Ideas, Institutions, and Political Order: Explaining Political Change
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Institutional approaches to explaining political phenomena suffer from three common limitations: reductionism, reliance on exogenous factors, and excessive emphasis on order and structure. Ideational approaches to political explanation, while often more sensitive to change and agency, largely exhibit the same shortcomings. In particular, both perspectives share an emphasis on discerning and explaining patterns of ordered regularity in politics, making it hard to explain important episodes of political change. Relaxing this emphasis on order and viewing politics as situated in multiple and not necessarily equilibrated order suggests a way of synthesizing institutional and ideational approaches and developing more convincing accounts of political change. In this view, change arises out of "friction" among mismatched institutional and ideational patterns. An account of American civil rights policy in the 1960s and 1970s, which is not amenable to either straightforward institutional or ideational explanation, demonstrates the advantages of the approach.

As the time neared midnight on 10 June 1964, Everett Dirksen took the floor of the United States Senate to conclude three months of debate on the Civil Rights Act. "It is said that on the night he died," Dirksen said, "Victor Hugo wrote in his diary substantially this sentiment: 'Stronger than all the armies is an idea whose time has come.' The time has come," he went on, "for equality of opportunity in sharing in government, in education, and in employment. It will not be stayed or denied. It is here" (*Congressional Record* 1964, 13319; Whalen and Whalen 1985, 185, 198).[1] Surely equality of opportunity for all races was an idea of its time in the United States in 1964, well past due according to many. But what made that particular night *the* moment when this idea arrived, to be entered finally into the nation's lawbooks by vote of a venerable legislative body that had long resisted it? Many things beyond the force of the idea itself conspired to make this idea arrive at that place at that time: a broad and vigorous social movement espousing it, political parties increasingly divided by it and consumed with it, and political institutions that were able to help its advocates build and sustain a coalition around it. How did these things contribute to the triumph of the liberal ideal of equal rights? As John Kingdon (1984, 1) asks, "What makes an idea's time come?"

Long dormant in the systematic study of politics, ideas have staged a remarkable comeback in the social sciences in the last 15 years or so. Indeed, the challenge of "bringing ideas back in" to political science and political explanation is one of the central issues now facing the discipline. There are a number of reasons

that we have arrived at this pass. First, developments in world politics brought ideas onto center stage. The end of the Cold War, the collapse of communism, and the convergence of the world's economic and political institutions on a new neoliberal paradigm, among other broad shifts, signaled a profound ideological transformation in much of the world. Never mind that the social sciences utterly failed to predict these phenomena; without reference to the ideological nature of these transformations, the new world of the twenty-first century seems unfathomable and the pathways by which it arrived incomprehensible (see Anderson n.d.).

Second, prevailing institutional approaches in political science are limited in their capacity to account for the substantive course of politics. Given the raw material—assumptions about actors' beliefs, preferences, knowledge, understandings, and expectations—institutional theories can effectively derive predictions about which outcome from among a range of contemplated outcomes is likely to occur. But precisely because material approaches tend to take these things as given, they are at something of a loss to explain the appearance at any given moment of any particular menu of substantive choices. In the case of the Civil Rights Act, for example, institutional theories can explain why, given the emergence of civil rights as a salient issue, Congress acted as it did. They can even explain why the American political system at mid-century was particularly susceptible to the appeals of the civil rights movement. But they cannot account for the substantive content of civil rights demands, or of the beliefs and understandings that led actors to connect these demands with a particular set of policy solutions. Ideas, many analysts argue, can fill this explanatory gap. After all, they constitute much of the substantive raw material upon which institutional theory feeds— the goals and desires that people bring to the political world and, hence, the ways they define and express their interests; the meanings, interpretations, and judgments they attach to events and conditions; and their beliefs about cause-and-effect relationships in the political world and, hence, their expectations about how others will respond to their own behavior. To the extent that these and other things that go on in people's heads are not simply a function of something else in

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[1] The Hugo quotation is actually a paraphrase of a passage from his historical essay, *Histoire d'un crime: Déposition d'un témoin,* his vicious account of Louis Napoleon's coup d'état of 1851. The passage reads, "On résiste à l'invasion des armées; on ne résiste pas à l'invasion des idées" ["The invasion of armies can be resisted; the invasion of ideas cannot be resisted"] (Hugo 1987, 456).

the political world, institutional and interest-based approaches will tell only a part of the causal story of many significant political phenomena (Berman 1998, 16–19).

With these limitations in mind, scholars studying the role of ideas in politics have offered a bracing challenge to material perspectives on a number of grounds. Ideational approaches challenge the reductionism of much institutional theory, which often assumes away any complexity in the substance of politics, as in spatial models of voting or legislative behavior that collapse political disputes typically to a single dimension (Black 1958; Downs 1957; Krehbiel 1988; Poole and Rosenthal 1997). Ideas in politics, by contrast, are often complex and multidimensional. Ideational accounts of politics also challenge the tendency of institutional theories to take the interests and aims of political actors as given, whether they are determined by individual rationality, group affiliation, or cultural patterns. Rather, actors' understanding of their own interests is apt to evolve as the ideological setting of politics changes. More generally, ideational theories seem to challenge the institutional emphasis on structure, aggregate organizational or behavioral regularities, as the principal guiding force behind political behavior. A focus on ideas suggests, rather, the possibility that human agency can defy the constraints of political and social structures and create new political possibilities (Smith 1992).

These challenges zero in on the central shortcomings of institutional theories of politics. Although each brand of institutionalism has its own blind spots, in their broadest outlines they share these characteristics—reductionism, the exogeneity of certain fundamental elements of political life, and a privileging of structure over agency. Above all, institutional theories share an emphasis on finding order and stability, comprehensiveness and coherence, patterns and models that elucidate more or less general propositions about a class of political phenomena. Because of their emphasis on eliciting ordered patterns and regularities from observations about politics, institutional theories in general run into trouble in accounting for political change; How, after all, can we explain change in outcomes by reference to stable causes? Any search for the sources of change in this sort of explanatory scenario inevitably leads to a problem of infinite regress: To explain a change in some familiar state of affairs, we must assume an antecedent change in one or more causal factors that were previously part of a stable system. But after making this move we are left with the same problem: What caused this antecedent change, if not some change farther back in the causal chain? At some point in this sequence, the source of change must come from outside the system.

It is one of my contentions that these same dilemmas—problems of reductionism, exogeneity, and structure envy—ironically bedevil much ideational political analysis, contrary to common presumptions and the self-professed aims of many ideational theorists who define their enterprise as a counterweight to these particular sins of institutional analysis. Above all ideational and institutional accounts share the focus on ordered regularity that makes problems of change particularly intractable for both camps. It is certainly

true that ideational accounts are often more sensitive to change than institutional ones; ideas, after all, are a medium by which people can imagine a state of affairs other than the status quo and such imaginings might plausibly spur them to act to try and make changes. But ideas alone do not create the incentives or opportunities for action, and not all holders of alternative political ideas act on them. Moreover, ideational accounts of political change typically chronicle shifts from one ideational equilibrium to another.

There is no particular shame in these faults; they are the necessary elements of theory building and generalization that distinguish social science from the description of singular slices of human experience. Nevertheless, this set of analytical moves, common to both theoretical schools, comes at some cost. In particular, what Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek (1994) have called the "iconography of order," the quest to find coherent synchronous patterns—equilibria—in political life, often leaves political scientists scratching their heads when asked to account for political change.[2]

I suggest further that by substantially relaxing the common focus on order that both sets of approaches share, we can make progress in accommodating the two perspectives. That is, an analytic perspective that considers *both* institutions and ideas as integral, endogenous explanatory elements, without privileging one or the other, can go some distance in avoiding these traps. In particular, analysis that takes both ideas and institutions seriously will almost of necessity shed light on points of friction, irregularities, and discontinuities that drive political change. These discontinuities between separately constituted patterns of institutions and ideas can lead to a reformulation of the incentives and opportunities facing political actors and produce large-scale political change that neither institutions nor ideas, considered independently, can explain. There are, to be sure, analytical costs to this approach, particularly the parsimony and clear foundations that often characterize institutional models of politics. But there are corresponding analytical gains, particularly the ability to account for major political change, that make these costs worth paying. After elaborating this critique of both institutional and ideational theories I sketch the outlines of a synthesis and illustrate its possibilities with an example taken from the development of civil rights policy in the United States.

