

Introduction

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Imagine what it would take for welfare politics in the United States to be unaffected by race. The social problems addressed by the welfare system—poverty, health, life skills, and the like—would need to be equally distributed across racial groups. The composition of welfare recipients, both in fact and in the public mind, would have to reflect the population as a whole. The term *welfare* itself would be stripped of racial connotations, and mass media and public officials would have to find ways to discuss the poor without an invidious racial subtext. To be unaffected by race, the political present would need to be shaken free of its past, so that the welfare system’s legacy of racial bias would not limit the possibilities or define the problems for contemporary political action. The formation of political coalitions would need to be liberated from the divisive effects of racial prejudice and residential segregation. Political representation, policy implementation, and the power to influence them would all have to be made innocent of color.

The farther one takes this thought experiment, the clearer it becomes that welfare politics in the United States remains entwined with race. It also grows harder to imagine how people in this country could discuss welfare without taking race into account. Yet today, in a remarkable number of political venues, this is precisely what happens. Like the proverbial pink elephant at a cocktail party (the one that no guest will be first to mention), the “problem of the color line” is usually a subject of delicate avoidance when the conversation turns to poverty.¹ Some politi-

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cal elites and policy experts do pay close attention to the ways poverty-related outcomes vary across racial categories. But even in this company, the discourse tends to stay within a narrow range; race is usually treated as a self-evident basis for classifying people and social outcomes. Rather than delving more deeply into the construction or consequences of racial categories, a wide array of actors in welfare politics find it useful to assert that race has limited relevance. Conservatives dismiss the idea that durable racial disadvantages explain patterns of welfare usage. Liberals are equally quick to reject images of welfare as a program directed primarily at people of color. Few public voices suggest that racial subordination (past and present) plays a fundamental role in the ways Americans understand and practice welfare provision.

This book is about race in the United States and its distinctive effects on contemporary welfare politics. Over the past three decades, despite the lack of public attention to this issue, an impressive body of scholarship has grown up around the subject of race and welfare provision. Racial dynamics, in one form or another, played a key analytic role in a number of the classic works on welfare published between the 1960s and 1980s, such as Winifred Bell's *Aid to Families with Dependent Children* (1965), Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward's *Regulating the Poor* (1971), and Michael Katz's *The Undeserving Poor* (1989). More recently, scholars have focused direct attention on the racial dimensions of welfare politics in a series of landmark books, including Jill Quadagno's *The Color of Welfare* (1994), Robert Lieberman's *Shifting the Color Line* (1998), Michael Brown's *Race, Money, and the American Welfare State* (1999), Martin Gilens's *Why Americans Hate Welfare* (1999), and Kenneth Neubeck and Noel Cazenave's *Welfare Racism* (2001).

Through these works, as well as a large number of important publications in scholarly journals, evidence and explanation have become more sophisticated, and the interplay of race and poverty politics has come into sharper focus. To assemble the relevant literature, however, one must fish in separate disciplinary streams. Some questions have become specialized topics for historians; political theorists claim others. Much of the empirical research emphasizes field-specific debates about the dynamics of public opinion, policy implementation, or some other dimension of political life. This division of labor offers some advantages, but it also discourages an integrated understanding of how race has shaped the past and present of U.S. social policy. A major goal of the present volume is to counter this tendency toward balkanization. By bringing together diverse scholars with overlapping substantive concerns,

we hope to encourage a richer dialogue centered on the role of race in U.S. welfare politics.

The need for such a dialogue, however pressing it may be for scholars, is more urgent for the public at large. During the past three decades, as the various streams of scholarship on race and welfare have flourished, public discussion of this issue has waned. Where in welfare politics today does one find candid talk of race and its impact on social policy? Who speaks openly of racial equality and justice? The contributors to this volume differ in their fields of interest, research methods, and theoretical orientations. But their work converges on a basic message for citizens and public officials: race matters for U.S. social policy. We hope readers will come away from this book recognizing what is lost when discussions of welfare proceed as if race were irrelevant. Whether the venue is Congress or a casual conversation, race should have a place in our deliberations about how the welfare system works, what it does, and what it might become in the future.

Our purpose in this volume, however, is not simply to make a case for race. The assertion that “race matters” in welfare politics is only helpful to the extent that it leads to more searching questions. Which aspects of race matter? How and for whom do they matter? In which arenas and under what conditions? Such questions lie at the heart of explanatory political analysis. They are also a prerequisite for the constructive political action needed to achieve a racially just welfare state. The contributors to this volume aim to illuminate the structural conditions, social processes, and causal mechanisms that account for the significance of race in welfare politics. Their work addresses the political contingencies that determine the scope, magnitude, and form of racial effects in a given place and time.

