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Edited by Glenn C. Loury, Tariq Modood, and Steven M. Teles
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Introduction

Glenn C. Loury, Tariq Modood, and Steven M. Teles

Edited volumes are, by their very nature, a compilation of the views of different minds. And yet, in most cases, those different minds are chosen for a purpose. In the case at hand that purpose can be intuited from the title of this volume: *Ethnicity, Social Mobility, and Public Policy: Comparing the USA and UK*. The assumptions underlying the editors' efforts in bringing these many scholars together are essentially twofold: that social mobility is a heterogeneous phenomenon – not functioning the same way in every society and for every social group; and, that the social markers of ethnicity and race matter in the study of social mobility. Ethnicity and race are causally related to social mobility for the obvious reason that actors in society at large distribute mobility – relevant goods with those markers in mind, but also because those markers represent real social formations in the context of which mobility-relevant goods are produced and nurtured. Our view is that, in discerning how these effects play themselves out, analytical leverage is gained by making reference to the broadest possible range of groups and social settings. This we attempt to do in this volume. This introductory essay will elaborate on and defend these assumptions, and then connect them to the structure and content of the book.

1 Social mobility – what is it?

The editors of this volume view social mobility not as a single, homogeneous phenomenon, but rather as a cluster of interdependent social processes. We saw no need to establish a single definition of social mobility but instead encouraged the authors to select a conception of mobility that seemed most appropriate for their area of study. It is convenient, if a bit oversimplifying, to delineate four different ways of thinking about social mobility that are used in this volume. First, and in the United States most common, mobility can be measured by income, in either absolute or relative terms. This approach tends to envision social classes defined basically in arbitrary terms (e.g., by income deciles), and to view the

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differences between individuals as incremental. Here the classes between which individuals are more or less mobile are creations of the researcher, but not "real" categories in the world. This approach is typified by Duncan (1984).

A second, and still partially an economistic approach to social mobility, looks to the labor market for the core of its analysis but conceives that market as strictly segmented into real professional classes: mobility is the shift from a lower-status profession to a higher one, and it is not so much the income derived from the profession as its power and prestige that matters. This is a more common approach in the Nuffield studies of, for example, Heath (Goldthorpe 1980, Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992).

A third approach shares an emphasis on power and prestige with the Nuffield school but does not insist on the centrality of the labor market. This approach sees social mobility in terms of "recognition" and social citizenship – that is, in the degree to which individuals are affirmed by others as being equal partners in the community. While the labor market is an important setting for processes of inclusion and exclusion, this third approach recognizes that there are many other important settings wherein distinctions of status and belonging are produced. Individuals make significant decisions about where to live, with whom to socialize, and with whom to engage in collective action. Whether a group is recognized as having "social citizenship" is partially independent of its position in the labor market. It is indeed possible for there to be large, and even permanent, lags between labor market position and social equality. Scholars in this tradition insist that social citizenship is as real as economic status and is perhaps even more foundational. For instance, while the Indian minority in Uganda were able to attain a high economic success in that country, their continuing outsider status in Ugandan society rendered their economic achievements ephemeral once challenged by state authorities. Students of social citizenship thus look for what is "beneath" labor markets and political institutions, and tend to think of social mobility less in terms of classes moving in a labor market hierarchy, and more in terms of racially and ethnically defined groups operating within a hierarchical system of social statuses.

A final approach to the subject looks at the capacity of groups to organize for collective action and to significantly influence the institutions that affect them. For lack of a better word we can call this the "political" school of mobility studies. This approach typically understands racial and ethnic minorities (particularly newcomers) to be outsiders to the major social institutions, and thus to be in an inferior bargaining position when critical social resources are being distributed. This outsider position creates strong incentives for group-based collective action, but

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these incentives may be undermined either by the structure of social and institutional rules, or by the cultural and economic attributes of the group itself. Mobility in this understanding is the process by which groups attain sufficient internal coherence to legitimately threaten existing social institutions with the loss of power, and thus to obtain a fair (or more than fair) slice of the collective pie. More sophisticated analyses in this vain look at the social "pie" not as fixed in content, but rather as sensitive to the needs of groups in power. Social mobility can thus be analyzed in terms of the ability of a group of people to shift the overall supply of social resources in a direction that matches their needs and tastes. A quintessentially political analysis of social mobility is Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan's *Beyond the Melting Pot*, whose British equivalent is John Rex and Robert Moore's *Race, Community and Conflict* (Glazer and Moynihan 1963, Rex and Moore 1967).