IDEAS AND INSTITUTIONS: COMMON CHALLENGES

A variety of institutional perspectives has come to occupy, it is fair to say, the ascendant position in the theoretical pantheon of political science. There is, of course,

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[2] By "order" I refer not to the orderliness of societies and government—what Samuel Huntington (1968, 1) defined as qualities of "consensus, community, legitimacy, organization, effectiveness, [and] stability"—but rather to the recognition of patterned regularity in social and political life. Some major works of social science have focused precisely on finding order among great moments of societal disorder, such as revolutions, as in the work of Barrington Moore (1966) and Theda Skocpol (1979).

a variety of "new institutionalisms" in political science (and the social sciences more generally), rooted in a variety of methodological and disciplinary approaches, from neoclassical microeconomics and the theory of games to macrohistorical sociology to the sociology of organizations and culture (Campbell and Pedersen 2001a; Hall and Taylor 1996; Immergut 1998; Powell and DiMaggio 1991; Thelen and Steinmo 1992). Although these perspectives differ in significant ways, they share a common set of concerns and assumptions, particularly an interest in the way in which some set of regularities in political life (rules and procedures, organizational structures, norms, cultural scripts) shapes the expression and aggregation of political preferences, allocates power and regulates its exercise, and therefore affects political outcomes (Immergut 1998).

Another characteristic these perspectives share is a tendency to relegate ideas, however they are conceived, to the sidelines in explanatory accounts of political processes (see, e.g., Berman 1998, 14–24, and Hall 1997). One extreme version of this view holds that ideas are epiphenomenal, simply consequences of material (or structural or institutional) arrangements. This view is most clearly associated with certain versions of Marxism, but it also appears in non-Marxist variants. In such cases, expressions of ideas in a political setting might be taken not as genuine articulations of beliefs or understanding but as strategic manipulation or position taking aimed at advancing an interest or pursuing a goal that is deemed to be fundamental (see, e.g., Mayhew 1974).

Even in cases where the analysis is not quite so doggedly materialist, ideas are seen as exogenous to the more fundamental explanatory framework. Ideas often make an appearance in institutional analyses, where they serve the purpose of patching over lacunae in the basic explanation. This move has become somewhat common in rational-choice institutionalism, where ideas operate as focal points that help solve game-theoretic models with multiple equilibria (Bates, de Figueiredo, and Weingast 1998; Garrett and Weingast 1993). Ideas are unquestionably important to such analyses, but not ideas *as* ideas—that is, their content, valence, and intensity are less important than the role they play in a causal tableau. Ideas work in such instances merely as devices to untangle the knotty problems of institutional models; something else entering from the wings would do just as well. More generally, as Mark Blyth (1997, 231) has observed, "Ideas in such treatments are ultimately secondary to the mode of analysis in which they are employed. Their definition, operationalization, and explanatory power are simply derivative of the wider theory in which they are embedded." Although they might be important to particular explanations, ideas when adduced in this way do not fundamentally alter the institutionalist enterprise.

Such moves also ignore commonplace readings of history, in which ideas often appear as the prime movers of history. Prominent accounts of the American (Bailyn 1967; Wood 1969) and French (Sewell 1985) Revolutions, for example, have put ideas at the cen-

ter of causal accounts of tumultuous political change. Nor do they fully capture political developments that involve basic conflicts and transformations among political ideas and values. Such developments span the spectrum of substantive concerns in political science: the rise of Keynesianism and its eclipse by neoliberalism (Campbell and Pedersen 2001b; Hall 1989, 1993), the triumph of color-blind liberal integrationism in the United States over a history of race-conscious oppression (King 2000; Smith 1997), and the emergence of international norms of multilateralism and human rights out of Cold War realism (Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink 1999; Sikkink 1993). If institutionalism wants to remain relevant in political science, it must prove itself able to account convincingly for these changes that manifest themselves not simply in new policies but in fundamentally new ideological bases for politics.

The challenge for institutional approaches, therefore, is to find a way to treat ideas as analytically consequential in accounts of political action, policy development, and institutional change, and to do so without falling into the characteristic traps that I have outlined—particularly the ad hockery with which institutional accounts usually appropriate ideas as explanatory factors. But this must also be done in a way that retains the essential strengths of institutionalism in all its varieties: its accounts of strategic behavior by purposive agents under structural constraints, of the aggregation of interests, of the distribution and exercise of power, and of the social construction of political rationality—and its ability to combine and recombine these elements and mobilize them into convincing causal explanations of a wide range of political phenomena, from the presidential veto (Cameron 2000) and the political control of the bureaucracy (McCubbins, Noll, and Weingast 1987) to social revolutions (Skocpol 1979), industrial policies (Dobbin 1994), lawmaking under separated powers (Krehbiel 1998), and welfare states (Pierson 1994; Skocpol 1992). Our synthesis should recognize, in other words, that ideas are not simply tools in the hands of power-seeking strategic agents (although they can be and often are) (Campbell 1998).

While institutional approaches labor under these difficulties in trying to assimilate ideas, ideational explanations share many of the same blinders. Again, these difficulties take more and less extreme forms. At the far extreme are accounts that posit a single, overwhelming, and, above all, stable set of ideas as the driving force in politics (see, e.g., Geertz 1964 and Hartz 1955). In such accounts it is the substance of ideas that matters above all in shaping political outcomes, whether they are coherent, logical, internally consistent, and thus influential; the causal mechanisms that drive this influence inhere in the ideas themselves. While such an approach is admittedly rare in the rationalist world of the social sciences, functional explanations of politics often ascribe this role to political ideas; modernization theory, which ascribes great importance to the logical, functional connections among the components of political systems, is a prominent example (Almond and Coleman 1960; Inglehart 1997).

More common are studies that emphasize political ideas as central causal factors but give short shrift to the political settings in which ideas become influential and to the causal mechanisms that influence the selection among ideas in concrete political choices (Berman 2001). In his magisterial survey of the multiple political traditions that have challenged liberalism for ascendancy in American politics, for example, Rogers Smith (1997) places his bets squarely on ideational factors, the interplay of three clusters of ideas about national membership and civic identity, as the central factor in shaping American citizenship laws and American political development more generally. Smith (1993, 1997) brilliantly parses the ideological currents that found expression in American citizenship and immigration policy and effectively challenges the view of American culture as thoroughly suffused with egalitarian liberalism that has held sway from Tocqueville through Louis Hartz and beyond (see also King 1973). These ideological traditions do not stand alone in Smith's work; like a mirror image of institutional accounts that rely on ideas as catalytic but not constitutive, his account presents evidence about the institutional settings in which ideas are enacted as policy—courts, legislatures, administrative agencies, and the like. But these settings are exogenous to his theoretical framework; they appear conveniently as stage-setters for his interpretive enterprise but they do not fundamentally change the theoretical approach, limiting somewhat his theory's capacity to explain the particular sequence of outcomes he charts (Orren 1996a, 1996b; Smith 1996, 1999). As Smith (1999, 25) himself notes,

> Conducive conditions are . . . not enough to explain outcomes. To grasp how and why early American political actors combined liberal, republican, racist, and sexist ideas and institutions, we must go beyond a Hartzian focus on their initial material and intellectual circumstances and attend to their central political tasks. Those tasks were not, first and foremost, the carrying on of any particular tradition, although many early Americans identified with historical figures who defended personal liberties and championed republican governments. American leaders were most immediately concerned with using available traditions first to mobilize support for the Revolution, then to build a successful new nation, and finally to maintain and extend it in various ways.

