1

Introduction

Has America's sense of "community" been racially constrained and contingent? In other words, has American civil society, politics, and a broader collective sense of self been shaped about as much by racial and ethnic differentiation (i.e., racial/ethnic "diversity") as by more general and supposedly inclusive conceptions of social connectedness and commonwealth, civic republicanism, or "social capital"? Do America's practices – and perhaps very understanding – of community continue to be shaped in substantial part by racial factors, even though forty years have passed since civil rights legislation was enacted? Do understandings of race affect perceptions of what are considered to be appropriate and actual community bounds, and do notions of community define and/or reinforce racial/ethnic differentiation? Beyond formal citizenship and legal guarantees of civil rights, what criteria implicitly (or explicitly) define the depth and breadth of "who really belongs"? Are the two sets of social phenomena – race and community – normatively (and actually) antithetical, symbiotic, intertwined, or related in other ways? Has scholarly research effectively acknowledged these possibilities and analyzed them accordingly? These complex and difficult questions motivate the present study.

The issues examined here certainly speak to these questions, although it is unlikely that any single study can satisfactorily grapple with the many dimensions identified. Therefore, this inquiry is somewhat more focused and asks: Has the reality been one of a civil society and a polity that is racially constrained and conditional (Hero 1998; cf. Orr 1999)? In other words, is the social capital interpretation (Putnam 2000) a reasonable and accurate – or rather an incomplete and romanticized – depiction of American community? How should we study the American polity when addressing such questions? What is the appropriate type of evidence to consider, and what do we learn in the view of one analytical approach versus another?

These complicated issues have been implied but only tentatively probed in the political science research literature, and these social forces have not been systematically examined jointly in contemporary political science empirical analysis. There have been numerous commentaries as well as a number of critiques of social capital, including the application of the thesis to the United States. Yet the present study is unique in systematically examining the social capital argument through the lens of an alternative theoretical perspective: racial diversity. The large bodies of empirical research on social capital ("community") and on racial/ethnic diversity offer dramatically different portrayals of the American political system; examining them together may offer a way of better attending to pressing questions. However, these bodies of research have, with few exceptions, developed along separate paths and with little cross-examination, intersection, or integration. Perhaps this is understandable given that contemporary political science is commonly segmented by subfield specialization and differing methodological approaches; the disconnectedness may also be due to the different world views of scholars. The implication by social capital studies (e.g., Putnam 2000) of something like an era of a civic "American Dream" should be kept in perspective by the historic and continuing "American Dilemma" of race (Myrdal 1944; DuBois 1935).

Particularly striking is that – despite largely overlooking issues of race, including a substantial body of research that has documented its role – the social capital interpretation continues to hold sway over scholars of American politics (Putnam 2000; Gray 1999, 1996). (More recent research on social capital has begun to engage issues of race and immigration, however.) Whatever the reasons for the separation of the two approaches and for the frequent neglect of racial aspects of American community by the social capital thesis, one consequence has been to forestall a broader and better understanding. A principal aim of the current study is to connect and critically assess these two bodies of research – an especially compelling goal in that the United States has never simultaneously had high formal racial/ethnic equality (much less substantive equality) *and* high social capital: the decline of social capital (as documented in Putnam 2000) coincided with the emergence of formal racial equality. As racial/ethnic complexity evolves with an increasingly multiethnic population (Clarke et al. 2006) and with the large immigration in the 1980s and 1990s, the relevance of these issues continues and in some ways increases.

A core goal of this book is to examine jointly the analytical perspectives of research on racial diversity and social capital in order to juxtapose and thereby assess how and why they differ as well as how much they inform our understanding of recent and contemporary American politics. I shall assess the accuracy and (perhaps more importantly) the adequacy and appropriateness of theoretical perspectives as vantage points for comprehending American politics. In exploring these two perspectives I engage an intriguing and important puzzle in American politics. Previous research indicates that *higher racial diversity* is associated with lesser and *less equitable political processes* and public policy outcomes (even after accounting for a host of other factors; see Hero 1998). At the same time, *higher levels of social capital* are consistently associated with *better processes and outcomes* (Putnam 2000). Can both arguments be equally correct? Does one set of claims sufficiently take into account the other?