It is unnecessary to decide which of these approaches is the "right" way of studying the subject. It is more fruitful to think of the income, professional class, and social citizenship schools as all having something true and significant to say about social stratification. Nor is it necessary to distinguish among these approaches as primary and secondary, or as sub-structural versus super-structural. It is a fundamental feature of modern societies that they exhibit what Daniel Bell called a "disjuncture of realms": social complexity produces multiple centers of power that themselves produce only loosely overlapping status hierarchies (Bell 1976). It is thus possible to obtain substantial and rising income in a field lacking social prestige or power, or, as we have noted, to obtain both rising incomes and power without those labor market outcomes producing substantial social acceptance of one's racial or ethnic group. Thus, consider the contrast between British Afro-Caribbeans and South Asians. While the former have achieved far inferior social mobility than have the latter in terms of the labor market, Afro-Caribbeans are widely accepted as being at the core of modern British identity, while suspicions of foreignness and a consequent cultural distance still bedevil those from the Indian subcontinent (Modood 1999).

2 What do race and ethnicity have to do with it?

Most accounts of social mobility study the matter from the perspective of an individual endowed with particular skills and capital, or by examining how individuals are able to transfer their status across the generations to others within their families or their racial or ethnic group. One way that race and ethnicity can come into the picture is that differential treatment in contractual relations (such as employment) of minority group

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members by others can impair the ability of these persons to translate their endowments into mobility outcomes (either within generations or between them). We can call this the *discrimination paradigm* in the study of social mobility.

The discrimination paradigm, while surely of some value in particular contexts and for certain groups, has probably become less important as an explanatory schema in both societies over the past quarter-century. But this does not mean that ethnicity or race have ceased to matter to the attainment and transfer of status across time – far from it. As noted briefly above, race and ethnicity matter in the production of social mobility in two ways: first, decisions which affect the life chances of persons belonging to a particular racial or ethnic group are sometimes made by non-group members on the basis of their perception of the group's habits, attitudes, and skills. Secondly, ethnicity and race may reflect real social formations – networks of mutual influence, like-mindedness, and reciprocal concern – that influence (either negatively or positively) the development of those habits, attitudes, and skills that, in turn, partially determine social mobility. These disparate channels of influence are worth describing in more detail.

Individuals often make choices on the basis of perceived group averages, choices that extend across a wide range of social contexts. These choices can range from the annoying but relatively trivial (store clerks distributing attention to customers based on their perception of customers' likelihood of making a high-priced purchase), to the significant but virtually undetectable (house-buyers estimating neighborhood "quality" on the basis of its ethnic and racial mix), to the significant and advantageous (high-tech employers preferring "Asians" because of their reputation for hard work and technological competence). What is significant is that, from the point of view of social mobility, outsiders' estimation of group averages and their imputation of those averages onto individuals may have very substantial consequences for the acquisition of job experience, education, and assets. If individuals use the racial and ethnic mix of a neighborhood as a proxy for "quality," it may serve to depress housing values in neighborhoods with the wrong mix, thereby affecting lenders' willingness to lend in such neighborhoods (thus keeping individuals out of the housing market altogether, and limiting their asset appreciation if they are able to get into the market). If employers evaluate Asian applicants on the basis of perceived group averages, applicants whose real qualities are well below the group average will obtain an unearned advantage in the labor market, the opportunity to build on the job skills and experience, and as a consequence may end up fulfilling the prediction implicit in the group stereotype (this example works in the opposite direction,

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of course, for groups with a perception of low quality) (Loury 2002: Chapter 2). In short, when mobility-relevant resources are controlled by individuals who make decisions on the basis of group averages, race and ethnicity can profoundly impact social mobility even in the absence of group-based animus.