More precisely, these broad political projects posed particular political challenges to these actors, who had to negotiate a distinctive and shifting institutional universe to implement them. They had to pass laws, defend those laws against legal challenges, and administer them according to particular institutional rules and logics that were not necessarily connected to (or in synch with) the ideas these policies embody. These patterns surely affected the sequence and substance of the outcomes Smith charts by placing power in certain hands at certain moments, privileging certain interests over others, and creating moments of opportunity for politicians to act, whether out of strategic or ideological or some combination of motives (Kingdon 1984; Mayhew 2000). These features of the political landscape are not absent from his account, but they do not carry independent explanatory weight and he does not assimilate their effects systematically into his framework.

Just as ideas are not merely strategic tools, political ideas are not free-floating bits of knowledge and conjecture, detached from considerations of structure and power, that rise and fall according to the functional logic of the marketplace (to borrow Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr.'s metaphor) or of natural selection (*Abrams* v. *United States* 1919, 630–31; Mill, *On Liberty*, chap. 2). Part of understanding political development and institutional change is understanding which ideas win (or, in fact, which ideas are in the arena to begin with), why, and with what consequences for whom. The important point is not only where ideas come from or how they cohere or collide but also how they come to be prominent, important, and powerful, even determinative in shaping political behavior and defining political rationality. As Sheri Berman (2001, 233) writes, "Political scientists must be able to explain . . . why some of the innumerable ideas in circulation achieve prominence in the political realm at particular moments and others not. Since no intellectual vacuum ever exists, what is really at issue here is ideational change, how individuals, groups, or societies exchange old ideas for new ones." These exchange processes, it is clear, occur at the intersection of ideas and institutions, and any fully convincing theory of political or institutional change must incorporate both as constituent elements with reasonably equal weights.

ORDER, DISORDER, AND POLITICAL CHANGE

The most important limitation on the capacity of both institutional and ideational approaches to come to grips with processes of change is their common emphasis on ordered, patterned regularity. It is this emphasis, after all, that distinguishes social science from other modes of inquiry into human experience—the search for general patterns of behavior and interaction.[3] This emphasis on order leads, as Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek (1994, 1996, 1999) argue, to a view of political development that consists of periods of stability and coherence, of "politics as usual," punctuated by moments of extraordinary, even transformative change, after which things settle back down into a reformulated pattern of ordinariness (see Baumgartner and Jones 1993 and Carmines and Stimson 1989). Each brand of institutionalism lends itself to this view: Rational choice, with its emphasis on equilibrium and its methodology of comparative statics; historical institutionalism, with its focus on periodization and regimes;

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[3] This minimalist definition of social science is intended to be a thoroughly catholic one. I do not mean to endorse a vision of social science that depends on the discovery of Hempelian covering laws that govern human behavior across time and space, nor do I mean to exclude interpretive modes of inquiry such as Geertz's (1973) notion of "thick description," which, although it does not endorse generalization across cultural milieus, nevertheless hews to an idea of understanding human societies by discerning regular patterns of interaction and signification among their members (Merton 1949; Zuckerman 1997).

and sociological institutionalism, with its account of taken-for-granted cultural meanings and scripts that underlie action. Although ideational theories are often more attuned to change, they too tend to emphasize order and regularity. Ideas do not appear willy-nilly in ideational accounts; rather, they appear in settled, ordered configurations that serve to organize some reasonably broad aspect of political life over some span of time, whether as all-encompassing ideologies or as what Berman (1998, 21–22) calls "programmatic beliefs" (see also Eckstein 1988).

Both institutional and ideational approaches thus exhibit something of a bias toward finding and explaining stability in political arrangements. Each set of approaches has developed sophisticated tools for making causal inferences about the effects of stable, recurring patterns on political outcomes. This bias, however, poses a problem when we are confronted with significant political change. From a perspective that emphasizes stability and relegates things that do not fit the pattern to the background, the sources of important change almost necessarily appear to be exogenous, the result of some sort of shock of unknown origin that may or may not be assimilable by the prevailing order. What we are after is an explanation not of ordinary predictable variation in outcomes but of extraordinary change, where relationships among explanatory factors themselves change.

To put the matter in more analytical terms, consider a simple model of some political phenomenon:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \varepsilon. \qquad (1)$$

Although the explanatory factors, X_1 and X_2, vary, the model describes a stable pattern of relationships between these factors and the outcome, Y; when X_1 or X_2 varies by a certain amount, Y changes by a predictable amount, as described by the parameters, β_1 and β_2. Anything we do not observe or cannot measure or consider unnecessary to explain the outcome is bundled in the error term, ε. This model describes a stable pattern, and we can test its explanatory power by observing variation on the independent variables and comparing the model's predictions with actual states of the world under a variety of conditions. But consider that, for some reason, the pattern changes, requiring a new model to describe the same phenomenon:

$$Y = \beta_3 + \beta_4 X_1 + \beta_5 X_2 + \varepsilon. \qquad (2)$$

This model describes a new set of stable regularities, in which the variables are the same but the relationships among them are different—we have new parameters, β_4 and β_5, in place of the original ones. Now we have useful models of two situations, before and after some transformative change that has altered not just the conditions that produce some outcome (what I describe above as ordinary variation) but the very causal process at work in producing the outcome (extraordinary change).[4] We might even have a description of whatever happened at the moment of transformation from

(1) to (2). What we do not have is an account of how and why the world changed; there is nothing in the stable patterns of variation in model (1) that can provide a causal story about the emergence of model (2). Any explanation we might be able to mount for this change would have to be exogenous to model (1), based on something that was simply relegated to the error term, since model (1)'s parameters (β_1 and β_2) are constant.[5]

What all of this abstract symbolism is meant to suggest is that the only source of explanatory power to account for significant political change—change that goes beyond the bounds of ordinary variation—is the error term, the detritus of the normal model of political affairs. These are the things that, as noted above, are considered irrelevant or unnecessary to a model of political order or else too wispy or ethereal to be the focus of systematic explanation. This is true, in general, of both institutional and ideational models that focus on ordered patterns in the political world. To explain the move from one set of institutions to another, we need reference to something exogenous to an institutional model of the initial state of affairs; likewise for a shift from one ideational pattern to another. The question is how to develop models of politics that can account for such substantial episodes without recourse to such ad hoc exogenous factors—in other words, how, if possible, to endogenize multiple ordered patterns, whether based on institutions or ideas, in a single type of explanatory framework that can help explain how apparently stable institutional and ideological patterns can change quite dramatically. There are limits, of course. Not everything that happens in the political world is predictable and consequential things happen that are quite simply beyond the reach of any reasonable model—singular events such as assassinations, for example. Thus we cannot hope to endogenize everything. Nevertheless, there does not seem to be any a priori reason why both ideas and institutions, neither of which has such singular character, cannot both be incorporated into reasonable, tractable models of politics.

One way out of this bind is to relax the emphasis on order and regularity in modeling politics. The alternative need not be chaos. Rather, we can consider that any political moment or episode or outcome is situated within a variety of ordered institutional and ideological patterns, each with its own origins and history and each with its own logic and pace (Orren and Skowronek 1994, 1996). These patterns, it is often metaphorically said, "take on lives of their own"; that is, they come to structure and delimit political interests, understandings, and behavior independently of other factors that might also be important. It is common in

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[4] For simplicity's sake, I have not considered the possibility that some new variable, X_3, may have entered the mix in the transition from

(1) to (2). This eventuality, however, would not change the fundamental point and would in fact deepen the conundrum that I am illustrating.