How, then, does race fit into the contemporary politics of welfare provision? Surely it does not matter now in the same ways it did in the first half of the twentieth century. People of color in the United States have gained political and civil rights (Klinkner and Smith 1999), and significant numbers now enjoy middle-class status (Hochschild 1995). The racial and ethnic composition of the population has become far more diverse, as Hispanic, Asian, and other groups have grown in number (Cohn and Fears 2001). Rather than being shut out of public assistance programs, people of color now make up a majority of public aid recipients (Schram, this volume). The white population now overwhelmingly opposes *de jure* discrimination (Schuman et al. 1997). The black population is now less concentrated in the South but more concentrated by res-

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idential segregation (Massey and Denton 1993). The U.S. population has diversified in ways that make racial and ethnic politics less and less of a “black and white” matter (Wu 2001; Suro 1999). The list could go on, but the key point should be clear. Race may be an enduring “American dilemma,” but its role in welfare politics changes over time. The chapters that make up this volume are, each in their own way, designed to advance a historically specific understanding of welfare politics in the United States—a map of its racial dimensions in our time.

Our desire to present explanatory research that has practical relevance for welfare politics today reflects the dramatic changes that recently have taken place in U.S. social policy. In 1996, President Bill Clinton signed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), passed by the 104th Congress. The new law abolished the 61-year-old entitlement program, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), that was the primary source of cash assistance for poor women with children. In its place, the 1996 legislation created a program organized around block grants to state governments, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Under the new system, states have gained more discretion over program rules; poor families have confronted new time limits on the receipt of aid, rules and benefits designed to promote work, tougher requirements for program participation, and penalties for noncompliance.

The new system, in conjunction with a strong economy and other changes in public policy, produced a stunning decline in the national welfare caseload. The number of welfare recipients in the U.S. fell from 12.2 million in August 1996 to 5.8 million in June 2000. Evaluations of the reforms appeared in droves, offering a diversity of claims regarding their effects on poor, single women and their children. But even as the 1996 legislation came up for evaluation and reauthorization in 2002, the racial dimensions of reform continued to be ignored by policymakers. What role did race play in the public deliberations and expressions of public support that gave rise to welfare reform? How has race influenced the ways state policymakers and local administrators have used their newfound discretion? How have different racial groups fared under welfare devolution and the new policies it has engendered? By addressing these and other questions, the essays in this volume challenge us to rethink contemporary welfare politics and provide resources needed to understand the role of race in welfare reform.

To provide an overview of the book as a whole, the remainder of this chapter offers a preliminary sketch of the ways race and welfare policy

come together in specific arenas of the political process. At the outset, however, two points about the focus of this volume merit some elaboration. First, we emphasize race in this book because we place it among the most crucial forces in U.S. welfare politics, not because we consider it to be “more important” than gender, class, or other aspects of social stratification. Pitting these categories against one another as alternatives is far less productive than identifying the contributions of each and the distinctive characteristics of their intersection in a given place and time. Second, although this book is nominally about race (broadly defined), most of the chapters focus on European and African Americans; other racialized groups receive only intermittent attention. This emphasis is not accidental. It is partly a reflection of the current state of scholarship; it is equally a response to the unique significance that black-white relations and the cultural categories of black and white have had for the development of the U.S. welfare system. Race in the United States is rapidly changing in ways that force scholars to rethink the prevailing emphasis on dichotomous “black and white” analysis. As the scholarship in this volume demonstrates, however, African Americans continue to hold a distinctively prominent and disadvantaged position in U.S. poverty politics.

Historical Process and Institutional Development

“The instinctive attitude of a great many,” Marc Bloch (1953, 38) once wrote, is to experience the present as if it stood outside the flow of history—to “consider the epoch in which we live as separated from its predecessors by contrasts so clear as to be self-explanatory.” Today, such an “instinctive attitude” toward history remains a stumbling block to understanding the politics of welfare reform. Many efforts to explain the present make only passing reference to earlier sequences of events. In some cases, the past is used simply to “sketch in the historical background” before turning to a snapshot analysis of contemporary reform. Little effort is made to confront the legacies of racial subordination in the United States or the ways in which race has shaped institutional development in this country. In other cases, analysts briefly address racial aspects of U.S. history but do so only to contrast the present era with earlier periods of racial prejudice and discrimination. In these linear accounts of racial progress, one finds the mirror image of sweeping claims that U.S. welfare provision has been unremittingly racist. The past is treated only

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as a point of contrast, not as a source of contemporary politics; the present is identified as an era in which race matters “less,” not an era in which race matters in new ways. As Theda Skocpol (1995a, 129) has argued, such all-or-nothing accounts of race and U.S. social policy cannot help but distort the historical record and its implications for contemporary politics.

African Americans have not invariably been excluded from U.S. public social benefits, nor have they always been stigmatized when they did receive them. The overall dynamic since the Civil War has not been a linear evolution, moving from the exclusion or stigmatization of African Americans toward their (however partial) inclusion and honorable acceptance within mainstream U.S. politics and policies. There have been more ups and downs, more ironies and reversals, in the history of African American relationships to U.S. social policies across major historical eras.

