

A Discussion of Avidit Acharya, Matthew Blackwell, and Maya Sen's *Deep Roots: How Slavery Still Shapes Southern Politics*

Deep Roots: How Slavery Still Shapes Southern Politics. By Avidit Acharya, Matthew Blackwell, and Maya Sen. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018. 296p. \$29.95 cloth, \$22.95 paper.

If the election of Donald Trump has proven anything indisputably, it is that the notion of America as a “postracial” society in the aftermath of the Obama presidency is a canard. Yet how should we understand the specific pattern of race’s persistent salience in US politics? In *Deep Roots*, Avidit Acharya, Matthew Blackwell, and Maya Sen argue that it is the long legacy of chattel slavery that continues to shape politics in the US South in distinctive fashion. Comparing regions that were once marked by slavery with those that were not, the authors develop the concept of “behavioral path dependence” to describe the production and reproduction of a political culture marked by intergenerational racial prejudice. They argue that this legacy continues to shape US politics today in a fashion that is both understandable and predictable with the tools of empirical political science. We asked several scholars with expertise on politics and race, US political development, and political behavior to address this controversial argument.

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doi:10.1017/S1537592719004584

In *Deep Roots*, Avidit Acharya, Matthew Blackwell, and Maya Sen offer a compelling theoretical and empirical case for the lasting effects of slavery on the political attitudes of whites residing in the Southern Black Belt (BB). According to their argument, the effects of slavery persist via behavioral path dependence as a response to the critical juncture lasting from the abolition of the peculiar institution to around the late 1800s when BB whites successfully implemented the Jim Crow system of segregation, which subjugated African Americans to a second-class citizenship in economic, political, and social realms. There is a lot to unpack here, but the thesis, although somewhat novel, is easily comprehensible.

First, the Black Belt is named for the fertile dark soil running across the heart of the South and especially across sections of the Deep South (Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina) where the practice of slavery was most prominent. In the BB counties (the authors’ preferred geographic unit of analysis), slavery’s greater presence as a percentage of the population shaped and continues to have a greater impact on whites’ racial attitudes toward African Americans. The emancipation of slaves in 1865 and the crisis it brought on former slaveholders/planters and their progeny led to their successful efforts to rein in the newly freed slaves by

severely restricting their economic and political mobility. Unlike in those sections of the South where slavery did not flourish and therefore emancipation of a relatively small number of blacks was never viewed as an existential threat to white rule, BB whites drove the establishment of Jim Crow and the Solid Democratic South as the principal institutional means to perpetuate white supremacy.

Interestingly, the authors place greater emphasis on social (e.g., churches, schools, and parents) than on institutional factors (e.g., restrictive voting measures like poll taxes, literacy tests, and the white primary) for the intergenerational transmission of conservative racial attitudes among BB whites. By learning of their racial superiority as expressed by their parents and in their schools, at the same time as discrimination was mandated by election laws and in racially separate but unequal public places of accommodation, every postbellum generation of BB whites has inherited, maintained, and promulgated the most racially conservative opinions found in the United States. The authors refer to this social and institutional process of inculcation as mechanisms of reproduction: hence, behavioral path dependence explains why BB whites persist as America’s most racially conservative population.

The authors begin by developing their theory of behavioral path dependence as the vehicle explaining why slavery still influences whites’ political attitudes. In making this argument they note that it is generalizable to various places and time periods throughout history; for example, German anti-Semitism dating to the fourteenth

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century. In part 1 of the book, the authors go straight to the evidence that slavery continues to shape Southern whites' attitudes. Specifically, the higher the percentage of slaves in a county in 1860, the more likely contemporary whites in that county are "opposed to affirmative action...agree with statements that indicate racial resentment, and more likely to express cooler feelings about blacks" (p. 74). In contrast, and bolstering the authors' argument that slavery's main effect is on racial attitudes, they find no significant relationship between the percentage enslaved in a county and white attitudes toward nonracial issues such as gay marriage and abortion.

