerman (1991) found ample evidence that employers (1) adhered to negative stereotypes of blacks (and to a lesser extent Latinos) as employees and (2) used applicants' race and residential locations as a basis for hiring decisions. Applicants from poor neighborhoods and those living in public housing were perceived as undesirable; the extreme levels of residential segregation in the city all but guaranteed that these applicants were nonwhite. Although the employers interviewed for this study did openly engage in negative stereotyping of blacks and Latinos as workers, they made their hiring decisions without explicit mention of race.

A more recent survey of employers in Atlanta, Boston, Detroit, and Los Angeles also found meaningful evidence of indirect or statistical discrimination against African Americans (Moss and Tilly 2001). While employers did not make blanket statements about different racial groups being better suited to particular jobs, roughly one in five employers surveyed believed that inner-city residents are "poor

performers" and said that their customers were biased (Moss and Tilly 2001, 152-53). Nearly half of the employers found fault with African Americans as employees—often citing a lack of motivation or problems associated with single parenting, welfare dependence, or the inner-city environment (Moss and Tilly 2001, 153).

Two recent, innovative studies provide insights about whether the actual decisions of employers are racially biased. In the first, researchers mailed out resumes applying for more than one thousand jobs advertised in Boston- and Chicago-area newspapers. Two resumes were sent for each job they responded to—one from an applicant with a white-sounding name (e.g., Chad), the other from an applicant with a black-sounding name (e.g., Jamal). Every effort was made to ensure that this was the only difference between "applicants," including the random assignment of residential location to avoid the use of street address as a proxy for race (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004). The results are telling. "Black" applicants were half as likely as "white" applicants to get a callback overall. Moreover, whites saw greater returns to their human capital than blacks did: whites applying for high-skilled jobs had a 14 percent callback rate, but the rate was only 10 percent for low-skilled jobs. For black applicants, skill made almost no difference (each had a callback rate of about 7 percent). A low-skilled white applicant was more sought after than a high-skilled black applicant (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004).

In another study, Pager (2003) conducted an audit study of the labor market in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, which focused on jobs requiring little skill, and found that an applicant's race was more important than having been convicted of a crime. Just more than one-third of whites with no criminal record were called back, as were 17 percent of whites convicted of a nonviolent drug offense. Astonishingly, only 14 percent of blacks with no criminal record received callbacks—a rate lower than for white "criminals." As expected, very few blacks with criminal histories (5 percent) received callbacks. Pager's study included telephone surveys of these same employers regarding their hiring practices that revealed a substantial difference in words and actions: nearly two-thirds of the employers indicated a willingness to hire someone with a criminal record irrespective of the applicant's race (Pager and Quillian 2005). These assertions are clearly not supported by their actions—far fewer employers actually take a chance with a convicted criminal, and the applicant's race clearly influences their willingness to do so.[9]

Together, these results from studies using various methodological techniques in several locations offer compelling evidence of persisting racial discrimination in the labor market. Moreover, results from studies of employers' actual attitudes and behaviors are consistent with African Americans' reports of experiences with discrimination (e.g., Feagin and Sikes 1994).[10]

Close interpersonal relationships

Forty years ago, more than half of whites (56 percent) nationally supported laws against interracial marriage (a much higher percentage of southern whites

compared to whites in the North). This was the sentiment of the "typical white person" a full year after the Supreme Court overturned bans on interracial marriage in the seventeen states where they remained in place. According to data from the 2004-2005 National Politics Study (NPS), 19 percent of whites continue to express opposition to interracial marriage. This trend toward more favorable attitudes is consistent with actual social trends in interracial marriage. In 1960, about one-third of the 150,000 interracial marriages in the United States were black-white. By 2000, the number of black-white interracial couples had grown to 363,000—a sevenfold increase—but this coupling represented only about one-quarter of all interracial unions (1.46 million) (Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies 2001).

Politics and political behavior

Numerous studies examine the impact of race and racial attitudes on voting behavior, basic partisan identifications, and public opinion on an array of public policy questions (Krysan 2000; Hutchings and Valentino 2004; Lee 2008). Several conclusions seem warranted on the basis of this literature. First, racial considerations have played an important role in the shifting partisan alignments in the United States, particularly in the shift of southern white voters from primarily Democratic Party identification to increasingly Republican Party identification and of African Americans to overwhelming Democratic Party identification nationwide (Hutchings and Valentino 2004). Second, candidate race and the degree of a candidate's perceived affinity for the interests and agendas of African Americans can affect who supports a candidate and the level of that support in important ways.

Third, some prominent political issues, of course, have an explicit race-related component, such as race-targeted affirmative action in employment or access to higher education, and raise the likelihood of racial polarization and of prejudice-based effects on relevant policy views. A strong body of research indicates that a variety of antiblack attitudes substantially affect the way many white Americans respond to explicit racial policy questions (Bobo and Kluegel 1993; Kinder and Sanders 1996; Sears et al. 1997). To say that "race matters" is not, however, to say nothing else is relevant. Evidence also shows that conventional nonracial considerations, such as political ideology (conservative versus liberal) and beliefs about the appropriate role of government, also shape views even on explicitly race-related public policy questions (Sniderman and Carmines 1997).