In each period of reformation in U.S. welfare history, the relationship between race and social provision has taken on complex and distinctive forms. When Civil War pensions were created in the late nineteenth century (an era of overt white supremacy in most U.S. institutions), over 180,000 black Union veterans received the same eligibility for federal benefits as their white counterparts (Skocpol 1992, 138). By contrast, the state-run mothers’ pensions that developed in the early twentieth century generally excluded women of color, a pattern that emerged from the discriminatory use of local discretion and also functioned to reinforce the prestige of the program as aid for “good mothers” (Bell 1965; Gooden, this volume). The Social Security Act of 1935 established a broad national system of provision, but its passage hinged on support from southern representatives of white cotton interests. The result was a bifurcated system that, by excluding domestic and agricultural workers from social insurance coverage, effectively denied African Americans access to the more generous channel of federally controlled resources (Lieberman 1998; Brown 1999). By the next great era of reform, the 1960s, race had taken on a new but no less central role in the political process. Northern migration nationalized race relations as a political issue; the civil rights movement and urban unrest brought these relations to a higher place in the public consciousness. Great Society efforts found much of their inspiration and ultimately some of their political frustration in the demands people of color were making for full inclusion as rights-bearing, democratic citizens (Piven and Cloward 1993; Quadagno 1994).

Close inspection of these historical twists and turns is an essential step in the process of understanding how race and welfare reform relate in our present era. This is so for two reasons. First, historical comparisons make it possible to bring the particular features of our current situation into dialogue with more general theoretical accounts. They help us see what is distinctive, and what is not, about race in contemporary welfare politics. They direct our attention to processes and locales that may seem obscure to current observers but nevertheless have racial consequences. They suggest which types of developments one should expect to enhance or diminish racial distortion.

Second, beyond the merits of comparative analysis, the relevance of historical analysis derives from the fact that political events can never be wholly separated as discrete cases. The sequence of events matters in political life (Pierson 2000). Policy outcomes in one era can generate political contradictions that must be resolved in the next (Quadagno 1994). They can influence which political conflicts emerge and which political arenas serve as their eventual site of resolution (Skocpol 1992). They can shape popular understandings of social problems, perceptions of social groups, and orientations toward political demand making (Schneider and Ingram 1997). Some political choices create “path dependencies,” self-reinforcing dynamics in which once-imaginable alternatives come to be seen as too costly, obscure, or inconsistent with current practice to merit serious consideration (Pierson 2000). Other political choices generate negative feedback: cultural backlash, countermovements, or a conventional belief that we must avoid repeating some “mistake” of an earlier period. For these and other reasons, efforts to understand contemporary welfare politics must seek out and illuminate the presence of the past.

Accordingly, the first section of this volume focuses on historical processes and patterns of institutional development in U.S. welfare politics, giving special attention to their racial origins and implications. In chapter 1, Robert Lieberman presents a cross-national analysis of how racial divisions have contributed to welfare state development in the United States, Great Britain, and France. His chapter not only highlights how racial politics has shaped the structure of the U.S. welfare system; it also clarifies the mechanisms that account for such racial effects. Specifically, Lieberman directs our attention to the ways different racial formations may encourage or impede the development of pro-welfare political coalitions. His analysis elucidates the distinctive features of race in U.S. politics as well as the racialized nature of institutional arrangements that remain at the heart of recent struggles over welfare reform.

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In chapter 2, Michael Brown offers a historical perspective on race and its intersection with federalism and localism in the U.S. political system. His analysis illuminates the historical and racial roots of policy devolution, a defining feature of the block grant system that structures the TANF program. Equally important, Brown uses historical and contemporary examples to demonstrate the profound fiscal constraints and racial distortions that can emerge when control over social policy is decentralized. The focus of this chapter is fiscal federalism, but Brown uses this concept as the starting point for a broad analysis of race as a dimension of culture and political economy in the current era of reform.

In chapter 3, Richard Fording illuminates the recent historical context of welfare reform by examining the policy choices states made under AFDC waivers during the five years that led up to federal action in 1996. Fording's analysis demonstrates that the historical legacy of race and welfare continued to be evident in the ways states undertook welfare experimentation in the 1990s. Three findings stand out. First, Fording shows that the racial composition of a state is strongly related to ways white people stereotype African Americans and estimate the black share of the poverty population—two key predictors of individual-level support for welfare. Second, state policy choices during the AFDC waiver period were significantly related to the racial composition of welfare rolls. Third, state policy choices also depended significantly on the racial composition of political representatives in government. This last point bears particular attention. Fording's analysis underscores that African Americans are not just passive actors in welfare politics, limited to the role of targets for the actions of white actors. African American agency is, in its own right, also an important factor affecting welfare policy. When African Americans are better represented in government, welfare policies are more likely to respond to the needs of welfare recipients (who are disproportionately black).