But racial and ethnic groups are not just fictive categories that exist only in the minds of outsiders. They are also real social groupings, through which mobility-relevant skills, habits, and attitudes are produced. And, in some cases they harbor real institutions through which resources are hoarded and distributed. Decisions to invest in education, to defer consumption, to accept or resist superiors in the workforce, and to delay or accelerate childbearing come down, in part, to questions of what "people like me do." That is, they are affected by the meaning embedded in racial and ethnic identity, meanings that are produced by some combination of group insiders and outsiders. Groups that are constituted by a rich set of ethnically or racially specific institutions are likely to have more control of these processes of meaning production, while groups with weaker institutions are likely to find their identity produced at least as much by outsiders as by themselves (Loury 2002: Chapter 3).

Identity, however, is not the only mechanism through which race and ethnicity function as real social groupings that affect mobility. Institutions bounded by race and ethnicity also produce and distribute resources and discipline individuals to meet group norms. But it is with respect to this sense of "group-ness" that ethnic and racial groups vary most starkly. In short, not all racial and ethnic groups are constituted in the same way. The more an ethnic or racial group is constituted by well-functioning social institutions, the greater its ability to mobilize its members for ongoing collective action, to pool resources to guard against risk, to invest for long-term returns, and to discipline members into ongoing group identity by the (implicit or explicit) threat of the withdrawal of those opportunities. The weaker a group's institutions, conversely, the more identity will be enforced through symbolic means, and the less able the group is to coordinate its activities, and thereby to maximize group resources.

3 Comparative method and regime effects

While linking the study of race and ethnicity to that of social mobility makes sense, the reader might reasonably ask what the advantages are of doing so comparatively, and given a comparative method, why the choice of the United States and Great Britain? Our sense is that the deeper processes that structure social mobility, and the way that race and ethnicity interact with it, are brought to the surface by the method of comparison,

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and that the two countries have the right balance of similarities and differences to make comparison productive. To illuminate these points, the balance of this introduction will begin the comparison conducted by the authors in the rest of this book, looking particularly at the variation in political institutions in the two countries. We will also discuss how the analyses in this volume can help us better understand the intersection of "social capital" with race and ethnicity. The larger argument here is that a single-minded focus on the characteristics of ethnic and racial groups, or even on racism, will tend to obscure a central issue – how social and political institutions condition the effects of both group attributes and anti-group animus, in some cases magnifying and in others limiting them.

Institutions and policies vary across space and time. As similar as the two countries here under study may be, they are not the same. Britain fuses political power in a strong executive backed by disciplined political parties, has a strong and insulated civil service, and centralizes power in the national government, leaving localities to implement diktats from London. The United States de-concentrates power within a national government with relatively little party discipline, a weak civil service, and a decentralized federal system in which important decisions are made by states and localities. While the last twenty years have changed things somewhat, Britain has generally been characterized by a broader scope of state intervention in the economy and a more comprehensive welfare state, while the United States has had a stronger and more intrusive set of civil rights laws and protections.[1] These broad institutional and policy differences provide the context within which ethnic minorities make claims, are counted and labeled, seek allies, construct ideologies, organize and mobilize. They do not always influence those outcomes in the way one might first think. At least some of the authors of the chapters that follow arrive at counterintuitive conclusions about the influences of politics on group mobility.

An examination of political influences on group mobility must start with the obvious although often overlooked, fact that political institutions shaped the immigration policies that, in the first instance, caused ethnic and racial minority groups to enter Britain and the United States. In comparing the USA and Britain, the old saw is that the USA is a country of immigrants, while Britain is a country with immigrants. Cliché though it may be, this claim has a great deal to be said for it. While indigenous people are a tiny minority in the USA, whose massive population has been built up by the descendants of colonialists, refugees, forcibly transported slaves and migrant families over several centuries and from across the globe, large-scale, society-constituting inward population movements have a historical depth in the USA that dwarf the same