Fourth, much of the way that race matters in politics occurs via a process of "racial coding." Accordingly, certain issues become understood as linked to the interests or demands of African Americans. When a candidate or ballot proposition is linked to black demands, then racial considerations, or underlying racial schema, are likely to figure into voter behavior. For example, strong evidence indicates that the issues of "welfare" (Gilens 1999; Fox 2004) and of "crime" (Entman and Rojecki 2000; Bobo and Johnson 2004) are now strongly linked in the mind of many white Americans to blacks. Political sociologist Martin Gilens (1999) has shown that large fractions of the white public overestimate the level of black dependency on welfare

and, in particular, perceive blacks as particularly undeserving recipients (consistent with the earlier stereotyping trends we discussed) of government assistance. Political communication researchers have found that merely mentioning these issues in the course of a political campaign or advertisement, depending upon how it is done, can cue underlying negative racial attitudes and thereby lend such tendencies greater political consequence in how voters think and react in particular contests (Mendelberg 2001; Valentino, Hutchings, and White 2002).

Conclusion

Does "the racist virus in the American blood stream" still afflict us, as Moynihan put it so poignantly back in 1965? In many ways, the answer depends on what standard of evaluation, which indicator, and which trend or outcome one wishes to emphasize. The most positive aspect of the literature and research we have reviewed concerns the fundamental principles or norms that Americans expect to guide black-white relations. Here, the change is enormous, clear-cut, consistent, and we believe profoundly consequential. Most white Americans not only no longer endorse segregation, white privilege, and antiblack discrimination as rules that should guide black-white relations, but in fact endorse broad goals of integration, equality, and equal treatment without regard to race. We are convinced that this shift cuts much deeper for most people than mere lip-service adherence to what "one is supposed to say." Rather, consistent with the view espoused by social psychologist Gaertner and Dovidio (1986), a nondiscriminatory or colorblind identity is, in fact, important to most white Americans.

Yet, this facet of our culture and of individual psychological makeup is compromised or checked (or undermined) by a series of other cultural and individual psychological conditions (both of which have larger structural underpinnings; see Bobo, Kluegel, and Smith [1997] for a fuller elaboration). Public policy issues raise questions of government authority, access to material and symbolic resource distribution, and group rights and entitlements, the full sum of which greatly tests the readiness of many whites to incur potential costs or burdens of social change consistent with these new norms. Moreover, negative racial stereotypes did not vanish; they merely became less categorical and less firmly rooted in ascription to natural or biological (as opposed to cultural and volitional) differences between the races. What is more, perceptions of fundamental structural and race-discrimination-based barriers to black advancement, while common among African Americans, were never embraced by large fractions of the white public.

The full array of patterns in racial attitudes and beliefs, we believe, are borne out in parallel social conditions and trends. Whether the domain is the housing market, the labor market, the marriage market, or the world of politics, one can identify huge positive change consistent with the normative transformation we review, as well as patterns of ongoing black inequality and disadvantage traceable to lingering negative racial stereotypes, doubts about the modern relevance of

race discrimination, and differences in basic perspective that derive from the historic and contemporary social locations of black and white Americans.

Nothing brings home the complexity of the current moment more than the nomination of Barack Obama for the Democratic nomination for president of the United States. Consistent with that great transformation in norms, Obama has waged a successful effort to become the first African American to secure the presidential nomination of one of the major political parties. Yet, two patterns raise concerns about even the very popular and charismatic Obama's ability to transcend the racial divide.

First, as became a matter of concern in the New Hampshire primary and several subsequent contests, some white voters appear to tell pollsters one thing but do another once in the voting booth. Some polls suggested Obama was comfortably ahead of Hillary Clinton in New Hampshire even though he narrowly lost when the final votes were in. This sort of discrepancy had been seen before, of course, when L. Douglas Wilder ran for governor in Virginia, when David Dinkins ran for mayor of New York, and when Thomas Bradley ran for governor in California (see Hutchings and Valentino 2004).

Second, throughout the primary season, especially in its later stages in such states as Ohio, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, and West Virginia, it is clear that a nontrivial number of white voters openly rejected Obama largely on the basis of race. Some estimates suggest that as many as one in five voters in Kentucky, for example, preferred Hillary Clinton over Obama largely on the basis of racial considerations. Such racial considerations seem to have greatest currency among older, less well-educated, white males (exactly as the survey-based literature would indicate; see Schuman et al. 1997).