In part 2, the authors produce their best work in chapters 5 and 6. Here, they employ rich historical data on voting behavior, lynching, and political economy to flesh out their contention that the period between the abolition of slavery and the turn of the century was the critical juncture: it was then BB whites diverged from their white counterparts in low-slave counties by furthering a much more pronounced racial caste system to perpetuate their dominance over a recently emancipated and, in many cases, majority-black population. Notably, white views regarding slavery do not exhibit much variation on the basis of the institution's relative prominence, even in the 1860 presidential election. Rather, when the profit motive is threatened by political disagreement (intensified Republican opposition after 1860), the split on slavery comes into stark relief as high-slave counties are markedly more pro-secession than are low-slave counties. After the Civil War, BB whites are further incentivized to exert their dominance over African Americans because of the economic toll the conflict wrought on their wealth, which was directly tied to chattel slavery.

In part 3, the last section of the book, the authors offer evidence for the kinds of factors that reinforce or weaken the behavioral path dependency of BB whites' racial attitudes. The reproduction of racial conservatism is evident with respect to the parent-child transmission of these opinions, and it is manifest in BB whites' greater support for presidential candidates furthering a racially conservative agenda irrespective of party affiliation; for example, Dixiecrat Strom Thurmond in 1948, Republican Barry Goldwater in 1964, and Independent George Wallace in 1968. And, even though big changes to race relations through interventions like the 1954 *Brown* decision, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and the 1965 Voting Rights Act have greatly reduced white-black educational, economic, and political participation disparities, the more racially conservative attitudes of whites residing in high-slave counties persist.

Deep Roots is an important work because it is perhaps the most theoretically and empirically developed explanation for why whites residing in high-slave counties remain the most racially conservative Americans. Nonetheless, with the exception of racial resentment, the direct evidence for the relationship between county percentage enslaved in 1860 and modern white racial attitudes is not as robust as the

authors claim. This might explain why statistical confidence intervals are typically set at 90%, and in several instances the plotted effects are not even significant at this level. Also, it is curious that the authors include non-secessionist states in their analysis as "Southern" (e.g., Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, and West Virginia). Presumably this is just because these states practiced slavery, but no portion of the Black Belt runs through them and Kentucky is likely the only one with a legitimate case for being classified as "Southern."

In the otherwise outstanding chapter 5, the authors unwittingly succumb to the ecological inference fallacy in contending that BB white voting behavior in presidential elections does not depart from the regional pattern until after Reconstruction (Figure 5.4, p. 118). Recall that the impressive enfranchisement of African Americans during Reconstruction and the concomitant strong reduction in ex-Confederate participation (at least initially) mask what is likely already a one-sided Democratic presidential vote cast by native BB whites, who are outnumbered in many localities by the Republican coalition of blacks, Northern whites, and Southern scalawags.

Surprisingly, the authors completely overlook the scholarship of Edward Carmines and James Stimson (1989). This omission is alarming because Carmines and Stimson put forth a theory of issue evolution that, in its entirety, closely resembles the one advanced in *Deep Roots*. Instead of a critical juncture, Carmines and Stimson speak of a critical moment that constitutes the impetus for a marked change of political course, which is then pursued and prolonged by path dependency. The cardinal example of issue evolution as applied to the US context of racial politics occurred when the national parties permanently reversed positions on civil rights in the 1964 presidential election (the critical moment).

Finally, the authors' weakest argumentative claim—and also the one given the most attention in the book—is that there is scant evidence of racial threat per se as an explanation for why BB whites harbor the most racially conservative attitudes. The authors tie themselves into knots in their efforts to both explicate racial threat and then knock it down as a significant explanatory dynamic. Indeed, they would be better served to merely state that racial threat is real and that its *roots date back to the legacy of slavery*. After all, how can they dismiss racial threat or attempt to strip the definition of historical context when they include the following quote, which is a classic statement of the concept? "Southern whites and particularly those whites in the Black Belt who were the most outnumbered...had the most to lose" (p. 209).

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doi:10.1017/S1537592719004596

There are many ways to judge the impact of a book. Although awards and citations are common metrics, whether a book prompts a reader to discuss the work with a wide variety of scholars is another important marker of a book's reach. In this regard, Avidit Acharya, Matthew Blackwell, and Maya Sen's *Deep Roots* has provoked many discussions in my concentric intellectual circles. I probably have had more discrete conversations about this book with colleagues from more disciplines (political science, history, and sociology) than I have had about any other book. I appreciated the opportunity to engage my colleagues, and those discussions inform my comments here.

