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Color-Blind Racism: Toward an Analysis of White Racial Ideology

All groups in power build ideologies to rationalize social inequality. Even in situations of crude domination such as slavery, patriarchy in antiquity, or early capitalism, dominants develop very complex ideological formations that provide them rhetorical ammunition to account for social inequality. They also cultivate a moral framework to deal with dilemmas arising from maintaining domination, such as killing a slave, maiming a woman, or forcing children to work in factories. Thus, ideology, borrowing from Ann Swidler, can be conceived as a practical toolkit of ideas and concepts, expressions, prejudices, and stories that provide individuals with "naive basic 'theories' of social life."[1] Hence, from this vantage point, ideology is, as John B. Thompson has succinctly defined it, "meaning in the service of power."[2]

In this chapter I examine color-blind racism, or the central ideological formation that has emerged to support and reproduce the new racial structure of the United States.[3] I recognize that writing about a racial ideology that is alive and well and shapes the views of most whites in the United States is risky business because, as William Ryan stated in his famous book *Blaming the Victim*, "no one [wants to think] of himself as a son of a bitch."[4] Thus, I remind readers that analyzing ideologies is not a matter of finding good and bad people but of examining the *collective* understanding and representation produced by social groups to explain their world (for details on the

concept of racial ideology, see Chapter 3). Doing ideological analysis about race then is not a matter of finding "racists" but rather an attempt to uncover the frames, racetalk, and storylines that help lubricate a racial order at a particular historical juncture. My main analytical tasks, therefore, are determining whether actors share social representations about the world and analyzing how they use them to explain a host of racial matters.

Before examining the contours of color-blind racism, let me recapitulate first why it is that we have a new racial ideology. As I argued in Chapter 4, events that transpired between the 1940s and 1960s (e.g., the urbanization of racial minorities, the gradual incorporation of minorities into the industrial sector, the protests by civil rights organizations as well as the over 200 race riots in the 1960s, and the contradiction between the democratic rhetoric of the U.S. government at the height of the Cold War and its treatment of minorities at home) led to a change in the racial structure of the United States. Specifically, I suggested that whereas the racial practices typical of the Jim Crow era were overt and clearly racial, today they tend to be covert, institutional, and apparently nonracial. Whether in politics, housing markets, banks, stores, corporate America, restaurants, schools, or universities, white supremacy is fundamentally maintained today in a style that Roy Brooks has labeled "smiling discrimination."[5]

Not surprisingly, since white supremacy changed in nature, the ideological glue that binds U.S. racial dynamics has changed too. This change in the content of the dominant racial ideology has been documented by analysts such as William Ryan and Joel Kovel, who wrote in the 1970s about a nascent "meta racism" and of whites' employment of "cultural deprivation" arguments to "blame the victim." More recently Larry Bobo and Philomena Essed and his associates have written about "laissez faire racism" and "competitive racism" respectively.[6] According to these analysts, although racial ideology today tends to exclude old-fashioned racist speech, it effectively safeguards racial privilege by applying the principles of liberalism to racial matters in an abstract and decontextualized manner. It also protects the status quo by focusing on minorities' (particularly dark-skinned minority groups such as blacks, Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans, and some Asian Americans) cultural differences as the reason for their inferior performance in labor and educational markets. Although the ideas endorsed by most whites today may

sound like "racism lite" or may seem absent of racism altogether, they signify postmodern support of the racial status quo. For example, most whites indicate in surveys that they support integration and equal opportunity and that they are *less likely* than ever before to disapprove of interracial marriage; yet they oppose most programs to reduce racial inequality and residential and school segregation, and they have limited primary associations with blacks.[7] How do whites explain these apparently contradictory positions? They explain them by appealing to liberalism ("Affirmative action violates the American creed"), blaming minorities for their problems ("Blacks are poor because they lack the proper values"), and by claiming that segregation is the product of the invisible (nonracial) hand of the market ("I live in this white neighborhood, but it has nothing to do with race").[8]

Since ideology is expressed and reproduced in communicative interaction, I base most of my analysis on interview data. Although I recognize that whites may try to place their "best foot" forward in interviews as much as they do in surveys (see my conclusions in Chapter 3), I contend that it is easier to extract their beliefs from interviews because, as Nietzsche stated a long time ago, "Even when the mouth lies, the way it looks still tells the truth."[9] However, whenever possible, I present interview material against the backdrop of survey findings to make my point.