Taken together, the chapters by Lieberman, Brown, and Fording invite us to construct a more precise, historically grounded understanding of race and welfare politics in our time. They underscore how historically racialized patterns of exclusion and agency remain an important part of the context for understanding welfare policy today.

Mass Media and Public Opinion

The second section of this book turns our attention more directly to the ways race and welfare come together in mass communication and public

sentiment. Popular images and attitudes play a variety of roles in welfare politics. Aggregate public opinion may rarely be decisive in the policy process (Noble 1997), but it almost always plays a contributing role in the process that shapes policy outcomes in the United States (Sharp 1999; Stimson, Mackuen, and Erikson 1995; Wright, Erikson, and McIver 1987). In addition to its direct impact on representatives who must anticipate electoral accountability (Arnold 1990), majority opinion also provides elite advocates with a crucial political resource—the presumption that democratic governments should “give the people what they want” (see, e.g., Mead 1992). Moreover, the importance of media portrayals and mass attitudes extends beyond the governmental components of welfare politics. Negative images of welfare have the power to stigmatize and to deprive groups of full and equal status in the citizenry. They can operate as mechanisms of informal social control, deter demands on public programs, and divide the poor against one another (Piven and Cloward 1993; Schneider and Ingram 1997).

The past decade has produced a growing body of research showing racial distortions in the ways media stories portray poverty and welfare issues (Williams 1995; Gilens 1999; Clawson and Trice 2000). Between 1967 and 1992, black people accounted for an average of 57 percent of the people pictured in major newsmagazine poverty stories—a figure that was about twice the true proportion of black people among the nation’s poor during this time (Gilens 1999, 114). In addition, pictures of white people were significantly more likely to accompany positive stories; pictures of African Americans predominated in periods of hostility toward welfare, in stories that took a more negative view of the poor, and in stories that focused on more stigmatized subgroups of the poor (Gilens 1999). As Clawson and Trice (2000) have shown, these particular patterns of distortion in media coverage continued throughout the most recent period of welfare reform. From 1993 to 1998, media images of the poor continued to emphasize black people; welfare recipients tended to be portrayed as undeserving; and black faces predominated in poverty stories that adopted a negative tone or emphasized unsympathetic traits.

In this context, it is hardly surprising that public responses to poverty and welfare exhibit strong racial patterns. African Americans are far more likely than their white counterparts to favor generous social programs (Shapiro and Young 1989; Kinder and Winter 2001). White Americans tend to substantially overestimate the black percentage of the poor and, partly as a result, view the plight of the poor through the lens of antiblack stereotypes (Gilens 1999). Among white Americans, black peo-

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ple are more likely to be seen as lazy (Gilens 1999); if poor, they are more likely than whites to be judged personally responsible for their poverty (Iyengar 1990) and less likely to be seen as deserving public assistance (Peffley, Hurwitz, and Sniderman 1997; Gilens 1995, 1996a). The impact of racial attitudes on white support for welfare tends to vary depending on the nature of immediate racial cues (Peffley, Hurwitz, and Sniderman 1997). But in the main, the evidence suggests that antiblack stereotypes enhance the likelihood that white Americans will view welfare recipients as undeserving, withdraw support from welfare spending, and prefer get-tough approaches to benefit provision (Gilens 1999).

Among public opinion researchers, there continue to be heated debates about the nature of white racial attitudes and their impact on policy preferences (Sears, Sidanius, and Bobo 2000). Most agree that “old-fashioned” racism, with its overt endorsement of biological hierarchy and legal segregation, has declined substantially since the 1940s (Schuman et al. 1997; Sniderman and Piazza 1993; Page and Shapiro 1992). The controversy focuses on what kinds of policy-relevant attitudes have replaced the old racism. One influential thesis argues that a new, less overt form of “symbolic racism” or “racial resentment” has emerged among white Americans—a blend of socialized antipathy toward blacks; perceptions that black people violate cherished values related to work, self-restraint, and respect for authority; and resentment toward black people for allegedly receiving special government treatment they do not deserve (Sears 1998; Sears et al. 1997; Kinder and Sanders 1996). A second group of scholars has offered a more structural theory of “laissez-faire racism” emphasizing group position and racialized competition over status, power, and resources (Bobo, Kleugel, and Smith 1997). A third group treats racial subordination as the product of a more general tendency toward “social dominance” in public attitudes and group relations (Sidanius and Pratto 1999). A fourth group, which has been sharply critical of the symbolic racism thesis (Sniderman and Tetlock 1986), now attributes a relatively small role to race per se, emphasizing instead the varying ways in which political principles get applied to race-related policy agendas (Sniderman and Piazza 1993).