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in the UK. Britain has not been without a series of incomers that have changed its population mix and social structures, but (leaving aside the violent invasions of a thousand and more years ago) they have been on a smaller scale, more intermittent, and till recently, from fewer sources. The pre-1948 notable cases are the Huguenots (Protestant refugees from persecution from across the Channel), the Irish, as laborers in the late Victorian industrial expansion, and the Jews at various times and from different parts of Europe (the largest Jewish flow being those fleeing from Eastern Europe, especially Russia and Poland, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries). Nineteen forty-eight, the year in which the steamship, *Windrush* brought some young West Indian male workers to Britain, witnessed the start of the large nonwhite, New Commonwealth migrations that are the source of social formations which, on its British side, form the subject of this book. The result, in racial terms, is that 8 percent of the UK today is not white according to census forms (ONS 2003), as compared to 75 percent in the USA (US Census Bureau 2000).

The form of the immigration to Britain has had significant impacts on the society. Most of the British immigration in the first decades of the post-1948 period came from colonies and recent ex-colonies of the empire and so the migrants, predominantly young men, had automatic citizenship status from the moment of arrival. In contrast, migrants to the USA were more likely to come as families and citizenship required periods of residency, could be withheld and, perhaps for these reasons, could be prized. A series of legislative and administrative changes, beginning in 1962 and culminating in the Nationality Act of 1981, restricted rights of entry and citizenship to new migrants in Britain. Family dependents were, however, allowed and thus congeries of temporary male workers steadily began to be transformed into ethnic minority families and settlements. Migration from new sources became very difficult, so reinforcing the presence of specific migrant communities, such as the Caribbeans and South Asians. This has to be qualified, however, by three important observations. First, in this same period Britain joined the European Union, which progressively integrated itself and created a common citizenship enabling the nationals of any one member state to work and live freely in another. Second, employees in multinational companies were becoming more mobile, and London, being a major financial, commercial, and communications hub, attracted many such workers; also, Britain was a major global player in higher education and many overseas students came to Britain and thereafter settled and worked in Britain at least for a period. Third, in the last decade the numbers of refugees and asylum-seekers (coming from, for example, Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa, and

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the former Yugoslavia and Soviet-bloc countries) has greatly increased and includes people who are really traditional economic migrants but if they declared themselves as such would be denied entry. Thus the last decade or so has seen a revival in inward flow which some commentators refer to as the "new migration." In the USA, by contrast, immigration (especially from outside Europe) opened up in 1965 (precisely the time it was closing up in the UK and later elsewhere in the EU) and has continued to grow with the economic boom years of the 1980s and 1990s.

Political institutions have played a central role in the US immigration story. Slavery, protected and regulated by the national government, is responsible for the presence in North America of the vast majority of black Americans. The desire to populate the continent in the early 1800s led successive American governments, both state and national, to actively encourage immigration through much of the nineteenth century. The incentives provided by closely competing political parties caused mass immigration to continue unabated well into the second decade of the twentieth century (when America abruptly stepped on the hose of further migration, largely in response to the shifting national background of immigrants combined with the increasing autonomy of the national state from political parties (Tichenor 2002). A similarly elite-driven process led to the removal of immigration restrictions in the 1960s, followed by a four-decade-long mass wave of migration that brought to American shores the groups most particularly under examination in this study. Despite rising opposition to further immigration among large parts of the American public, the peculiarities of American party competition and an increasingly insulated political system have kept the doors open to further migration, to the point where no national political candidate can now openly advocate immigration restriction.

The British story is quite different. Migration *within* the United Kingdom (primarily from Ireland) is an old story, and one critically connected to the tale of more recent years, as Mary Hickman observes in her contribution to this book. Such migration was not – could not be – formally restricted, and as a result substantial parts of England had a real, durably important experience of ethnic diversity. It was this same legal openness to immigration, combined with the tight postwar British labor market, that led to the sudden burst of Caribbean and Indian subcontinent immigration that began in the 1950s and carried on until the 1970s. Legally, all citizens of first the empire and then the Commonwealth had a right to move to Great Britain, and for a few decades large numbers availed themselves of this right, in part as a result of active government policies of encouragement. As in the United States (both in the early twentieth century and in more recent times), mass immigration

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led to popular support for restriction. Unlike in contemporary American experience, popular pressure for restriction in Great Britain led both Labour and Conservative governments to step hard on the hose of further migration. The result has been that the numbers of ethnic minorities in Britain are substantially below what would have resulted had immigration policy remained constant, as it has in the United States. It is difficult to speculate about the consequences of different immigration policies in Britain, but a more liberal policy would undoubtedly have led to ethnic minorities having a larger influence on national and local politics, and would thereby have made subsequent moves toward restriction that much more difficult.