If conditions are indeed better in high social capital settings, for whom are they better? Are conditions better for essentially all – that is, for a majority in absolute/aggregate terms, or for some groups more than others? And should overall or instead relative evaluative standards be used in making such judgments? Finally, are the evaluative criteria applied and the indicators used to assess evidence themselves associated with a particular analytical perspective? Depending on the answers to these questions, diversity's importance may be emphasized more or less, so at times social capital arguments may be interpreted as mistaking a problem for a solution.

Although overlooked in much of the early social capital research designs, racial diversity and social capital in the American states may be related (Hero 2003a,b, 1998). Empirical analysis shows that states with high social capital tend to be racially homogeneous (white), whereas states with high racial/ethnic diversity tend to have low levels of social capital (Hero 2003a; cf. Putnam 2000). Is this correlation a coincidence or is there an underlying connection (causal mechanism) between the two? Is America's legacy of racial inequality the "evil twin" of its social capital? Are they, at least to some extent, two sides of the same coin – a kind of yin and yang flowing together, each containing the seed of the other in U.S. politics? There is reason to believe they could well be related in these ways (Smith 1993; King and Smith 2005). It is widely agreed that race has been a weighty factor in American political and social history (see, e.g., Key 1949; DuBois 1935), but there is debate concerning precisely how *much* weight compared with such other social factors as social class, formal and informal institutions, and sense of community (Hero and Radcliff 2005). This study will pursue and, it is hoped, illuminate these questions with respect to race and social capital.

THE SOCIAL AND THEORETICAL LANDSCAPE

The United States has been among the most racially and ethnically diverse of the Western democracies, and demographic

complexity and change have been central traits of its politics (Key 1949; Hero 1998). Most of the thinking on and analysis of race in America has, understandably, been in terms of white and black politics; that orientation has substantially influenced social capital analyses and racial diversity studies as well. According to the 2000 census, whites (non-Hispanic) constitute 71 percent of the population and Latinos over 13 percent. African Americans account for roughly 12 percent of the population and Asians 4–5 percent. Contrast this with 1980, when 79 percent of the U.S. population was white, 12 percent African American, 6.4 percent Latino, and 1.6 percent Asian American. By 2005, four American states – including the two most populous, California and Texas – had become "majority minority" states, with Latinos as the largest component; altogether, nine U.S. states had minority populations of 40 percent or more. The U.S. Census Bureau projects that, by the year 2025, whites will account for 61 percent of the population, Latinos 18 percent, African Americans 14 percent and Asian Americans almost 7 percent. Hence, by this estimate, in slightly over 40 years the white population will decrease by about 20 percent to little more than 60 percent of the population. Demographic forces and demographic diversity continue to alter the face of the American polity, yet the implications for social capital's evolution and relevance have not yet been fully addressed, and the diversity thesis has only begun to incorporate these changes into its theorizing (but see, Hero 1992; Hero and Preuhs 2006; Clarke et al. 2006; Fraga et al. 2006). Most of the empirical analysis in this study that directly compares racial groups draws on evidence of black versus white differences; however, specific attention is also given to Latinos in several instances (e.g., see Hawes, Rocha, and Meier's 2006 analysis in Chapter 4 and the latter parts of Chapter 5).

A number of scholarly studies were published from the mid-1990s onward documenting, despairing of, and seeking to explain a steep decline in "civic community," "civic engagement," and "social capital" in the United States that was