The differences among these schools are complex and, in some respects, probably cannot be settled on the basis of survey or experimental evidence (Hochschild 2000). Regardless, our purpose in this book is not to resolve such broad theoretical disputes, or even to ask how research on race and welfare opinion might illuminate them. Our theo-

retical interests lie more directly with the question of how mass media and public opinion fit into the collection of forces that link race and welfare politics in the United States. With this in mind, the second section of our book offers perspectives from leading public opinion scholars on mass media, mass attitudes, and the racial dimensions of welfare politics.

In chapter 4, Martin Gilens examines media responses to the social and political events of the 1960s in an effort to explain how the American public came to view poverty and welfare as racial issues. In his previous work, Gilens (1999) has suggested that the racial basis of poverty reporting shifted dramatically in the 1960s and that an increased media emphasis on African Americans went hand in hand with declining mass support for welfare over the ensuing decades. Here, he returns to the tumultuous years of the 1960s to show how a potent tie between race and poverty was forged against a backdrop of black northern migration, increased welfare participation, a civil rights movement demanding economic equality, and the turbulence of urban unrest. Examining 40 years of news coverage, he helps us understand “how the poor became black” and “welfare” became a target of public animosity.

In chapter 5, James Avery and Mark Peffley add greater precision to our understanding of how racial patterns in news reporting can influence public assessments of welfare. Employing an experimental approach, they demonstrate that the race of a pictured recipient is an important factor affecting the ways individuals’ interpret stories on welfare reform. Specifically, they find that when news stories present images of black recipients, they are more likely to be interpreted in a negative manner. Building on Gilens’s chapter, which describes the parallel growth of racialized news coverage and public hostility toward welfare, this chapter provides more direct evidence of a connection between media imagery and public evaluations.

In chapter 6, Martin Johnson adds significant evidence regarding the impact of white racial attitudes on welfare policy outcomes in the states. Using opinion data drawn from the National Opinion Research Council’s General Social Survey (1974–98), Johnson examines how white perceptions of African Americans have related to patterns of state benefit provision over time. Unlike past studies, which have focused on a single level of analysis, Johnson’s work shows that individual-level attitudes aggregate in ways that have direct effects on state policy outcomes. White racial attitudes, he concludes, are a major factor shaping patterns of state welfare generosity.

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Public Discourse

The three chapters on mass opinion raise questions of public discourse, but do not entirely resolve them. Public discourse on welfare has many facets, some of which cannot be captured in quantitative studies of media coverage and mass attitudes. To understand these aspects of discourse, we must ask critical questions about race and welfare such as the following. How and why do racial categories get construed in particular ways at particular times in U.S. welfare politics? Whose voices get heard in public deliberation and with what authority? What does “race” mean to the actors involved, and why are particular issues understood in racial terms? How do racial categories get used when they are discussed explicitly in welfare talk, and how do such categories function as an implicit aspect of coded language and veiled imagery? In what ways does race constitute an object of dispute in welfare discourse, and in what ways does it define terms of debate that are shared by the primary disputants?

The contemporary era of welfare reform is marked by a racial discourse that is truncated and skewed in a number of politically consequential ways. With the “old-fashioned” brand of racism now largely discredited, we inhabit a discursive moment defined by a mixture of corrosive racial resentments, fears of being labeled “racist,” and uncertainties about whether it is wise to speak of race at all. Too often, race now operates by stealth, embedded in ostensibly neutral language (Williams 1997; Ansell 1997). Many conversations take on a “we all know what we’re talking about” feel, trading on race-coded euphemisms regarding “urban” and “inner city” problems, “cultural backgrounds,” the need for “personal responsibility,” the troubles of the “underclass,” and so on. As George Orwell noted many years ago (1954), such euphemistic language nourishes political ideas that cannot bear the cold light of direct analysis; it protects the existing social order at the expense of clear thought and open deliberation.

When elites invoke race explicitly in public discussions of social policy, it is usually to describe group differences in particular traits, social behaviors, or economic outcomes. Such descriptions of group differences can be informative, but, taken alone, they provide a very thin and politically domesticated mode of race-based analysis. Too often, they create an illusion that racial questions are being squarely addressed, when in fact pivotal questions are being evaded. Facts are often presented with little discussion of what race means or how (in observers’ understandings) it actually contributes to group difference in outcomes. In addition, some

racial disparities seem to merit close attention while others remain obscure. It is now standard for policy briefs and public hearings to compare white and black rates of poverty, single motherhood, and the like. By contrast, it is rare to find public discussion of the disparities in treatment and benefits that these groups receive in various sectors of the welfare system. Many elites talk about race, but few talk about which groups get what from government or *why* skin color continues to be so consequential for life outcomes and positioning in the social structure.