The main contribution of *Deep Roots* is its replication and extension of V.O. Key's main findings in *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (1949), using causal inference. Building on Key's work, Acharya, Blackwell, and Sen use counties in slaveholding states as their unit of analysis and find that counties with higher concentrations of enslaved people in 1860 still exhibit politically distinct behavior today. More of their white residents identify as conservative, and the counties boast a higher Republican voting rate in recent presidential elections. White survey respondents in these counties report higher levels of racial resentment and also tend to oppose affirmative action. To be sure, the effects of high concentrations of slavery on some types of black–white inequality lessened after the passage of civil rights legislation in the 1960s. However, the attitudinal measures are contemporary, suggesting that sentiments have been slow to change.

The causal models that the authors present are convincing. They comport with Key's original findings and the baseline conclusions of numerous African American politics scholars who arrived at those conclusions via process-tracing methods. As such, my concern with this book is not with the findings. I do, however, want to push the authors to go further in their modeling, and I raise concerns about the book's framing and overall narrative.

The authors frame 1860 as the genesis of their story, using the percentage enslaved in each county that year as the basis for their primary explanatory variable. This makes perfect sense, and the authors use it consistently throughout their various models. However, in chapter 6, they also frame the aftermath of Reconstruction as a critical juncture in Southern political history—another stop on the path dependence road to the South's continued political distinctiveness. This, too, is a completely reasonable assertion. It raises the question, however, of whether the history of both slavery and the South's attempt at “redemption” is even more complex than the

way in which authors modeled it. It seems to me that the legacy of slavery, compounded by the end of Reconstruction and Southern efforts to codify white supremacy, could be reasonably hypothesized to jointly and independently affect Southern political attitudes today. As such, I suspect that a structural equation model would better capture the relationships the authors are presenting. This method would allow them to assess the direct and indirect effects of the concentration of enslaved persons in a county, in addition to capturing the cumulative effects of post-Reconstruction decisions such as support for state constitutional conventions that, among other things, functionally disenfranchised blacks until the passage of the Voting Rights Act. Despite this modeling concern, I do not question the authors' findings.

There are places in the narrative, however, where the story they tell about the data muddles the statistical argument. On the first page of the book, they contrast Greenwood, Mississippi, and Asheville, North Carolina to introduce their analytical frame that counties with large and small proportions of enslaved persons in 1860 are different. These two cities are an odd pairing. Yes, the counties that included these cities in 1860 had different concentrations of enslaved persons. However, they are distinct in other important ways (namely, geographic terrain and land arability), which arguably make them an inappropriate matched pair for even a rhetorical comparison. (To be clear, I am not suggesting that these counties were matched in the statistical analysis.) Comparing the county that included Greenwood in 1860 to a county in inland Southeast Georgia, for instance—where the soil is (and presumably was) rich but where there were relatively few slaves in 1860—would have been a more convincing setup that would have burnished the authors' authoritative voice.

As I mentioned earlier, I am persuaded by the findings, though they may seem intuitive to many expert readers. That the findings are intuitive is not a problem. Replication is a hallmark of science, and that the authors are able to build on Key's methods and extend his argument is commendable. That said, the more challenging task for any author is answering the “So what?” question. This brings me back to my original concern: Do the authors clearly convey the purpose for replicating Key beyond the obvious methodological innovation? I am not sure they do. Although I value applying causal inference to this question, that should not be the point of this book. The larger purposes are to demonstrate the lingering impact of one of the United States' original sins on political attitudes and behavior and to challenge skeptical readers who argue that slavery is ancient history and does not affect American politics today. The authors succeed in addressing the former purpose, but they fall short in addressing the latter goal. For instance, in their conclusion, the authors suggest that the takeaway of their findings is that civil rights

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legislation works, because the 1960s legislation (when it was not challenged by the courts) attenuated some of the structural effects of the legacy of slavery. That is a fair conclusion, but it is incomplete. The more relevant question is, How do we address the problem that attitudes have been slower to change? The authors neither adequately address that issue in their conclusion nor do they suggest prescriptions, which would have been helpful.

In addition, I think this book misses an important opportunity to bridge disciplinary boundaries to engage contemporary debates about race and Southern history and politics. The authors make a conscious and understandable decision not to replicate the work of historians. However, by declaring their work “theoretical and empirical” and rendering the history as “context,” as they do on p. 21, they ignore important historiographical debates with which they need to contend, even as they incorporate classic historical scholarship into their citations. For instance, how would the authors respond to potential pushback from contemporary scholars of Southern history who challenge the notion of Southern exceptionalism?