associated with decreasing political participation and diminished democracy (Putnam 2000; cf. Skocpol 2003). It is probably no coincidence that these studies were written while demographic, social, and public policy changes emerged in legislation of the 1960s and were amplified in the early 1990s. These developments – declining social capital and (increased) racial diversity – have been seen as largely unrelated and distinct in practice; moreover, scholarly research on social capital has asserted that racial diversity and the decline of social capital are not connected (Putnam 2000; Skocpol 2003). The initial signs of the decline of social capital became evident in the mid-1960s (Putnam 2000), which happened to coincide with the adoption of such policies for formal equality as the Civil Rights Act (1964), the Voting Rights Act (1965), immigration (1965) and open housing (1968) legislation, as well as other developments, including urban riots, with implications for racial issues. Yet the leading study of social capital and politics has argued emphatically that the changed legal situation of blacks and other minorities, and racial diversity and change more generally, were *not* associated with the decline of social capital (Putnam 2000). Nonetheless, this coincidence is certainly intriguing and worthy of careful analysis (but is not a core issue animating this study and is thus only briefly engaged in later discussion).

This book offers a wide-ranging treatment of the puzzle regarding racial diversity versus and/or in relation to social capital as manifested in American politics. I first review, summarize, and mull over racial diversity and social capital as theories in order to better understand their claims and their strengths and weaknesses; in the process, the philosophical and associated normative underpinnings of the theories are considered. I explore the explanatory power of each theory, individually and comparatively, and to some extent consider their interactions – juxtaposing the underlying assumptions, research approaches, and claims of theories emphasizing racial/ethnic factors on the one hand, and "community" on the other hand, for social and political equality. The basic claims and supporting evidence of

the social capital thesis are delineated; similarly, the arguments and studies supporting the diversity interpretation are presented. Several analyses that draw on state-level data and on national opinion data are presented. This approach permits consideration of the two sets of propositions in a more directly comparative fashion and allows a comprehensive and careful treatment of the relative influence of racial diversity and social capital on social outcomes, civic and economic equality, aggregate and individual participation, and policy outputs in America, specifically, the American *states*.

A BROADER CONTEXT: A MULTIPLE TRADITIONS APPROACH

Before summarizing the analysis to be presented in later chapters, I think it useful to discuss scholarship that provides an intellectual backdrop for the current study. The significance of multiple theoretical or philosophical traditions in American politics – including the importance of aspects of American society associated with the "ascriptive hierarchy" or "inegalitarian" tradition – has been increasingly acknowledged (Smith 1993, 1997; King and Smith 2005). Those inegalitarian orientations are relevant for gender, economic, and racial inequality and other social dimensions. A varied literature has emphasized the connections between such inequalities (see, e.g., Strolovitch 2007; Hochschild 1995; Hero and Radcliff 2005), though many studies have tended to focus on one or the other.

Scholarship has increasingly stressed the multiple traditions as central to a fuller understanding of politics in the American states (Hero 1998; cf. Elazar 1966, 1972, 1984; Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky 1990). These concerns have been commonly recognized at a general level, particularly in works of normative political theory. However, *empirical democratic theory* research on social and policy outcomes in American politics has rather seldom followed suit; on the whole, such research focused on the macro level has neither adequately incorporated

the multiple traditions perspective in a systematic manner nor compared the multiple traditions as alternative (or complementary) explanations of important political and policy phenomena. There has certainly been a vast literature in political psychology on *individuals'* attitudes and beliefs about race and race-based versus race-neutral public policies, engaging such matters as "symbolic racism," "social dominance" and other analytical viewpoints (see, e.g., Sears et al. 2000; see also Chapter 7). But those micro-level studies do not examine aggregate social outcomes, actual policy formulation and implementation, or their effects on various racial groups; nor have they considered political participation and various other issues most relevant to the present study (cf. Hero 1998, 2003a,b).

Rogers Smith's treatment (1993, 1997) is frequently viewed as the most explicit and perhaps one of the earliest statements of the "multiple traditions" thesis (but see Stevens 1995). Focusing on writers who analyze the American ("national") political tradition, Smith emphasizes there are three major strands. These include not only *liberal* (or liberty, "individualism," etc.) and *republican* (or civic republicanism or "community" and "fraternity") ideas, as is commonly recognized, but also *ascriptive inegalitarianism*, which was most relevant to providing "justifications" for racial, gender, and class inequality (Smith 1997; cf. Elazar 1966; Putnam 2000, p. 355). One of Smith's central assertions is that much American politics literature and research stresses the former two traditions while neglecting or understating the third.

