Racial Mobility: The Dynamics of Race and Inequality in the U.S.

A racial mobility perspective brings together constructivist theories of race and the tools of sociological studies of social mobility to make the case for a more dynamic understanding of the relationship between race and inequality. Evidence for this perspective will be presented from different historical periods, replicated across multiple outcomes and datasets, and shown to be consistent with results from controlled experiments. By questioning canonical assumptions – from the relationship between reliability and validity in survey measurement to how ascription and achievement are conceptualized in studies of stratification – taking a racial mobility perspective also points the way toward much-needed changes in data collection and research practice.