In short, although this book was stimulating, it raised more questions for me than it answered. That creates opportunities for future work, however. I have no doubt that the authors and their peers will continue to study this foundational problem of US democracy and provide new and important insights.

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doi:10.1017/S1537592719004572

Why did the attitudes of late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century southern whites on affirmative action and the Democratic Party, as well as their degree of “racial resentment,” differ depending on the percentage of African Americans in the counties in which they lived? Avidit Acharya, Matthew Blackwell, and Maya Sen (hereinafter ABS) contend that this attitudinal contrast was not the result of a current “racial threat” that varied by the difference in black proportions among counties, but was instead the product of attitudes formed at least 150 years earlier under the slave regime, attitudes that were passed on by family and community socialization and by institutional reinforcement. Distant history did it, and what came in the century after 1860 reinforced the lessons. The civil rights movement and the federal laws that the movement inspired dampened the effect of slavery equally throughout the South, but left the Upcountry/Lowcountry contrast intact.

In a sense, their thesis only states a tautology. But for slavery, a much smaller number of African Americans would have voluntarily moved or been involuntarily forced to move to the South, even if tobacco and cotton had been widely cultivated there. No slavery, no Civil War. No freed persons, no Reconstruction, Redemption, or Jim Crow. No Solid South, no civil rights movement, no racist Republican Party. Other resentments. Q.E.D.

But should final effects be attributed to the First Cause alone? Was slavery even the starting point, or was it spotlighted to draw attention to the book? What are we to make of the “behavioral” and “institutional” path dependence that the authors posit to have connected slavery to the present? What causal emphasis should we place on current conditions or a century and a half of reinforcing events? What role did racial threats have in the onset and development of the path? Is the ABS gloss just another form of racial threat theory? Are all facets of race relations so essentially similar that we should view them as a phenomenon that can be placed on a single scale, so that “conservatism” at the time of slavery can be meaningfully related to “conservatism” in an era of formal legal equality? Did different facets of race relations move across time in lockstep, or was discrimination more complicated?

Let us start with slavery, which ABS largely treat as a static institution solely focused on raising upland cotton. Their treatment is too simple, and it focuses too much on the years just before the Civil War. There was substantial slave importation to the United States by 1700, and upland cotton could not be easily ginned before 1793. By 1860, the tobacco, rice, and long-staple

cotton cultures of the seaboard states had had a much longer time to develop a tradition than the two generations of Mississippi parvenus and the single generation of East Texas frontiersmen had. Slavery changed drastically over two centuries in the United States, and there was not a single slaveholder culture to transmit; if the counties where slavery thrived had been assessed in 1800 or 1830, rather than 1860, the pattern would have been different.

Often, ABS suggest that the roots of twenty-first-century southern politics reach only to Reconstruction: “the political divergence between high- and low-slave counties began to emerge in the years immediately after the Civil War, not before” (pp. 107–8). Or “the time period after emancipation was likely a critical juncture in the trajectory of Southern whites’ racial attitudes” (p. 153). Indeed, antebellum Whigs and Democrats each appealed to areas where slaves were scarce and areas where they were predominant. It was from 1865 to 1900, not during the era of slavery, when Republicans and, later, Populists (who make no appearance in this book) split from the virulently white supremacist Democrats. As ABS realize (p. 135), it was only after 1865 when a coalition of African American voters and largely upland whites began to pose what they explicitly term a “threat” to plantation-area elites within the South. “How the First Reconstruction Still Shapes Southern Politics” might have been a more appropriate subtitle for the book.

The time path of race relations was also much more complicated than ABS generally present it. Black Codes, adopted when Andrew Johnson was president, were soon invalidated by military commanders, the 1866 Civil Rights Act, and the Fourteenth Amendment. Segregation of housing and public accommodations was an urban phenomenon that began in the North and was imposed by law in the South a generation or two after emancipation. It was impossible and, for whites, undesirable to mandate segregation in heavily black small towns and rural areas during and after slavery. Plantation whites had other, harsher ways to dominate African Americans.