Data Source and Analytical Methods

Depending on the survey questions used, researchers can construct a variety of interpretations about whites' racial attitudes ranging from the view that they are racially tolerant to the idea that they are "modern" or "symbolic" racists.[10] However, based on college students' responses to race-related questions in interviews on affirmative action, interracial marriage, and the significance of discrimination, Tyrone A. Forman and I discovered a more consistent pattern. Students were significantly more likely to express prejudiced views on a number of issues although they filtered them through various "semantic moves" or rhetorical constructions to avoid appearing racist. Although I believe that our findings in this study are very suggestive, our study had some limitations. First, our analysis was based on a convenient rather than a representative sample, which limited

our capacity for generalizing our findings to the white population at large. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to point out that the bias in that sample was in the direction of more racial tolerance since researchers have consistently found that young, college-educated whites are more likely to be racially tolerant than any other segment of the white population.[11] Another limitation of our study was that we did not interview any blacks and thus could not assess whether their racial views were different from those of whites. Finally, due to budget constraints, our sample was somewhat small (41 subjects, or 9 percent of the white respondents who participated in the survey), albeit large by interview-based work standards.[12]

The data for this chapter come from the 1998 Detroit Area Study on White Racial Ideology (DAS) in which I served as the principal investigator. This data set overcomes most of the limitations of my previous work since it is based on a representative sample and includes a significant number of interviews with both white and black respondents. The 1998 DAS is a probabilistic survey of 400 black and white Detroit metropolitan-area residents (323 whites and 67 blacks). The response rate was an acceptable 67.5 percent. As part of this study, 84 respondents (a 21 percent subsample) were randomly selected for in-depth interviews (67 whites and 17 blacks). The interviews were race-matched, meaning that the interviewer and respondent were of the same race; followed a structured interview protocol; were conducted in the respondents' homes; and lasted about one hour. After the interviews were completed, my assistants transcribed the recorded material verbatim, that is, the transcripts included nonlexicals, pauses, and meaningful changes in intonation. After the material was transcribed, I read all the interviews to extract common themes and patterns. At that stage, I performed a basic content analysis of a number of questions. Most of this chapter is based on the 1998 DAS interviews with white respondents.

Color-Blind Racism

I have argued elsewhere that "in the postmodern world few claim to be 'racist' except for Nazis and Neonazis and members of white supremacist groups."[13] In the United States most whites proclaim to be color-blind and express their wish to live in a society where race

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does not matter at all.[14] Yet whites tend to navigate every day a "white habitus"[15] and seem to be rather "color-conscious" in terms of their choice of significant others (close friends and romantic partners). When confronted with these apparent contradictions between what they believe and what they do, whites argue that "it's economics, not race," "the evidence is not clear," "it's just the way things are," or "it's natural for people to gravitate toward likeness."[16] Thus, whites today are, as Thurgood Marshall once wrote, "strict in theory but fatal in fact."

Bourdieu habitus

The Dominant Frames of Color Blindness

I list the central themes, or "frames,"[17] of color-blind racism and of alternative racial ideologies in Table 5.1. The most salient frames of this ideology are (1) abstract liberalism ("I am all for equal opportunity and that's why I oppose affirmative action"), (2) "biologization of culture"[18] ("Blacks are poor because they do not have the proper values"), (3) naturalization of matters that reflect the effects of white supremacy ("Neighborhood segregation is a *sad* but *natural* thing since people want to live with people who are like them"), and (4) minimization of racism and discrimination ("There are racists out there but they are few and hard to find").

These frames were used by white respondents, as shown in Table 5.2 below, anywhere between 43 and 94 percent of the time in their responses. In the sections below, I will address three things: First, I will illustrate how whites deploy the major frames of color blindness. Second, I will analyze the style typical of color blindness. Lastly, I will explore the major storylines that have emerged along with this new racial ideology.

The reasonable racist: liberal justifications. In the post–civil rights era whites articulate their race-related views as "reasonable racists."[19] Today they apply elements of political liberalism (equal opportunity, meritocracy, equal rights) and economic liberalism (free market, competition, individuals' preferences, little government intervention) to racial matters in an abstract and decontextualized manner that rationalizes racially unfair situations. Because political and economic aspects of liberalism appear intermingled in whites' responses, I regard this as one frame: abstract liberalism. Since this

Table 5.1 Central Frames of Color-Blind Racism and Contemporary Alternative Racial Ideologies