Is it possible to transcend race? We do have a telling if largely hypothetical case. At the start of the 1996 presidential campaign, there was a buzz that then–former chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell, would run for the Republican presidential nomination. Polling results indicated that after the successful Gulf War, he was actually perceived as favorably as Dwight Eisenhower had been at the end of World War II. Moreover, his popularity was so great that it transcended both the party and racial divides, as very careful analyses by political scientists Donald Kinder and Corrinne McConnaughy show (2006, esp. 147). Of course, Powell did not run, so the case remains a hypothetical. And the full analysis suggests that a Powell candidacy did not in any way represent the end of race and racial prejudice as political influences: he was more the exception that proved the rule. Powell, the authors argue, effectively became an exception to prevailing racial stereotypes and expectations, or "racial prototypes," as they put it. Achieving that exceptional status is what made Powell so seemingly viable. As Kinder and McConnaughy explained,

> Powell is an anomaly, and for a bundle of reasons. He is of Jamaican heritage. He is light-skinned. He keeps company with white people. He is a Republican. He speaks, Powell says himself, "like a white person." And perhaps not least, he is a victorious general. Powell is immune to racial stereotyping and racial identification, we suggest, because he deviates so markedly from the prototype. (P. 163)

Obama shares some of these features: namely, he is light-skinned, of mixed racial and immigrant background, speaks "like a white person," and has come to prominence without dependence on the usual black institutions or sponsors. However, he is a Democrat, he has clear roots in the black community, and his primary season success was heavily dependent on mobilizing black voters. And of course, a variety of implicit and explicit strategies were deployed to cast him as "the black candidate." It is thus little surprise that in this real contest involving an actual candidate, race and racial prejudice rise more directly to prominence, though these factors in no way decide the outcome of this contest.

This exact complex, murky situation is, we believe, where the matter of race now stands in the minds of Americans. The metaphor of the "virus" remains apt. While the virus is not yet defeated or fully eradicated from the body politic, we can find a number of encouraging indicators, including the Obama candidacy, that can be thought of as part of an effort to push the healing process to its next stage.

Notes

1. Only about 5 percent of these cite lack of access to education as the primary cause of inequality; for the rest, persisting discrimination is the culprit.

2. We should also note that antiminority animus is not the only source of opposition to government involvement in effecting positive racial change.

3. This decline in black-white segregation is due overwhelmingly to increasing residential contact between blacks and Latinos. Between 1980 and 2000, while black-white dissimilarity declined, blacks' exposure to whites was stagnant (Charles 2006).

4. Studies of residential segregation generally rely on one or more of six measures, each of which captures a different dimension of the spatial distribution of groups. *Evenness*, measured as the index of dissimilarity (D), describes the degree to which a group is evenly distributed across neighborhoods or tracts. A score of 60 is interpreted as extreme segregation between two groups, indicating the percentage of either group that would have to move to another tract to achieve within-tract population distributions that mirror those of the metro area. *Isolation*, measured as (P*xx), is interpreted as the percentage of the same race in the average group member's neighborhood or tract; scores of 70 and over, indicating that the average person lives in an area that is 70 percent same-race, are considered extreme. The inverse of isolation is *exposure* (P*xy), interpreted as the average probability of contact with a person of another race comparison group (usually whites). These are the most commonly reported measures. On three other measures—*concentration* (a group's degree of density), *clustering* (proximity to the central business district), and *centralization* (the contiguity of their neighborhoods)—scores greater than 60 are considered extreme. A group is hypersegregated if it scores in the extreme range on at least four of these measures (Denton 1994; Massey and Denton 1989, 1993).

5. In an audit study, pairs of trained testers with similar economic and family characteristics (one white and the other either black or Latino) successively inquire about housing. After a visit, each auditor completes a detailed report of his or her experiences with the real estate agent or landlord; discrimination is defined as systematically less favorable treatment of the nonwhite tester and is documented by direct observation during the interaction (Ondrich, Stricker, and Yinger 1998). Housing units are selected randomly from metro-area newspapers. Examples of the experience that are detailed by auditors range from aspects of seemingly race-neutral interactions (e.g., how promptly phone calls are returned or whether both members of an audit pair are shown additional units) to the obviously racially motivated act of steering minority auditors toward mixed or segregated areas (or whites to predominantly white areas).

6. The foreign-born Latino and Asian populations are considered separately as their immigrant status plays an important role in their preferences for same-race neighbors. Still, only about 8 percent of each of these groups states a preference for entirely same-race neighborhoods. The average Latino and

Asian immigrant wants a neighborhood that is nearly half same-race. Immigrant Latinos and Asians are even more likely than whites to exclude blacks entirely from their neighborhoods (38 and 44 percent, respectively; Charles 2006, 127).

　　7. For a detailed discussion of this research, see Charles (2003, 2006).

　　8. In fact, when the significant increase in incarceration among black men in this age group is taken into account, the joblessness rate has increased to nearly 33 percent—the stability in rates of black male joblessness is simply an artifact of rising rates of black male incarceration (Massey 2007; Western 2006).

　　9. Pager and Western (2006) replicated the Milwaukee study in New York City and report similar findings.

　　10. Self-reports of this type run the risk of either underestimating or overestimating the prevalence of discrimination. In the case of the former, the target does not know the reason for the negative outcome; in the case of the latter, a negative outcome could be wrongly attributed to discrimination (Quillian 2006).

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