Political violence, much deadlier during Reconstruction and other political crises than the later, largely social spectacles of lynching, followed a different pattern in time and place than did segregation. If racial violence was an “important mechanism” for the transmission of white supremacist values (p. 138), its sharp decline after 1877 and again after 1920 should have diminished the salience of those values by the twenty-first century. Disfranchisement, gradually instituted until about 1890 and fully accomplished by 1910, traced yet another path. School segregation was, except in New Orleans before 1877, apparently universal in the South from the 1860s until after *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). The point is that different facets of racial discrimination followed different time patterns through the post-emancipation South and

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affected different areas differently. Establishment and reinforcement of cultural attitudes were not as straightforward as ABS seem to suggest.

Although they discuss some effects of the Second Reconstruction legislation on white attitudes, ABS skip over the politics of the last three decades of the twentieth century. At that time, a series of moderate southern Democratic governors, led by Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton, offered some hope that southern whites might come to better terms with racial issues, even in the Black Belt. If ABS had measured southern white attitudes then or looked at state-level elections, they might have found different patterns.

Provocative in their subtitle and in some sweeping statements, ABS often qualify their thesis that contemporary differences in counties' black proportions cannot account for observed contrasts in whites' racial attitudes by inserting such words as "in part" (pp. 14–15), "alone" (p. 43), "exclusively" (p. 78), "only" (p. 101), "fully" (p. 107), or "solely" (p. 162). The preceding analysis and the facts that the correlation between the slave percentage in southern counties in 1860 and the proportion of African Americans was 0.93 in 1900 (p. 95) and 0.77 in 2000 (p. 83) suggest a reformulation of ABS's views.

The gravity of racial threats during Reconstruction and the rest of the nineteenth century and the potential threats thereafter varied with the African American population in each area. Putting down these threats with violence, ballot box stuffing, discriminatory laws, and, finally, state constitutional provisions that stifled black aspirations created a racial order of great power. But with great power came great fragility. Even small challenges from within—minor refusals of deference, appointments of blacks to insignificant offices, attempts to register a few African American voters—required constant white vigilance and almost authoritarian control of white impulses toward humanity or the rule of law. And petty threats paled in comparison with the likelihood, growing in the twentieth century, of more significant challenges from outside the region: litigation, proposed acts of Congress, a Second Reconstruction.

State laws seconded white socialization, and both were most effective where continued high proportions of African Americans made the potential threats most palpable. The initial threat was important, but so was the path that led from the First Reconstruction to the present, and especially the demographic continuities that reinforced the boundaries of that path.

ABS deserve praise for paying more serious attention to history than political scientists usually do. But all scholars should avoid getting carried away by clever ideas, however great the methodological sophistication they employ in working out those inspirations.

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doi:10.1017/S1537592719004699

In *Deep Roots* (2018), Avidit Acharya, Matthew Blackwell, and Maya Sen offer an impressive, extensive, and extremely rigorous empirical analysis of the effects of high- and low-slave counties on the socioeconomic status and political psychology of white Americans. They consider how these effects are manifested, for example, in partisan votes within the Democratic Party (and for presidential and gubernatorial candidates) over time and through whites' (non-) support of affirmative action or their subscription to racial resentment, as indicators of antiblack animus. Using "high-slave" and "low-slave" counties, as defined by the geographic concentration of enslaved African-descendant Americans in the US South (whose population is documented in the 1860 US Census), the authors use geography (via the "county") as their primary unit of analysis, thereby linking political psychology to space and, most importantly, to history.

Through a theory of behavioral path dependence—norms, attitudes, and beliefs transmitted over time—the authors analyze how white Southerners' attitudes are produced, replicated, and transferred across generations through "mechanisms of reproduction," such as intergenerational socialization (via parents, family, social mores, and racial etiquette) and institutional reinforcement (via schools; larger policy systems like Black Codes, Jim Crow, and amended Southern state constitutions; and changed economic interests and the need for black labor). Often scholars of race and politics examine the significance of "race, space, and place" in the analysis of intergroup interactions. *Deep Roots* acknowledges and tests empirically the relationships of these several factors with white attitudes in high- and low-slave counties by analyzing the nuances of seemingly remote data sources (e.g., farm mechanization data in 1930 and 1940). The empirical evidence mostly bears out the effects of slavery, with greater effects occurring most often among whites who have historical roots in high-slave-concentrated counties.