In recent years, it has become increasingly common to view race as a social construction. People who share particular characteristics, such as Jewish or Irish people, may be understood as a distinctive racial group in one time and place but not in another (Brodtkin 1998; Ignatiev 1995). Racial classifications can be structured as multiple categories of difference but are often a binary contrast of “pure” and “tainted” opposites (Fredrickson 1997, 77–97). Two constructive processes merit special attention. The first, racial formation, refers to the processes by which social, economic, and political forces shape the content, meaning, and importance of racial categories in a particular societal domain (Omi and Winant 1994). The second, racialization, refers to processes that extend racial meaning to relationships, practices, groups, or social issues that have previously not been subject to racial classification (Omi and Winant 1994). From this perspective, race-based analysis must not be limited to studies of group behaviors and attitudes; critical questions must be asked about why (and with what consequence) specific racial formations and racialized understandings predominate in particular eras of welfare politics. Accordingly, the third section of this volume explores race as a malleable element of welfare discourse that is constituted through structural processes, displayed for strategic purposes, and enacted in public debate.

In chapter 7, Holloway Sparks explores the discursive practices employed in deliberations over welfare reform in the 1990s. Specifically, she shows how racial categories and meanings interacted with gender and class to undermine the legitimacy of welfare recipients’ perspectives. Sparks argues that in this discursive context, recipients were only able to find voice in the welfare reform deliberations when they identified themselves as “success stories” who showed they could leave welfare for work and behave in a manner consistent with white, middle-class values. The terms of this “participation” in the 1996 welfare reform deliberations silenced critical perspectives on the legislation that could have highlighted race, gender, and class biases as well as the experienced needs of welfare recipients. Her essay suggests how the seemingly neutral discursive

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sive practices associated with welfare reform worked to reinscribe racial disadvantage.

In chapter 8, Sanford Schram explores the politics of racial representation in welfare discourse more generally in ways that suggest difficult issues in the period after welfare reform. On one side, Schram's analysis points to the risks associated with a history of race talk that demonizes persons of color, especially African Americans. Schram argues that the dominant idiom in welfare discourse reifies racial categories in ways that can suggest blacks are inferior to whites in terms of ability and effort. Accordingly, there may be good reasons for advocates of a racially fair welfare system to avoid invoking race or highlighting the disproportionate presence of black recipients on the welfare rolls. On the other side, however, Schram suggests that such a strategy risks participating in the silence that surrounds racial inequity in the United States; it fails to name or challenge the social and economic processes that make persons of color more likely to need public assistance. With the welfare population becoming increasingly composed of nonwhites under welfare reform, Schram emphasizes that we need to discuss race and welfare in ways that attend to the risks of reifying race and demonizing the racialized "other."

Policy Choice and Implementation

Welfare provision in the United States has always reflected its political setting in a system that emphasizes federalism, localism, and a relatively weak and fragmented national government (Noble 1997). Unlike many European states, the United States never developed a uniform national system of public assistance; the amount and form of aid for the poor has always depended on action in state and local political arenas (Skocpol 1996). Legislative changes and court rulings in the 1960s produced a more stringent set of national standards regulating state governments' welfare efforts (Davis 1993; Melnick 1994). Interstate variation, however, remained a defining characteristic of the AFDC program, and over time the pendulum began to swing back toward greater state control (Peterson and Rom 1990; Weaver 2000). At first, this shift was expressed through a growing number of federal waivers that permitted state officials to deviate from national rules under the AFDC program (Lieberman and Shaw 2000). Eventually, with the enactment of welfare reform in 1996, states

gained more authority over eligibility rules and administrative procedures than they had enjoyed for three decades (Mettler 2000).

The fourth section of this volume explores the implications of devolution for policy choice and implementation under welfare reform. Since the mid-1960s, scores of studies in political science have employed the cross-state variation as a kind of laboratory for studying the policy process. The early literature in this area focused primarily on the ways state political institutions affected state welfare policies. Much of this work suggested that features of the political environment, such as party competition and party control, had little or no effect on state policies (Dawson and Robinson 1963; Dye 1966; Fry and Winters 1970; Hofferbert 1966). Rather, state welfare policies appeared to be almost entirely driven by state economic capacity.

Eventually, improvements in measurement and statistical techniques began to uncover significant effects for a number of political variables including state ideology (Wright, Erikson, and McIver 1987), party competition (Holbrook and Van Dunk 1993), and party control (Brown 1995; Jennings 1979). Consequently, state politics scholars have turned their attention to other types of possible influences on welfare policies. In recent years, this has included the degree of class bias in the electorate (Hill, Leighley, and Hinton-Andersson 1995), mass insurgency (e.g., Fording 2001; Schram and Turbett 1983), interstate competition (Peterson and Rom 1989; Rom, Peterson, and Scheve 1998), and labor organization (Radcliff and Saiz 1998).