[5] I offer this stylized example not to suggest, as some have (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994), that the statistical reasoning represented therein is any kind of gold standard for social scientific inference but rather to demonstrate the distinction I am making between explaining stability and explaining change and to point to the need for more configurative models of politics that embrace a multiplicity of causal elements (Katznelson 1997).

both institutional and ideational analysis to conceive of political order in holistic terms. A political "order," in this mode, is a regular, predictable, and interconnected pattern of institutional and ideological arrangements that structures political life in a given place at a given time—"a durable mode of organizing and exercising political power... with distinct institutions, policies, and discourses," as David Plotke (1996, 1) defines it (see also Skowronek 1993). Such an order might have multiple institutional and ideological components, which shape and constrain political action by providing incentives, opportunities, and grounds for legitimation to political actors. An important presumption behind this approach is that a political "order" is internally coherent. This definition implies that the effects of the component parts are cumulative and mutually reinforcing, that they generally point most actors in the same (or at least complementary) directions most of the time. (This is not to say there is no conflict, only that conflicts are fundamentally stable and predictable and tend to be contained and resolved within the normal political processes that constitute the order in question according to generally agreed upon or conventionally understood rules and expectations.) As an analytical strategy for explaining political outcomes, this approach presumes that other factors are not consequential enough to create sufficiently strong incentives for actors to deviate from what appear to be the "normal" workings of politics.

There is no reason to presume, however, that the ideological and institutional currents that prevail at any given time or place are necessarily connected with each other in any coherent or functional way. This is true for a number of reasons. First, political arrangements are rarely, if ever, the products of a coherent, total vision of politics that informs institutions and ideas and knits them together into a unified whole (and even in times and places that approach this extreme—revolutionary France, the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany—politics remains subject to multiple, discordant forces). Rather, they are inevitably the products of compromise, partial and circumscribed, incoherent and jury-rigged, rarely if ever sweeping away the detritus of a previous order to construct a new one. New policies, institutional arrangements, or ideological paradigms thus do not replace the old but are layered atop prior patterns, creating what Jeffrey Tulis (1987, 17–18) has called a "layered text." Second, such arrangements are often the products of some past event, so that while institutions, policies, or sets of ideas might have arisen in response to particular historical circumstances, they often outlast the conditions that led to their creation and may persist despite being dysfunctional (North 1990). Consequently the ideological and institutional orders that prevail at any given time or place are unlikely to be connected with each other in any coherent or functional way. There may be instances in which ideological and institutional patterns "fit" together and cumulate into something that looks like an equilibrium (on the notion of "fit" see Skocpol 1992). At other times, however, they will collide and chafe, creating an ungainly configuration of political circumstances that has no clear

resolution, presenting actors with contradictory and multidirectional imperatives and opportunities.

These considerations immediately shift attention away from any particular regularity and onto the tension or complementarity *among* patterns that might more plausibly drive the dynamics of political development. If we picture politics as occurring in multiple concurrent orders, it is in the friction between orders that we may more readily find the seeds of change within the politics of any given moment. Samuel Huntington (1981) identifies just such friction, between political ideals and the performance of political institutions, as the motive force behind American political development; when the gap between ideals and institutions grows large enough, he argues, periods of "creedal passion" occur in which institutional practices are reformed to align more closely with the ideals. Huntington's approach suggests the importance of the lack of fit among multiple ideological and institutional orders as an important motor of political change (although it is unclear what the causal mechanism is). But his view of these orders, particularly of ideas, is a relatively static one, in which a constant set of political ideas—*the* American Creed—serves as a fixed point to which political institutions and practices are tethered so that, like a pendulum, they return with a certain mechanical regularity and periodicity toward a central location. Political ideas and institutions are not fixed, however. Certain ideological constructions, at the level of Huntington's Creed (or culture, or ideology, or tradition)—the ideals of liberty and equality, for example—have a very long life span and can define enduring boundaries that a nation's politics will rarely, if ever, cross (Greenstone 1993). But ideas at this level do not offer a concrete guide to understanding the more precise pathways a country's political development might take. Many particular programmatic beliefs might be consistent with these broad boundary conditions, and these ideas might change more quickly. Moreover, the interpretation and framing even of deeply rooted ideas might change over time, so that concepts such as "liberty" or "equality" might be invoked to support very different practices in different contexts by people who all the while believe themselves to be upholding a timeless and unchanging political tradition. Similarly, some institutional features of politics are relatively stable over long stretches of time, while others are less fixed and more variable. If we unmoor both sets of factors from overly general assumptions about their fixity and stability, new patterns of order and change may well emerge into view.

As an example of this analytical dilemma, consider pluralism and consensus historiography, which dominated American social science in the aftermath of World War II. This approach, exemplified by such scholars as Louis Hartz (1955), Richard Hofstadter (1948), and David Truman (1971), offered a view of American politics in which ideology, institutions, and behavior were fundamentally aligned with one another. Liberal individualism, skepticism toward the state, the separation of powers, and a commitment to a set of "rules of the game" all went together to create

a unified and ordered whole, in which ideas, institutions, and interests reinforced one another to produce a frictionless politics of incremental adjustment and group accommodation, devoid of intense, polarizing, and destabilizing institutional or ideological confrontations (Bell 1960). But this school of thought lacked the capacity to explain the convulsive changes in American politics in the 1960s, such as the civil rights revolution, which mounted a profound challenge to the pluralist picture of order, consensus, and functionality—the type of untidy change that Truman (1971, xliv, 524) called (with more than a little horror) "the whirlwind." Even writers in this school who recognized the civil rights challenge, such as Gunnar Myrdal (1944), could not conceive of racism and segregation as anything other than mistakes, deviations, somehow external to the American political tradition (Smith 1993, 1997). But an alternative perspective understands the civil rights transformations of the 1950s and 1960s not as alien to the American political tradition but as outgrowths of many of the very ideological and institutional structures that are constitutive of it: an ideology of equal rights; political mobilization and organization; pressure on policymakers through the courts, electoral politics, and other institutional venues, and so forth (Klinkner and Smith 1999; McAdam 1982). In this view, the civil rights revolution arose from a clash among elements of the American political system rather than an unexplainable exogenous shock.

The central hypothesis that emerges from this discussion is that where friction among multiple political orders is more prevalent, the likelihood of significant, extraordinary political change (as opposed to normal variation) will increase. Note that this formulation is not necessarily about friction between ideas and institutions, although it may take this form, but about friction among ordered political patterns *however constituted*, whether institutional or ideational. Institutions can clash with each other, as can ideas. The essential point is to decompose the notion of a single, encompassing political "order" into its component parts, whatever form they happen to take, to judge the extent to which they overlap or conflict, and, finally, to assess whether the disjunction among them plausibly generates important political change. It is an important advantage of this approach that it can consider both institutions and ideas as building blocks of an explanation for political change, but it need not do so if the important motors of change in a given case fall on one side or other of the ideas–institutions divide.

The challenge of identifying and measuring friction among orders is a serious one. As the pluralism example demonstrates, different analysts can find order and disorder in the same material. Most important to the enterprise is simply the careful historical reconstruction of the relevant elements of the political setting of the moment under consideration—a policy debate, an era in political history, whatever the unit of analysis might be. This is not as biased and ad hoc an approach as it sounds at first blush. First, most episodes of important political change have already been the subject of voluminous historical analysis; even if analysts disagree

about the central causes of change, the key contextual factors and political patterns that are likely to generate friction in the political environment will be well known and this is unlikely to be a source of bias in the analysis (see Lustick 1996). Second, the characteristics of the major sources of political order are also well known, through the extensive literatures on ideas and institutions and their effects that I have already discussed. It is important to note that the approach I outline here is not a substitute for work that theorizes about order or discerns and explains ordered patterns in the political world, whether institutional or ideational. In fact, this synthesis can only build on the advances that have been made in the last generation by both institutional and ideational theorists and depends on the continuation and expansion of these research programs (see Fiorina 1996).