Smith demonstrates how public discourse and practices in American politics have actually interwoven the three traditions, including ascriptive inegalitarianism, but he also emphasizes that many theorists – including such major writers as Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz – have not adequately recognized this in their work. Much empirical research in American politics is similarly limited in not adequately considering the impact of ascriptve inegalitarianism as it echoes in contemporary racial differentiation.

Examining states' politics through "racial diversity" (as I do here) is emblematic of a multiple traditions perspective, but it also makes several important theoretical and empirical advances. The thesis makes direct links between the theoretical traditions and racial contexts, systematically arguing that such contexts (more or less racially diverse) are more or less strongly associated with manifestations of ascriptive inegalitarianism – and even with civic republicanism and, in turn, with different "faces" of racial inequality (Hero 1998, ch. 1). Although numerous other studies, including Key's (1949) seminal work, have emphasized the importance of race in American politics, the diversity thesis as such (Hero and Tolbert 1996; Hero 1998) differs in some important ways. Unlike other race-focused studies, the diversity thesis posits race as a *generally* important and pervasive social force that is germane to all states and localities, including those that are relatively homogeneous; it also highlights the importance of examining relative social outcomes by race (Soss et al. 2001; Hill 1994; Giles and Hertz 1994; cf. Meier, Stewart, and England 1989; Johnson 2001; Hero and Tolbert 1996; Hero 1998). Furthermore, racial diversity has been explored with respect to a wider range of issues than most race studies, including the impact of race on political and governmental institutions and processes (see Hero 1998 and Chapter 3).

With its claims about social capital and emphasizing a "community" (versus individualist) social and political orientation, Putnam's *Bowling Alone* (*BA*) is solidly rooted in the civic republican tradition. At the same time, the social capital thesis (Putnam 2000, cf. Rice and Sumberg 1997) appears to be a clear example of the tendency of civic republican accounts of American politics generally to understate the legacy of the racial or ascriptive hierarchy tradition, as Smith argues (Smith 1993, pp. 551–2, 557; cf. Hero 1998; pp. 9–23, 32–5; Thompson et al. 1990, ch. 13). Other, broadly similar works, including the "political culture" arguments discussed later (see Elazar 1972, 1984; Lieske 1993; cf. Rice and Sumberg 1997, Fitzpatrick and Hero 1988) similarly do not give race adequate attention in discussing

the "traditionalistic," hierarchical culture, much less the "commonwealth" or moralist orientation (Hero 1998; see Chapters 2 and 3 herein). In so emphasizing community and consensus, equality is a secondary concern that is presumed to be an almost natural by-product of high social capital; invidious social differentiation is overlooked or assumed to be mitigated in civic republican renderings of American politics.

Woven into the current study is a consideration of how the several philosophical traditions have been evident in the practices and empirical studies of American politics. Each tradition – and its associated body of empirical research – brings somewhat different conceptual, methodological, and normative lenses that bear, if only implicitly, on *what* is studied and on *how* it is studied. I examine two traditions in terms of their particular implications for policy, participation, and racial inequality dilemmas in American society; the economic class aspects of inegalitarianism are also considered via control variables in several dimension of the empirical analysis that follow in Chapters 4–6. I consider the relevance of the major traditions, particularly the two with a more explicitly collective focus – racial diversity (which draws out the implications and legacy of the ascriptive inegalitarian tradition) and social capital (civic republicanism) – for various indicators that address racial aspects of political equality in the American states. The liberal tradition is not directly examined, in part because of its more individualist nature, although the importance of certain liberal principles for various aspects of equality is considered. Given liberalism's place as the dominant political tradition and as a benchmark for the other two traditions, its impact is surely pervasive although difficult to operationalize and hence to examine effectively for present purposes. However, to the extent that some aspects of liberal and conservative ideas have been explored in studies that parallel this one, those ideas seem to have little relevance for issues of relative racial inequality (Hero 2003b). The evidence presented in subsequent chapters suggests that research rooted in traditions