Dominant Racial Ideology (Color-Blind Ideology)	Critical Alternative Racial Ideologies (Cultural Pluralism, Nationalism, and Others)
1. *Abstract liberalism:* Abstract and decontextualized extension of principles of liberalism to racial matters in ways that preserve racially unfair situations (e.g., "Race should not be a factor when judging people")	Concrete and contextualized notions of political liberalism or more egalitarian views on how social goods ought to be distributed
2. *Biologization of culture: Cultural* rationale for explaining blacks' status in society (e.g., "Blacks are lazy" or "Blacks lack the proper work ethic")	Political rationale for explaining the status of racial subjects in society (e.g., "Blacks have been left behind by the system")
3. *Naturalization of racial matters:* Naturalization of matters that reflect the effects of the racial order (e.g., explaining segregation or low levels of interracial marriage as natural outcomes)	Explanation of race-related issues with race-related arguments (e.g., segregation as the product of the racialized actions of the state, realtors, and individual whites)
4. *Minimization of racism:* Denial of structural character of discrimination viewed as limited, sporadic, and declining in significance	Understanding racism as "societal," with recognition of new forms of racism

Table 5.2 Deployment of Color-Blind Frames by White Respondents

Frames	Whites
Abstract liberalism	64/67 (96%)
On affirmative action	59/67 (88%)
Biologization of culture	59/67 (88%)
Naturalization of racial matters	27/67 (43%)
Minimization of racism	56/67 (84%)

frame has become the centerpiece of color blindness (for example, abstract liberalism was deployed by 96 percent of the white respondents), I present five cases to illustrate how white Detroiters used this frame to articulate their views on a variety of issues. First is Richard, a 46-year-old construction foreman, who explained his opposition to affirmative action as follows:

f Color-Blind Racism and Contemporary
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	Critical Alternative Racial Ideologies (Cultural Pluralism, Nationalism, and Others)
decon- of lib- ıat pre- .. judg-	Concrete and contextualized notions of political liberalism or more egalitarian views on how social goods ought to be distributed
ation- ocie- :s	Political rationale for explaining the status of racial subjects in society (e.g., "Blacks have been left behind by the system")
the in- ra-	Explanation of race-related issues with race-related arguments (e.g., segregation as the product of the racialized actions of the state, realtors, and individual whites)
uc- ed sig-	Understanding racism as "societal," with recognition of new forms of racism

Blind Frames by White Respondents

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59/67 (88%)
27/67 (43%)
56/67 (84%)

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follows:

> I [am] really against it because I feel it's the attitude of the person, not the color of the person that should be given a break. I think, I feel it's the attitude.

Richard also responded to a question dealing with a hypothetical company described as 97 percent white that hired a black over an equally qualified white candidate for diversity reasons: "Umhumm, and I said the same thing; it doesn't matter whether you're white or black. It matters whether they're qualified. Attitude and qualification.

Richard's views on this issue are not much different from those of most whites in the United States. Richard, like most whites, uses the liberal ideal of meritocracy to oppose affirmative action. And he ignores the impact of both past and contemporary discrimination on blacks' life chances, as most whites do. For example, he does not see anything racial about this hypothetical company being 97 percent white. His response to the question, "Why do you think that the company was 97% white?" was, "Ummm, our company's that way. It's how, it's like I said, you have to be recommended to be able to work, you know." Here Richard does not even realize that the way the company where he works does business violates the principles of equal opportunity and meritocratic hiring practices that he endorses.[20]

Before moving to the next case, I cite part of Richard's response to a question on interracial marriage. Richard, who admitted that he was not "too crazy about interracial marriage" and that he "wouldn't want [my daughter] do that," stated in his answer that his parents were not bigots and that he had a black friend while growing up. To make his point, Richard narrated the following story:

> And my mother, I would say something about Robert [his black friend] and call him a nigger and she say, "He is not a nigger. He's a black person." I would, I, I, I'm kind of a person that jokes a lot and would say, "wait until your daughter brings home one of those, one of those black people, he's turn into a nigger real quick!"

I include this quote not to demonize Richard but to point out that Richard expressed more directly racial views on certain subjects. This was not peculiar to Richard but was typical of most white respondents. Only a handful of white respondents did not say something that was racially problematic at some point in their interview.