Thus finding the multiple political orders that combine and potentially clash to produce change is no great mystery. In general, there will be a finite number of components that will constitute the field of inquiry, what we might call the dimensions of disorder (or order, as the case might be). These can be described in three clusters, each of which is a familiar presence in political analysis. The first cluster comprises governing institutions, whether the conventional institutions of states (legislatures, executives, courts, bureaucracies), international organizations, or other governance arrangements. The second cluster comprises the organizational environment, such as political parties and party systems, the organization of interests, nongovernmental organizations, and the like. The third cluster comprises the ideological and cultural repertoires that organize and legitimate political discourse.

Each of these sets of factors generates incentives and opportunities and defines repertoires of legitimate moves for political actors. Measuring friction, then, is a matter of deriving, from the historical record, accounts of these incentives, opportunities, and repertoires that arise from multiple sources of political order and impinge simultaneously on the same set of actors. What is important is the "directionality" of these incentives. Where they point mostly or predominantly in one direction, at least for most actors most of the time, the result will likely be political stability. Friction, on the other hand, occurs when they point in substantially different directions, especially where they subject the same sets of actors to conflicting pressures that pose acute dilemmas and make conventional moves untenable. In such circumstances, significant political change is more likely to result.

The structure of the multiple-orders argument draws significantly on parallels with Paul Pierson's (1993, 2000a) work on policy feedback and path dependence. Pierson has called attention to processes by which political decisions made at particular moments can become self-reinforcing, making change difficult and costly even when the policies or institutions become dysfunctional (North 1990). The causal process in Pierson's framework involves the "locking-in" of policies or other political arrangements through processes of learning, the coordination and organization of political

activity, and the adaptation of expectations. Political actors, whose interests and understandings of the political world are increasingly likely to be aligned with these arrangements, act to protect them. This approach, with its emphasis on order and regularity, is thus particularly successful at explaining the status quo bias of many political arrangements, as in Pierson's (1994) own analysis of the surprising resilience of welfare policies in the face of strong political and ideological pressures for retrenchment (Wood 2001).

Although the path-dependence framework is especially well suited to explaining continuity, its focus on the unfolding of political processes over time draws attention to the particular mechanisms by which political processes reinforce themselves and consequently provide an important opening to the study of political change (Pierson 2000b; Thelen 1999; Wood 2001). In particular, its causal approach—its attention to the incentives, opportunities, and repertoires that prevailing structures construct for political actors—provides a useful guide to the causal mechanisms that underlie the multiple-orders approach. The causal sequence, in which actors adapt to existing political arrangements and behave in response to them, is parallel, but with the recognition that at any given moment, politics is situated on multiple "paths," each of which contributes to the array of the choices available to actors. When these paths are consonant with one another, when they point actors in complementary directions, the result may be stability and incrementalism; when they are not, rather than self-reinforcing patterns of "lock-in," the result will more likely be instability and uncertainty among actors about how to formulate and pursue their political aims.

Thus the causal mechanism linking structural friction and political change is the reformulation of the incentives and opportunities for individual political action that friction produces—the discontinuities between the expectations generated by the "orders" considered individually and new opportunities presented by the "system" (conceived as a complex of individual "orders"). When stable patterns of politics clash, purposive political actors will often find themselves at an impasse, unable to proceed according to the "normal" patterns and processes that had hitherto governed their behavior. Political ideas and interests that had formerly prevailed might no longer find outlets in the same institutional settings, or institutions might no longer be able to resolve (or even paper over) clashes of ideas as before. Political actors in such circumstances will often be induced to find new ways to define and advance their aims, whether by finding a new institutional forum that is more receptive to their ideas or by adapting ideas to take advantage of new institutional opportunities. The result of these moves is not that old orders are jettisoned but that elements of them are recombined and reconfigured into a new set of political patterns that is recognizably new and yet retains some continuity with the old ones (much as Tocqueville [1955] described the aftermath of the French Revolution).

One key to this explanatory strategy is the openness and unpredictability of these moments when the normal order of politics is unsettled rather than change per se. Such friction, it is important to note, need not actually produce substantial change. The Clinton administration's health policy effort of 1993–94, for example, was a moment when a variety of institutional and ideological currents—electoral politics, interest-group configurations, policy legacies, and ideas flowing from the health policy community, among other things—combined to make the status quo seem untenable and to make dramatic policy innovation seem possible, if not probable (Hacker 1997; Peterson 1998; Skocpol 1996). That Clinton's effort failed does not diminish the importance of understanding politics in terms of overlapping orders; rather, it underscores the importance of identifying such moments of prospective choice and opportunity when new directions seem genuinely available and tracing the choices actors make under these circumstances.

This perspective presents politics as a process that may have stable elements but contains within itself the seeds of change, much like Joseph Schumpeter's (1950, 83) notion of "creative destruction," which he called "the essential fact about capitalism." In this picture, Schumpeter argues, "analysis of what happens in any particular part of [the economy]—say, in an individual concern or industry—may clarify details of mechanism but is inconclusive beyond that." Similarly, the multiple-orders approach suggests that political life thus rarely settles into stable patterns that persist unchanging for long periods; rather, it may be more fruitful to regard politics in terms of systems, as Robert Jervis (1997) argues, in which multiple sets of interconnected relational patterns interact. Analytically, this turn suggests a move toward a more configurative and relational approach to political change, which focuses "less on the causal importance of this or that variable contrasted with others but more on how variables are joined together in specific historical circumstances" (Katznelson 1997, 99).

Much path-breaking work on political change takes something like this approach. In his important account of changing institutional rules in the U.S. Congress, Eric Schickler (2001) develops a model of "disjointed pluralism," in which different interests drive the process of building coalitions for congressional reform at different times, and various reforms adopted to serve different purposes are layered atop one another. "By disjointed," he writes, "I mean that the dynamics of institutional development derive from the *interactions* and *tensions* among competing coalitions promoting several different interests. These interactions and tensions are played out when members of Congress adopt a single institutional change, and over time as legislative organization develops through the accumulation of innovations, each sought by a different coalition promoting a different interest" (Schickler 2001, 4; original emphasis). The result is a dynamic process of reform and development, in which members of Congress continually find themselves dissatisfied with their institutional setting, but for shifting reasons as both interests and institutions evolve. No reform is ever complete in that it does not sweep away old

rules to create a new, self-contained, coherent order, and it is the constant friction among procedural rules, organizational structure, and members' goals that drives the developmental process forward.

Several recent works in the ideational camp also take this approach (although rather less self-consciously). In his account of the transition from Keynesianism to monetarism in Britain, Peter Hall (1993) shows how a process of social learning created friction not just within the Keynesian paradigm that dominated policy but between the shifting ideological milieu and the institutional structure of British economic policymaking. What made the ideological drift from Keynesianism toward monetarism particularly influential in fundamentally remaking policy was not just the ideological triumph of a new paradigm but the difficulties that ideational change posed for institutional actors—the Treasury, the Bank of England, the Cabinet. Similarly, Kathleen McNamara (1998) locates the causes for the success of monetary union in Europe at the intersection of shifting policy ideas and the increasingly brittle structure of international economic institutions. These works show how the disjunction among differently constituted political orders, both ideational and institutional, can drive processes of political development.