Despite its many important insights, the literature on state politics has rarely paid sufficient attention to the role of race in welfare policy-making. Almost without exception, researchers in the 1960s and 1970s ignored race as an influence on state welfare policies. With the publication of Gerald Wright's influential analysis of AFDC benefits in 1976, however, this began to change. Wright (1976) demonstrated that benefit levels were related to both the racial composition of the state population and the degree of racial liberalism, as represented by the progressiveness of a state's civil rights laws. Even after these findings, however, few studies of welfare policy published over the next two decades focused on race as an explanatory factor. Of those studies that did examine race, nearly all treated it as a "control variable" rather than as the primary focus of attention. In the last few years, this pattern has begun to change as researchers have brought race into the foreground of the state policy-making process.

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In chapter 9 Joe Soss, Sanford Schram, Thomas Vartanian, and Erin O'Brien explore the racial underpinnings of the tough new rules and penalties that proliferated in state welfare programs under welfare reform. The first part of the chapter investigates which states were most likely to adopt stringent welfare policies. The analysis reveals that states with more people of color in their welfare caseloads were significantly more likely to adopt strict policies, but, equally important, the strength of this relationship varies across specific types of program rules. The second part of this chapter presents an individual-level analysis designed to illuminate public support for these tough new program rules as it stood at the time of federal action in 1996. The results suggest that whites are far more likely to support get-tough welfare reforms than blacks. Moreover, the racial divide on support for get-tough policies seems to derive, in part, from the impact of racial attitudes. A variety of attitudes drove white support for new time limits and work requirements; but even after accounting for these factors, negative beliefs about people of color emerge as a primary influence.

Public support and state policy formation take us part of the way toward understanding the new policy environment that has emerged under welfare reform. Welfare policy-making, however, goes beyond the choice of which policies to adopt; it is equally important to ask how such policies get implemented. A major portion of the "governmental actions that shape the quality of people's lives appear in the decisions we classify as 'implementation'" (Edelman 1983, 134). Such actions are rarely visible to the public but can be decisive both for individuals and aggregate policy outcomes. By writing procedural rules and interpreting these rules in specific cases, administrators determine how general laws actually get applied to citizens' lives (Meier 1993; Kerwin 1994). People who work in welfare agencies almost inevitably find that they have some discretion in dealing with applicants and clients. Such discretion may be used to provide more personalized or equitable services (Goodsell 1981). But it can also be used in ways that discriminate against particular categories of people or deflect demands for benefits (Lipsky 1984; Hasenfeld 1987). For all these reasons, implementation processes are now widely viewed as a continuation of "policy-making by other means" (Lineberry 1977, 71). For the poor, who tend to be marginalized at other points in the political process, welfare agencies are especially significant sites of politics (Piven and Cloward 1993). Welfare participation offers poor people a rare opportunity to influence public allocations; it also brings them into direct

contact with the state's power to monitor, control, and punish the citizenry (Soss 2000).

Throughout U.S. history, the politics of implementation has played a key role in frustrating the goals of racial justice. Hard-won voting rights have been undercut by discrimination at the ballot box; civil rights have turned to dust at the courthouse and police station; social rights have come undone at local hospitals, schoolhouses, and welfare agencies. Through much of the twentieth century, welfare administration for poor families was shot through with racial bias. State governments were free to define program eligibility rules, and local caseworkers were given a wide berth to enforce the rules as they saw fit. African Americans, concentrated in the South, often had no access to benefits or found that access varied according to the labor needs of local cotton growers (Piven and Cloward 1993). In many states, caseworkers could use "man in the house" and "suitable home" rules to deny benefits to women who allegedly lived with an unrelated male or violated some other norm regarding domestic arrangements. To obtain evidence of such violations, caseworkers could enter and inspect recipients' homes at any time, sometimes during unannounced "midnight raids." Such practices were often aimed selectively at "undeserving" black recipients; they constituted a form of intimidation that kept the welfare rolls down, regulated domestic behavior, and controlled local race relations (Piven and Cloward 1993).

In the 1960s, political mobilization produced a string of legal victories and administrative reforms that limited the scope of caseworker discretion and brought greater equity to eligibility decisions. State and local officials continued to control access to AFDC benefits, and in many respects clients were still subject to the discretionary actions of caseworkers (Prottas 1979; Handler 1992; Soss 2000). But such activities were constrained by the federal government in ways they had not been in the past. Predictably, the new arrangements produced a sustained increase in the welfare caseload and brought African Americans onto the rolls in far greater numbers (Mink 1994). Welfare reform in the 1990s was, among other things, a concerted effort to cut back the federal limits on state and local administration (Weaver 2000). The new logic of implementation created by these reforms is partly a "return to the past," but it proceeds under a very different configuration of policy mandates, program rules, and societal conditions. Under TANF, agency workers have an expanded scope of discretion that includes when to divert would-be applicants,

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whether to grant exemptions from program rules, whom to sanction for what kinds of infractions, and which clients to inform about which available benefits and services.