The next case is Jim, a 30-year-old computer software salesperson who explained his opposition to affirmative action:

> I think it's unfair top to bottom on everybody and the whole . . . the whole process. It often . . . you know, discrimination itself is a bad word, right? But, uh, but you discriminate every day and you go . . . and you look at the . . . you wanna buy a beer at the store, if there are six kinda beers you can get from Natural Light to Sam Adams, right? And you look at the price and you look at the kind of beer, and you . . . it's a choice. And a lot of that you have laid out in front of you . . . which one you get? Now, should the government sponsor Sam Adams and make it cheaper than Natural Light because it's brewed by . . . someone in Boston? That doesn't make much sense, right? Why would we wanna do that or . . . make Sam Adams eight times as expensive because we want people to buy Natural Light? And it's the same thing about getting into school or . . . getting into some place. And the reason I have that, you know, and universities it's easy, and universities is a hot topic now, and I could bug you, you know, UM [University of Michigan] I don't think has a lot of racism in the admissions process. And I think UM would, would agree with that pretty strongly. So why not just pick people that are going to do well at UM, pick people by their merit? I, I think that . . . I think you, we should stop the whole idea of choosing people based on their color. It's bad to choose someone based on their color, why do we, why do we enforce it in an institutional process?

Since Jim assumes that hiring decisions are like market choices (choosing between competing brands of beer), he embraces a laissez faire position on hiring. The problem with Jim's view is that discrimination in the labor market is alive and well (e.g., it affects black and Latino job applicants 30 to 50 percent of the time) and that most jobs (as many as 80 percent) are obtained through informal networks (for details, see Chapter 4). Jim himself acknowledged that being white is an advantage in the United States because "there's more people in the world who are . . . white and are racist against people that are black than vice versa." However, Jim also believes, as he stated in response to a question on the significance of discrimination for blacks' life chances, that although blacks "perceive or feel" that there is a lot of discrimination, he doesn't believe there is. Hence, by upholding a strict laissez fare view on hiring and, at the same time, ignoring the significant impact of past and contemporary discrimination in the labor market, Jim can safely voice his opposition to affirmative action in an apparently race-neutral way.

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The third case is Beverly, a self-employed woman in her early forties, who answered a question about who is at fault for the high level of residential segregation in the United States in the following manner:

> I don't think much about it at all. I guess, ah, you're in a neighborhood, you're in a neighborhood. You know, I, I, just don't. I guess I don't think about that.

After a brief exchange with the interviewer in which she stated that the government should only intervene to guarantee that no one is prevented from moving into any neighborhood, the interviewer asked her, "And you don't think it's bad [that] the neighborhoods are segregated?" Beverly answered,

> It, it, it just isn't that important. Where you live is where you decide to live. If you decided to live in and can afford to live in a very upscale house, great! If you are black and you can afford to do that, fantastic. I mean . . . people have choices as to where they live. If they have the economic background or money to do this with . . . . I can't envision . . . 97 percent of the black people saying, "I'm going to live in a white neighborhood 'cause it will make my life better." And I can't imagine 97 percent of the white people saying, "I'm gonna move to a black neighborhood 'cause it will make me feel better." You know, I, I . . . where you decide to live is your choice.

Beverly relies on individual choice to rationalize the tremendous level of residential segregation in the United States. By doing this, she is able to deflate its centrality as a factor shaping racial matters.

As for relationships, the last two cases illustrate how many whites use a free market view on love in a way that allows them to safely state their doubts on (if not opposition to) interracial marriage. First is Darrell, a driver of chartered buses in his late forties who answered the question on interracial marriage like most white respondents.

> I don't have anything against it if two people are in love and want to get married. The only thing that I see a problem with, ah . . . I can see where it's regional. Where the children are gonna have problems because they are mixed. But the outlook is on the children, if they're in a racially biased area. I don't think it's fair to the kids.

Rogelio Saenz and I have identified this "I don't have anything against interracial marriage, but . . ." rhetorical strategy as central in whites' repertoire of answers to the interracial marriage question.[21] This answer allows respondents to signify their nonracial stand ("if two people are in love") but, at the same time, safely offers a plethora of reasons why they believe interracial marriage is problematic (e.g., location, family concerns, children's welfare, and society is not ready). Furthermore, we suggested that whites' profession of color blindness on love is an abstract ideal that is very unlikely to be realized because most of them live in racially hypersegregated communities and have minimal levels of interaction with blacks. This situation creates a white habitus or a white-based structure that shapes whites' cognitive, emotional, and aesthetic reading of blacks.

Thus, for example, Darrell grew up in an almost totally white community in northern Michigan and never had black friends or associates. Although he presently works in Detroit and has worked in all kinds of jobs in the Detroit metro area, he reports never having had a black friend or close acquaintance. When questioned about the racial background of all his significant others (he had said that all of them had been white), he responded, "[I] just haven't met anyone I was interested in" and added that "I don't date down here in Detroit area" because "I'm too busy working."