IDEAS AND INSTITUTIONS IN AMERICAN RACE POLICY

As an illustration of how the overlay of ideological and institutional patterns can generate dramatic and unexpected political change, I sketch an example from American political development, the history of race policy in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s. The trajectory of race policy provides ample demonstration of the potential of a multiple-orders approach to explain outcomes that seem to defy analysis in terms of stability and order. In this section, I begin by outlining the puzzle that civil rights policy presents, namely, the surprising emergence of affirmative action. I then sketch the institutional and ideological contexts that seemed to make this development unlikely. Finally, I show how affirmative action arose out of the tension created by this particular configuration of elements by inducing actors to behave in ways that defied the expectations of more linear models of policy development.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 adopted an explicitly color-blind approach to prohibiting racial discrimination in employment: Title VII of the act outlawed deliberate, individual acts of discrimination such as the refusal to hire or promote individuals because of their race. In doing so, the act appeared explicitly to rule out an alternative, race- and group-conscious approach to recognizing and remedying discrimination in the workplace. It refused to recognize so-called "statistical discrimination" (the inference of discrimination from the mismatch between an employers' proportion of minority employees and the proportion of minorities in the local labor force) and refused to sanction group-based remedies for discrimination, such as targets or quotas for the hiring of minorities. And yet within 10 years of

the act's passage, the United States had adopted just this approach, having developed an extensive set of race-conscious, group-based policies and practices that offer compensatory advantages to members of historically or currently disadvantaged groups—known collectively as affirmative action.

This transition, from a convergence on color-blindness to an embrace of race-conscious remedies for discrimination (ambivalent and controversial, to be sure), poses a sharp challenge for both ideational and institutional explanatory approaches. Color-blindness, as John Skrentny (1996) has pointed out, is part of the taken-for-granted ideological and cultural fabric of American political life: the principle that individuals should be judged and afforded opportunity without reference to their race (or any other irrelevant characteristic). How, then, did American policy effectively turn away from this powerful idea and embrace its opposite, even after major legislation effectively affirmed and institutionalized the notion of color-blindness in national policy (Burstein 1985)? At the same time, the agency created to enforce the Civil Rights Act's vision of color-blind policy—the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)—was given no effective enforcement power and was relegated to a sideline role as conciliator and investigator. It could neither order remedies for discrimination nor file lawsuits. Moreover, the EEOC was embedded in a fragmented and decentralized state that frustrated the aims of civil rights advocates who sought vigorous enforcement. And yet the "weak" American state not only proved surprisingly effective at devising means of enforcing antidiscrimination law, but also managed to challenge the color-blind presumptions of its own law and to forge an extensive network of race-conscious policies and practices that have proven strikingly resilient in the face of political and legal challenges.

Analytically, then, the puzzle is that neither ideas (the apparent triumph of color-blindness in 1964) nor institutions (the apparent weakness of the civil rights enforcement apparatus) predict the emergence of affirmative action in any kind of way that makes sense. Neither approach even comes close; both would lead us to expect anemic enforcement, color-blindness because it rules out collective, compensatory hiring policies and institutional weakness because it leaves the state with little or no coercive power to enforce the law. In statistical parlance, the signs on the parameters are wrong.

Answering this puzzle thus demands a perspective that can account for the development of rather dramatic change out of political elements that seem to point toward stability. The development of civil rights policy was situated in several ideational and institutional orders simultaneously. Ideologically, the debates over civil rights represented the culmination of a long-standing debate in American political and intellectual life between color-blind and race-conscious visions of American society. On one hand, the American liberal tradition demanded color-blindness—the idea that race is irrelevant to citizenship and that the law, the state, and public policy should make no distinctions between persons on account of skin color. The color-blind vision

of civil rights policy invoked the deeply rooted traditions of individual rights and equality before the law (Skrentny 1996, 7). This idea has a long intellectual lineage in civil rights policy, dating at least to 1896, when Justice John Marshall Harlan wrote in his dissent in *Plessy* v. *Ferguson* (1896, 559) that "our Constitution is color-blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens. In respect of civil rights, all citizens are equal before the law." But Harlan wrote as the lone voice against a decision that, in fact, validated an alternative vision of civil rights policy, an ascriptive tradition of racism that had long challenged liberalism for ascendancy in American politics (Smith 1997). In this view, race was not only a legitimate but an essential political category, and in *Plessy*'s wake racial distinctions could be (and were frequently) invoked to protect white supremacy and state-sponsored segregation.

Not surprisingly, the race-conscious ideological tradition was not popular among civil rights advocates for much of the twentieth century. But in debates over how to prevent racial discrimination in such spheres as education, commerce, and employment, it became increasingly clear that a straightforward color-blind approach would not suffice, because in any context, simply treating race as irrelevant would not outweigh the effects of past discrimination that left many, if not most, African-Americans ill equipped to take advantage of the opportunities that color-blindness might offer. Beginning in the 1940s with the Fair Employment Practices Commission and continuing through the 1950s, civil rights advocates and public officials concerned with racial equality began to debate whether race-conscious means were necessary to achieve manifestly color-blind ends (Burstein 1985; King 1995, 208–9; Kryder 2000, 88–132; Skrentny 1996, 114–17). This dilemma found felicitous expression in the phrase "affirmative action," which was included almost casually in an executive order issued by President John F. Kennedy in March 1961. The phrase was intended not to supplant the order's fundamentally color-blind purpose (to ensure nondiscrimination by federal government contractors) but to supplement it, indicating vaguely that employers ought to take extra steps to ensure that hiring was not biased but not indicating how they were to go about this (Graham 1990, 40–43; Kennedy 1961; Skrentny 1996, 114). Thus the debate surrounding the Civil Rights Act occurred on ideological terrain defined by two competing paradigms, each of which had a deep intellectual legacy as well as institutionally powerful proponents.

These debates took place in several nested institutional settings. They were played out, first, in a Congress still dominated, as it had been for much of the twentieth century, by Southern Democrats, who wielded disproportionate power through a variety of procedural and organizational mechanisms (such as the filibuster in the Senate) and who were by and large committed to protecting their region's autonomy in racial matters (Key 1949). Second, they were shaped by a party system in which race was playing an ever-growing role. In particular, the Democratic party was increasingly divided over civil rights, leaving Republicans in the

pivotal position in the policymaking process (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Katznelson, Geiger, and Kryder 1993). These characteristics of congressional and partisan politics underscored a deep sectional split that had long been a central structural feature of American politics and prevented Congress from passing any civil rights legislation from 1875 until 1957 (Bensel 1984; Key 1949). Third, civil rights policy was made in the context of a chronically weak and fragmented state, in which civil rights authority, such as it was, was already divided among a number of different administrative agencies, most of whom lacked coercive authority. Moreover, the federal civil rights establishment was steeped in the color-blind model of antidiscrimination policy (Skrentny 1996, 34). These institutional factors did not augur well for significant change in civil rights policy; rather, they tended to pull policy toward the status quo or, at least, to foreclose all but incremental moves toward color-blindness.

Two other elements of the institutional context, however, looked more promising. The first was the cyclical pattern of American presidential elections. Both Kennedy and then Lyndon Johnson needed to balance the electoral demands of Southern whites and Northern blacks, each of whom was an essential piece of the Democratic coalition. Consequently, civil rights legislation posed both challenges and opportunities for building a reelection coalition in 1964 (Miroff 1981). Civil rights posed similar challenges and opportunities for Richard Nixon in his own presidential bids, as he sought to pry the South loose from the Democrats' grip while also competing for minority votes (Frymer and Skrentny 1998). For all of these presidents, civil rights offered an opportunity for distinctive and bold action, although one that had to be handled gingerly (Skowronek 1993). The second such factor, and what made civil rights an irresistible political force for these presidents, was the civil rights movement, which embraced race-consciousness in a double sense, both embodying it in its embrace of race as a collective political identity and championing it as a policy paradigm.