To put it bluntly, immigration policies – influenced by the nature of the two political systems (whose study lies largely beyond the scope of this volume) – have guided the evolution of ethnic diversity in the two countries in ways that provide the largely silent background for many of the chapters in this book. Had these policies been different, the stories that the authors that follow tell would have been different as well.

In addition to critical differences in the origins and numbers of ethnic and racial minorities, our two cases diverge substantially in the political institutions and culture that groups have encountered, as well as the ways that ethnic and racial diversity have shaped those institutions (a point that Robert Lieberman emphasizes in his chapter). It would be difficult to tell the story of American political development without taking note of the ways that core state institutions have been constructed by, and in some cases against, racial and ethnic minorities. Thus, the persistent decentralization of American politics well into the twentieth century was supported largely by a Democratic Party coalition held together by a desire to protect the autonomy of ethnically and racially defined political projects. In the South, limiting the construction of an autonomous national state was necessary in order to protect first slavery and then segregation. This influenced both critical political rules (for instance, those supporting individualism in the Senate, such as the filibuster) and the contours of public policy (such as state control of the level and eligibility rules in welfare policy). On the other hand, ethnically defined Northern and Midwestern party machines, controlled primarily but not exclusively by the Irish persistently resisted state centralization and policymaking autonomy so as to maximize the patronage resources that fueled their typically urban organizations. Both of these groups supported the expansion of national government spending when it avoided touching their core prerogatives but fiercely opposed it when state expansion threatened to damage the maintenance of the ethnic and racial political status quo. So, American political institutions and the politics of race and ethnicity could

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be said to have evolved in tandem in the United States, to the point that efforts at policy change by racial and ethnic out-groups also required a substantial project of institutional reconfiguration.

Britain presents a sharp contrast to this story of political development. On the one hand, the sheer numbers of racial and ethnic minorities in Britain have always been so small as to make their influence on the country's institutional architecture relatively marginal. The greatest experience of dealing with diverse racial and ethnic groups occurred at the edges of British politics, in the empire and in the subordinate parts of the United Kingdom, specifically Ireland. As a general rule, Britain's polity is substantially more centralized than that of the United States, with a more autonomous bureaucracy and a substantial fusing of legislative and executive power. This basic institutional configuration predated the arrival of commonwealth immigration, and basic institutional reforms have occurred with little consideration of their impact on ethnic minorities, and without substantial input from them. As compared to the American experience (where there was a co-evolution of institutions and racial/ethnic politics), Britain's minorities have confronted a deeply institutionalized system that developed without them in mind.

This basic fact turns out to have substantial, and in some cases counterintuitive, effects on the groups of interest to this study. On the American side, dealing with racial inequality required a massive transformation of the fundamental structure of American politics. The civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s was forced to attack not just racial segregation, but American traditions of federalism and weak bureaucratic power. That is, policy change and institutional reform went hand in hand. Britain's ethnic minorities, by contrast, have exercised what influence they have through an essentially static set of institutions.

Political decentralization, which was a major obstacle to racial minorities in the USA in the 1950s and 1960s, has since served to magnify their influence in some ways and diminish it in others. The concentration of black Americans in central cities with still-substantial authority has given them access to real power in, among other places, Los Angeles, Atlanta, New York, Detroit, and Chicago (once they were able to use their voting franchise to help elect black mayors). At the same time, these mayors attained power just as the budgets of central cities were coming under stress, making it difficult for them to use their newfound influence to durably advance the fortunes of their groups (as immigrants were, arguably, able to do earlier in the century). Nevertheless, political decentralization combined with population concentration has given ethnic and racial minorities access to power as something more than a coalition partner in the national Democratic Party.

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