The last case is Olga, a salesperson of software for an independent insurance agency in her late twenties, who stated that she did not have an "aversion to it [dating outside her race]," but that she did not do it because in her schools and neighborhood she only "had access to [no] other than vanilla people." However, like most whites, Olga's answer to the interracial marriage question revealed that she had lots of apprehension about interracial marriage:

> Ummmm . . . well . . . I guess my only concern is always if there's children and how those children will be accepted or not accepted. And it would be nice to think that the world would be lovely and wonderful, but . . . you know, I think people should be allowed to do whatever they want to do. I don't think you should look at people's skin color or their origin or anything to determine what it is that you want to do. However, ummmm . . . what are you putting those kids through when they're ah . . . a mixed that, that neither culture would accept because the cultures are sometimes just as bad about sticking together as they are about claiming that no one will let them in and out of each other's areas. So sometimes that really affects the kids and neither culture will accept the child as

> being their culture or the other. Ummmm, so that concerns me. But, in general, . . . I don't have any problem with any of that. . . . I mean, if I wasn't married, I'd, I'd date anyone that interested me. So that not, that's not an issue.

Regardless of Olga's protestations to the contrary ("in general, . . . I don't have any problem with that") and her stated willingness to date blacks (an unlikely claim since she has navigated a white habitus all her life), her answer reveals that she does have some issues with interracial relationships.

The biologization of culture. For many years whites explained blacks' inferior status in the United States as the result of their natural endowments ("They are less intelligent than us" or "God made them different"). Although these naturalistic explanations have not disappeared, they have declined in significance tremendously.[22] Yet since the 1960s, a new rationalization has emerged to explain blacks' status: the idea that blacks are poorer than whites because they have a different (inferior) culture. My Detroit data reveal that this was another central frame since 88 percent of white Detroiters used this frame in their responses. In this section I present two examples to illustrate how whites justify blacks' status in cultural terms. The first case is Ian. In his forties, he is a manager of information security at an automotive company. Ian's explanation of why blacks have on average worse jobs, income, and housing than whites was the following:

> The majority of 'em just don't strive to do anything, to make themselves better. Again, I've seen that all the way through. "I do this today, I'm fine, I'm happy with it, I don't need anything better." Never, never, never striving or giving extra to, to make themselves better. And I know a lot of people say "well, the opportunity isn't there." Well, the opportunity wasn't there when I got into high school either. My parents weren't rich and they wanted me to go to school and the only way I could go to school was to get a full-time job, my parents couldn't even pay for my books 'cause they didn't make enough. So I had to do certain things.

Ian's perception of blacks as lazy emerged from his understanding of blacks as culturally deficient. His response to the question, "Do you think that the races are naturally different?" therefore, was the following:

> Well I think that genes have something, some play in this, but I think a lot of it is past history of the people and the way they're brought up. You look at Chinese, if you're gonna get ahead in China, you've gotta be very intellectual and you've gotta be willing to, uh, to fight for everything that you're gonna get. Ja-Japan is the same way. For a kid just to get into college, they gonna take two years of going through entrance exams to get in. Um . . . then you kinda look at the blacks' situation. It's like, "well, because of slavery, I ought to be given this for nothing, so I don't have to work for it, just give it to me." So, I, you know, culture, and their, and the upbringing is the big, the big part of this.

Although some analysts regard the demise of biological or Jim Crow racism as a tremendous sign of racial progress,[23] I suggest that whites' contemporary view of blacks as culturally deficient is as problematic because (1) it is as extensive as biological racism used to be among whites, (2) it is regarded by whites as fixed or as something very hard to change (hence the idea of the "biologization of culture"), and (3) like biological or God-given ideas of inferiority, it allows whites to express resentment and hostility safely since, in their view, blacks are where they are as a group because they do not want to get ahead.[24] For instance, although Ian acknowledged that "being white is still an advantage in America," he added:

> I still think there is a very high level of people that are as frustrated as I am with the, with the blacks not wanting to strive, not wanting to, to do more. Always whining, "I don't have the opportunity," "I can't do that." You can if you get off your butt and try. So, you know, I know, [name of Automotive Company] bends over backwards to try to help the blacks up. But I would still say it's an advantage being white.

Ian's relative directness and coarseness in expressing his negative views on blacks, however, were not the norm among white respondents.[25] Most mixed up their answers to avoid the appearance of being flat-out antiblack and to deal discursively with the reality of discrimination. For example, Bill, a manager in a manufacturing plant in his fifties, answered the question on blacks' inferior social status in this way:

> They have a tougher time, you know, being equal and that's the reason. And they've had a harder row to hold and just tough because of racism and that.