The conflict and ambivalence among these contending institutional and ideological forces, particularly between color-blind and race-conscious visions of antidiscrimination policy, were played out first in congressional deliberations over the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Civil rights advocates embraced a policy vision that coupled a race-conscious approach with strong regulatory enforcement by the federal government by creating a new agency with the power to uncover and prohibit broad patterns of discrimination by employers. This approach was opposed not only by Southern Democrats, who were almost-unanimous in their unalterable opposition to any federal action on civil rights, but also by Republicans, who mistrusted the expansion of state power it entailed, and the Kennedy administration, which could ill afford to alienate the South. A somewhat stripped-down bill passed the House in February 1964, only to run into a three-month filibuster in the Senate. The act's final form was the product of a compromise between Senate Republicans and Northern Democrats, with the blessing of the Johnson

administration. The compromise, brokered by Senate minority leader Everett Dirksen, resolved both the ideological and the institutional questions that were at the center of the debate. Ideologically, the Dirksen compromise fell squarely in the color-blind camp, defining discrimination as a deliberate individual act and apparently explicitly ruling out collective, race-conscious remedies. Institutionally, the compromise substantially hollowed out the enforcement authority of the new EEOC (Graham 1990).

Although the Civil Rights Act certainly counts as dramatic political change, it was in many ways consonant with much that had come before, both in its embrace of color-blindness and in its withholding of strong coercive enforcement power from the state. Moreover, by establishing an apparently consistent and coherent set of ideological and institutional parameters for civil rights policy, it seemed poised to lock antidiscrimination enforcement into a pattern of weak enforcement. Looking at the situation prospectively from the vantage point of 1964, there are several compelling institutional and ideational reasons to expect this outcome. First was the lack of state power. The EEOC could neither order employers not to discriminate nor sue them. The second was the fragmentation of state power. The EEOC was only one among a veritable alphabet soup of civil rights agencies in the federal government, each with its own turf and resources. It was, like all federal agencies, subject to the oversight of both the president and Congress, which remained subject to the same electoral and partisan forces that had produced the compromise in the first place. A result of ineffectual bureaucratic enforcement subject to contending interests and political interference would not have been at all inconsistent with other regulatory initiatives in this period, as institutional theory has frequently confirmed (Fiorina 1977; Moe 1987, 1989). Finally, the Civil Rights Act institutionalized color-blindness, writing its presumptions quite explicitly into the law. Both the institutional and the ideational settlements of 1964 seemed to create a new status quo, a new equilibrium, that would carry forward, and analytical perspectives that emphasize either institutions or ideas as constraints on political behavior or on ordered patterns in political life would expect this equilibrium to endure. None of these factors points toward the emergence of a strong, race-conscious antidiscrimination enforcement mechanism.

And yet emerge it did. The momentary resolution embodied by the Dirksen compromise generated friction among its ideological and institutional elements that deflected antidiscrimination policy from the path it seemed most likely to take. In particular, the Dirksen compromise produced a critical mismatch between the ideological underpinnings of antidiscrimination policy and the institutional capacity created to enforce it. In general, this friction arose because, despite the compromise, the Civil Rights Act established strong expectations that the federal government would act to combat employment discrimination, expectations that shaped the outlooks and interests of presidents and members of Congress, bureaucrats in the EEOC and elsewhere, and advocates in the civil rights movement,

among others. The model of enforcement implied by the law's color-blind ideological approach was one of retrospective judgment, in which deliberate individual acts of discrimination could be adjudicated and punished after the fact. But—and here is the critical source of friction in the civil rights enforcement regime—the law did not throw the state's institutional weight behind this enforcement model: The EEOC could investigate and conciliate in individual cases; the Justice Department could bring lawsuits, but only in "pattern-or-practice" cases where it could document systematic, rather than simply individual, discrimination; and, after Johnson's Executive Order 11246 in 1965, the Labor Department could threaten to rescind federal contracts when it could document discrimination (Graham 1990, 180–87; Johnson 1965; Skrentny 1996, 133–34). No arm of the federal government possessed the power to enforce the central employment discrimination aim of the Civil Rights Act. Color-blind antidiscrimination policy, focused on punishing particular individual instances of discrimination by employers, failed to take hold not primarily because of a lack of consensus on color-blindness as a goal but because the institutional setting of civil rights enforcement efforts provided weak support for this model.

More particularly, this mismatch between the ideology embedded in the Civil Rights Act and the institutional capacity that it created affected the incentives and opportunities of political actors in the civil rights field. For presidents, first Johnson and then Richard Nixon, it posed a political dilemma. Vigorous enforcement would please the act's supporters and assuage the still vigorous forces of the civil rights movement but would displease Johnson's fellow Southerners and other skeptics of strong state civil rights authority. On the other hand, a White House task force in June 1964 doubted "that the bill will make for sufficient or sufficiently rapid progress as far as the Negro and a good part of the white community is concerned to placate the forces that have gathered over the past years."[6] The Johnson administration responded by temporizing—first by delaying appointing EEOC commissioners, then by only half-heartedly supporting moves in Congress to expand the EEOC's power, and, finally, by developing and then shelving a plan to require minority hiring targets of federal contractors (the "Philadelphia Plan") (Graham 1990, 177–79, 278–97).[7]

Nixon faced a similar dilemma. On one hand, he hoped to pursue a "Southern strategy," winning traditionally Democratic white Southern votes. On the other hand, he had to do something; he could not ignore the prevailing (if precarious) civil rights

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[6] Task Force Issue Paper, Civil Rights, 17 June 1964, Office Files of Lee C. White, Box 3, Lyndon B. Johnson Library (hereafter cited as LBJL).

[7] Memorandum, Lee C. White to Johnson, 28 September 1964, LE, White House Central File, Box 167, LBJL; Memorandum, Lee C. White to Johnson, 5 October 1965, *Civil Rights during the Johnson Administration, 1963–1969: A Collection from the Holdings of the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library*, part 1, reel 5; Memorandum, Ramsey Clark to Joseph Califano, 1966 Task Force Report, Legislative Background, Civil Rights Act of 1964, LBJL.

consensus in the rest of the country by burying the problems of employment discrimination enforcement (see Skowronek 1993). Although given the party's right turn on civil rights in the early 1960s a Republican administration was perhaps an unlikely champion of strong federal enforcement, Nixon had in fact long worried that the United States's record on race relations weakened its international position in the Cold War (Dudziak 2000). He opposed expanding the EEOC's power and eventually engineered and signed compromise legislation in 1972 that gave it the power to file lawsuits (although not to issue regulatory cease-and-desist orders). Most important, however, Nixon resurrected the Philadelphia Plan, throwing the weight of the executive branch behind race-conscious antidiscrimination policy with the power of coercive sanctions behind it (Skrentny 1996, 137–39, 193–211). This move—a form of affirmative action as we know it today—allowed Nixon to support enforcement efforts in the North while soft-pedaling the issue in the South (where he was simultaneously winning credit with his vigorous opposition to school busing) and to drive a wedge between African-Americans and labor unions, two pillars of the Democratic party's constituency. It thus proved an apt vehicle for Nixon to negotiate his complex partisan, sectional, and electoral situation.

For other actors as well, the ideological–institutional mismatch of the new civil rights regime presented opportunities as well as constraints. The unfortunate executives and bureaucrats of the EEOC found themselves in a nearly impossible position. Expected to enforce the law but left essentially powerless to do so, the EEOC had to find other outlets to fulfill its enforcement mission. These institutional limitations, however, proved a double-edged sword. On one hand, the EEOC's relative weakness and political vulnerability reflected the general limits on administrative power in American government. On the other hand, these very same institutional constraints created a great deal of slack in the commission's political and administrative environment. Limits on its power forced it to seek other means of influence, particularly by collaborating with other institutions, both inside and outside the state. This imperative drove the problem of antidiscrimination enforcement into the same fragmented and decentralized political arena that had produced the EEOC's incapacity in the first place. The struggle for enforcement would be fought out not in terms of administrative power emanating from Washington but in multiple arenas and jurisdictions around the country. In this context, the EEOC sought to play what role and forge what alliances it could as it sought pragmatic rather than ideological or coercive solutions to the problem of fulfilling its mandate in constrained environment (Skrentny 1996, chap. 5).