The racial implications of the new discretion are complex and only now beginning to emerge. To begin with, white families have left the welfare rolls faster than nonwhites, increasing the proportion of recipients who are African American and Latino. Between 1997 and 1999, the percentage of TANF families that identified themselves as white dropped from 42 to 33 percent, while percentage that reported their race as black rose from 34 to 46 percent (Zedlewski and Alderson 2001). In addition, the consequences of strict new welfare rules appear to be falling disproportionately on nonwhites. For example, while 63.7 percent of black TANF families participated in state programs that employed a full-family sanction in 1999, only 53.7 percent of white families did the same.² Moreover, available state-level studies “which examined reason for exit found that minorities were generally more likely than Whites to have their cases closed due to sanctions rather than earnings (according to administrative data)” (Lower-Basch 2000). Similarly, a recent analysis estimated that African Americans will make up over two-thirds of all families that will be forced off the rolls due to the federal five-year time limit on program usage (Duncan, Harris, and Boisjoly 2000).

In chapter 10, Susan Gooden explores the TANF implementation process, seeking out its racial dynamics and consequences. Her work highlights the ways in which administrative outcomes emerge out of the interactions of a variety of participants, including agency managers, street-level workers, clients, and community members. In taking up these interactions, Gooden shows how the racial logic of TANF implementation relates to the development of welfare administration over the past century. Drawing on her own research, Gooden explains why and how racial bias influences the ways caseworkers treat TANF recipients. Especially important, Gooden concludes with concrete proposals for establishing racial fairness as a measure of performance for caseworker action and welfare administration more generally.

Welfare in Context: Race and Social Policy in the States

In contemporary political rhetoric, “welfare” is often addressed as if it were a unique program, wholly unrelated to the broader system of social policies pursued by federal, state, and local governments. In some respects,

the politics of “welfare” may very well be distinctive; but in truth, welfare provision in the United States consists of many social policies that relate to one another in complex ways. As a result, one major challenge for students of welfare politics is to understand how developments in one policy area affect changes in other policy areas. A second and related challenge is to understand which political patterns in a given policy domain are distinctive, and which reflect more general tendencies in U.S. social provision. Just as historical comparisons are essential for an adequate understanding of contemporary welfare politics, so too are comparisons across related policy domains.

Accordingly, the fifth section of this volume consists of two chapters designed to locate welfare politics within the broader context of social policy choice in the states. In chapter 11, Caroline Tolbert and Gertrude Steuernagel extend the scope of our analysis to consider the relationship between race and health care policy. Specifically, Tolbert and Steuernagel employ survey data to analyze racial and ethnic voting patterns in California’s failed 1994 ballot initiative to adopt a universal health care system. In doing so, Tolbert and Steuernagel make two important contributions to the volume. First, following up on the chapters by Fording and Sparks (as well as Soss, Schram, Vartanian, and O’Brien’s discussion of the racial divide in opinion), Tolbert and Steuernagel’s analysis underscores the need to address people of color as active and distinctive agents in social welfare politics. Second, Tolbert and Steuernagel shift our attention away from the actions of legislators to the direct efforts of citizens to shape public policy. Today, most research on welfare policy formation focuses on legislative action. Over the last two decades, however, direct referenda have become critical for social welfare outcomes—often with major implications for disadvantaged minorities. Tolbert and Steuernagel’s analysis offers sorely needed insight into the ways racial and ethnic groups behave when they are given a chance to exercise direct control over social policy.

In chapter 12, Rodney Hero broadens the analysis further to illuminate a number of general theoretical and methodological issues related to the study of race and social policy. In addition to offering a general framework for analyzing racial composition and social policy, Hero demonstrates that the racial composition of a state’s population influences a wide variety of social policy outcomes. Equally important, his analysis shows that racial factors affect different domains of social policy in different ways. In doing so, Hero suggests that race is a fundamental but highly variable force shaping U.S. social policy.

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Ending a Book, Continuing a Dialogue

Because the central goal of this volume is to expand and sharpen our dialogue on race and welfare in the United States, we have chosen not to end with a summary conclusion by the editors. Instead, we have invited a major scholar of welfare politics to reflect on the material presented by our contributors. Frances Fox Piven's commentary offers her own perspective on race and welfare politics. Her critique of racialized practice in the U.S. welfare system places contemporary welfare politics in a historical perspective that highlights the interplay of race and political economy. In so doing, Piven offers a provocative response to this volume's open invitation to rethink the problems and possibilities of race in U.S. welfare politics. We hope that readers will be inspired to follow suit, developing their own responses and beginning the hard work of confronting the enduring relationship between race and welfare in the United States.

NOTES

1. For an elaboration of this metaphor, see comments by Janet Robideau, cited in Neubeck and Cazenave 2001.
2. If the percentage of black families participating under this policy were made equal to the percentage for white families (53.7 percent), the number of African American families at risk for a full-family sanctions would be reduced by about 102,000 families. These calculations were made by the authors based on 1999 caseload data from the Administration for Children and Families' Third Annual Report to Congress (August 2000, table 10:6) and sanction policy information gathered by the State Policy Documentation Project.