Acharya, Blackwell, and Sen argue that critical junctures, such as Reconstruction (1865–77), introduced changes in the economy and divergent interests among whites, which set in motion the path-dependent process of antiblack attitudes, the sociopolitical enforcement of white supremacy, and the oppression of African descendants of formerly enslaved people. Thus, *Deep Roots* more directly links a longer lineage of black–white relations to slavery as an institution than did V. O. Key's (1949) proposition that whites' propinquity to blacks created a "racial threat" and induced harsh Jim Crow conditions.

The book is a very important, necessary, and timely contribution to the discourses surrounding race and US political development. *Deep Roots* is also significant for contemporary discussions about the effect of slavery on US history and the current (socioeconomic) statuses of black and white Americans. The data analyses reflect comparative gaps between these two groups, with black Americans often disparaged for their poverty, especially in former high-slave counties.

In addition, *Deep Roots* is well-situated in contemporary politics, as the US political party system has become increasingly racially polarized, especially since the 1964 presidential election and the passage of the Civil Rights Act. As a result, today's Democratic presidential candidates have become increasingly reliant on blacks (especially, black women) as a reliable base of the party, with several of their platforms appearing to acknowledge the significance of incorporating the history of black Americans into their policies. The notion of "repair" through embracing a history often excluded from the larger narrative of the United States helps redress romanticized myths of a "better and empowered" South, one in which slavery "benefited" whites and purportedly even "benefited" enslaved Africans. *Deep Roots* shows how slavery actually affects both groups, although disparately. Unfortunately, this proposition about slavery's effect on society writ large remains contested in broader political discourse and within the halls of power.

Deep Roots demonstrates how various and unconventional data sources can be used to conduct numerous tests to show the relationship between slavery and contemporary Southern white political and racial attitudes. This is where the book makes its mark. The authors show that slavery affected societal structures not only during its periodization but also far into the future, creating unforeseen human interactions in society in an era of purported social and political equality between blacks and whites. Perhaps this is an even larger point: there are more facets to inequality than we have previously accounted for. As a result, slavery has lasting effects on human interactions that can inhibit cross-racial bargaining and even future equality, because race and racial difference were themselves constructed within the mores of slavery (Omi and Winant 1994). Jurisprudence also codified and legalized the inequality that slavery had created (Crenshaw et al. 1990).

Of course, the link between America's history of slavery and white Americans' racial attitudes today is not surprising. Such a link between slavery (and Jim Crow) and racial attitudes among blacks has been well established by African American public opinion researchers, and W. E. B. Du Bois's approach in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) discusses the dualities of black identity and American identity, based on the experiences and vestiges of this history. The conceptual meanings of this linkage continue

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to be developed and parsed rigorously in contemporary studies by scholars of African American psychology and politics, who have been researching this issue for a considerable time (Brown and Lesane-Brown 2006; Dawson 1994; Demo and Hughes 1990; McClain et al. 2009; Nunnally 2010a; Tate 1993).

Through the examination of racial identity and racial consciousness, these researchers have explored the effects of historic discrimination (including slavery and Jim Crow) on contemporary black public opinion and political behavior. For example, when asked whether knowledge about the history of black Americans affects how one interacts with various racial groups, blacks in short order report most often that it affects their interactions with whites (Nunnally 2012). And, when asked about whether they learned about the historic effects of racial discrimination on black life, an overwhelming number of blacks across age cohorts indicate such racial socialization (Nunnally 2010b, 2012). Slavery was part and parcel of black Americans' lives for centuries (and almost a century for Jim Crow). These systems defined their personhood and rights, shaping both their attitudes and activism about contesting their oppression. With this said, why would we not expect a similar pattern for white Southerners, who also lived in these systems, but under different circumstances meant to establish white supremacy?

Does the rigor of empirical examination in *Deep Roots* about the effect of slavery on Southern whites, thus, lead to counterintuitive conclusions? No. Does it add a needed quantitative empirical perspective to a story about race that otherwise seemingly dismisses the effect that slavery had on whites' racial attitudes? Certainly. Of course, other forms of qualitative empirical data (e.g., oral histories, archives, legislative records) can draw equally important linkages between slavery and today. *Deep Roots*, thus, provides additional data analyses and, thereby, spawns important and, arguably, ground-breaking inquiries about what we presume to know about racial attitudes in the United States. It rightly implies that slavery was a system based on white Southerners' commitment to white supremacy and the denigration of African descendants, one perpetuated through psychological and sociolegal reinforcement whose effects endure. As such, the book also points us to another important query: Where do we go from here?

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