In moving away from its prescribed institutional role, the EEOC was also led to move away from the color-blind model of antidiscrimination enforcement. Among the EEOC's key partners in this endeavor were African-Americans themselves, especially groups such as the NAACP that were important proponents of race-conscious approaches to civil rights policy, particularly

of affirmative action in the form of the same kind of hiring targets imposed by the Philadelphia Plan. In particular, these groups were equipped to undertake the fight for affirmative action on the local level. Despite the mass national mobilization that characterized the civil rights era, the attempts to bypass the pervasive localism of African-American politics—in the civil rights movement, the War on Poverty, and the courts— did not ultimately forge firm political links between African-Americans and the national state. Despite (or perhaps because of) overwhelming electoral support for Democratic candidates, African-Americans found themselves political captives of an increasingly indifferent party at the national level (Frymer 1999). Instead, African-American political organization flourished at the local level in the late 1960s and early 1970s, continuing the traditional pattern of linkages between African-Americans and the state. But whereas these historical patterns of diffusion, decentralization, and local attachment had long been sources of weakness for the political fortunes of African-Americans, in the present context they were, ironically, sources of strength. In particular, federated organizations such as the NAACP and its Legal Defense Fund could collaborate with the EEOC in pursuing race-conscious remedies for employment discrimination in a variety of local-level forums (Greenstone and Peterson 1973; Lieberman 1998; Morone 1990, chap. 6; Skocpol, Ganz, and Munson 2000).

The principal institutional arenas for these activities were collective bargaining between union locals and employers and lawsuits in the federal courts; both of these arenas allowed the EEOC to get around its lack of coercive authority. In particular, the EEOC's relationship with the federal courts (especially after the 1972 amendments) proved empowering, because it gave the commission access to a politically and organizationally independent means of deciding discrimination cases and enforcing remedies. It was by these alternative routes that the EEOC became a key player in subverting the very color-blind model of race policy that it had been created to enforce. It held hearings to publicize egregious cases of discrimination, pressuring employers to change their personnel practices. It participated with the NAACP and other civil rights organizations in precedent-setting antidiscrimination actions in labor negotiations and the federal courts that shaped antidiscrimination practices in a wide swath of American industry. The EEOC, for example, played a central role in *Griggs* v. *Duke Power Company* (1971), the case in which the Supreme Court ruled that employers could not use even ostensibly race-neutral tests or other occupational qualifications that tend disproportionately to bar minority applicants, unless the employer could show that they were a bona fide qualification for the job in question (Graham 1990, 383–90; Stein 1998). Like the presidential initiatives designed to cut through the ideological and institutional confusion engendered by the Civil Rights Act, these moves contributed to the unraveling of the color-blind consensus and the consolidation of a race-conscious policy approach backed powerfully by the state by the early 1970s, an

outcome that had seemed most improbable only a decade earlier.

CONCLUSIONS

This history suggests that the answer to the problem of understanding puzzling change in American race policy lies at the intersection of ideas and institutions and in the tension between ideological traditions and institutional capacities. In the case of American race policy, the Civil Rights Act seemed to embody a particular ideological approach to racial inequality, but the institutional incentives and opportunities in which key actors were embedded allowed them to mount a challenge to this approach even while claiming to maintain it (and possibly even believing they were doing so). In fact, had the EEOC been given greater coercive powers at the outset to enforce the color-blind vision of antidiscrimination law, it is likely that the impulse for affirmative action would have been weaker, because the EEOC would have turned its attention to an apparently more fruitful set of tasks.

More generally, this analysis suggests that public policies are most fruitfully understood as the results of political conflicts in which particular elements of national cultural and ideological repertoires are mobilized and enacted into policy. These political struggles take place within historical and institutional contexts that define the allocation and exercise of political power and so shape policymaking, especially by constraining political behavior through the operation of rules, norms, and organizational settings (Thelen and Steinmo 1992). At the same time, institutions also create strategic opportunities for purposive political actors to further their interests, and they shape political opportunities for the mobilization of social interests (Tarrow 1994). Similarly, political ideas and cultural traditions—institutionalized, taken-for-granted understandings of political and social arrangements—also constrain and enable policymaking, both by limiting the range of policies that are considered rational and by giving policymakers a repertoire of legitimating tactics for their favored policies (Campbell 1998; Dobbin 1994; Hall and Taylor 1996; Powell and DiMaggio 1991).

National political structures thus shape policy outcomes not simply by organizing power but also by acting as gatekeepers for political ideas and cultural dispositions. Policymaking in democratic government is not simply a process of optimizing the choice of policy instruments to solve readily identifiable social problems (Kingdon 1984; Lindblom 1959; Stone 1997). Rather, it entails the formation of coalitions among actors who represent both interests vying for power and diverse policy ideas. Because this coalition-building process combines what Hugh Heclo (1974, 305–6) has called "powering" and "puzzling"—clashes of both power and culture among social interests—the results it produces are not necessarily coherent and orderly but rather tend to build on prior policies without clearing away or dismantling them. The very process of policymaking can perpetuate the system of clashing

ideological and institutional orders and thus push forward the dynamic processes of political change.

The civil rights story underscores the fundamental point—that neither ideas nor institutions can rightly claim priority in an account that purports to explain significant political change (or even to describe it in a richly complex enough way to make a convincing, theoretically grounded explanation possible). What has changed, after all, in the civil rights story is not simply the values of a group of right-hand-side independent variables—public opinion about segregation, say, or the strength of the civil rights movement, or the level of interracial economic competition—resulting in a predictable change (within standard tolerances) of the left-hand-side dependent variable—antidiscrimination policy.

Rather, what has changed is the very relationships among factors that and the processes by which a set of underlying conditions generates outcomes. The evolution of race-conscious affirmative action out of the color-blind premises of the Civil Rights Act resulted not simply from the marginal adjustment of a set of independent variables producing linear policy effects, but from an entirely new configuration of mostly familiar elements—the same elements, in fact, that helped to shape the Civil Rights Act itself: ambivalence and contention over color-blindness and race-consciousness as ideological models for race policy, and fragmented and decentralized political institutions. Neither ideas nor institutions alone are sufficient to explain the trajectory of American race policy in the 1960s and 1970s. But the configuration of these two elements together enabled pragmatic but principled politicians, bureaucrats, lawyers, civil rights leaders, union leaders, corporate executives, and others to grope toward a set of practices that amounted to a fundamental transformation in race policy in a decade or so, one that embraced race-conscious employment practices and strong state action and one that deeply penetrated the state and civil society (Dobbin and Sutton 1998; Farhang 2001; Graham 1990; Skrentny 1996; Stein 1998).

So when *does* an idea's time come? The answer lies in the match between idea and moment. An idea's time arrives not simply because the idea is compelling on its own terms, but because opportune political circumstances favor it. At those moments when a political idea finds persuasive expression among actors whose institutional position gives them both the motive and the opportunity to translate it into policy—then, and only then, can we say that an idea has found a time.

This is not a story of variables but of configuration, not of ordered patterns of ideas *or* institutions in equilibrium, but of disjunction, friction, and overlap among ideational and institutional elements, none of which is sufficient but each of which is necessary for a more comprehensive explanation of an important episode of political change. It suggests the potential power, even the necessity, of an approach that considers both institutions and ideas as integral to political explanation and it underscores the importance of understanding the ways in which they interact to produce outcomes that, from either partial perspective, seem

unpredictable. Above all, it shows off the advantages of an approach that relaxes considerably the traditional social-scientific emphasis on order and embraces what Lionel Trilling (1950, 10), perhaps one of the more unexpected prophets of American social science but a shrewd commentator on the American liberal tradition, called "variousness, possibility, complexity, and difficulty."

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