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Although Bill seems to be sympathetic to blacks' plight, in an exchange that followed this answer, he suggested another possible explanation for blacks' inferior social status:

> [Interviewer: Mainly racism would you say, or . . . ?]
> Yeah, yeah, mainly.
> [Other factors of uh would also be important, would you say?]
> Well, if you have a person that throws in the towel and starts saying racism when in fact, it truly isn't it at all, and what it really is, is that you need to work harder. Then it's a crutch that they're using as an excuse and that is probably part of it. But I don't know how, I couldn't imagine how extensive that would be.

"How extensive that would be" seems a lot in Bill's estimation since he stated the idea that blacks do not work hard and that they use the "race card" whenever they are pressured to perform in three different occasions in the interview.

Naturalization of racial matters. In the Jim Crow era few would have doubted that racial considerations were central factors explaining the high levels of residential and social segregation or the limited number of black-white interracial unions. Thirty years after the death of Jim Crow, the levels of social and residential segregation remain unabated and the number of black-white interracial unions lags far behind any other dyad.[26] This being the case, how do whites explain this situation? In general their answer boils down to anything but race.[27] The frame of naturalization was used by 43 percent of the white respondents to explain the effects of white supremacy; I will focus here on school and residential segregation. The first example is John. In his forties and the vice president of a pest control company, he answered questions dealing with school segregation and busing as did most white respondents:

> I . . . it's not anybody's fault. I think it just happens. I mean when we talk about . . . about uhm . . . . where people live . . . uhmm . . . there are backgrounds, there are cultures, people stay together. Why is that, that eh, Dearborn has one of the largest Arab communities in the country? Is it anybody's fault? No, they chose to live there. Uhm.
> [Ok, umm, should the government continue busing to guarantee some mixing of the races in our schools?
> No.
> [For some of these reasons or . . . ?]

> Why force the issue? I mean, you can force it, but what good is it gonna do? Either they're gonna be happy or they aren't gonna be happy. And uh, it just goes back to . . . natural tendencies. People naturally gravitate . . . toward . . . likeness.

Although John uses a free market rationale to express his opposition to busing ("they chose to live there"), market choices are regarded as grounded in people's "natural tendencies," or in John's words, "people naturally gravitate toward likeness."

Older and less educated white respondents, whom social scientists have traditionally labeled "racist," used this natural topic in a much bolder, unsophisticated, and often quaint fashion. For example, Earl, a small-time contractor in his fifties with very little education, explained the high level of segregation in the United States:

> I think you're never going to change that! I think it's just kind of, you know, it's going to end up that way. . . . Every race sticks together and that's the way it should be, you know. I grew up in a white neighborhood, you know, most of the blacks will live in the black neighborhood.
>
> [So you don't think there's anything wrong?]
>
> No. Well, they can move, they still have the freedom to move anywhere they want anyway.

Nevertheless, I do not want to make much of this distinction between older and lesser educated vis-à-vis younger and more educated white respondents, particularly when younger and educated whites made some racially charged comments too. For instance, Bill, the manufacturing manager that I mentioned before, explained school segregation as follows:

> I don't think it's anybody's fault. Because people tend to group with their own people. Whether it's white or black or upper-middle class or lower class or, you now, upper class, you know, Asians. People tend to group with their own. Doesn't mean if a black person moves into your neighborhood, they shouldn't go to your school. They should and you should mix and welcome them and everything else, but you can't force people together. . . . If people want to be together, they should intermix more.
>
> [OK. Hmm, so the lack of mixing is really just kind of an individual lack of desire?]
>
> Well, yeah individuals, it's just the way it is. You know, people group together for lots of different reasons: social, religious. Just

as animals in the wild, you know. Elephants group together, cheetahs group together. You bus a cheetah into an elephant herd because they should mix? You can't force that.

Minimization of racism. When white and black Detroiters were asked whether "discrimination against blacks is no longer a problem in the United States," a high proportion of both groups (82.5 percent of whites and 89.5 percent of blacks) indicated that they "disagree" or "strongly disagree" with that statement. However, although whites and blacks believe that discrimination is still a problem in the United States, they dispute its salience as a factor explaining blacks' standing. Thus, in response to the more specific question, whether "blacks are in the position that they are today as a group because of present-day discrimination," 60.5 percent of blacks compared to only 32.9 percent of whites stated that they "agree" or "strongly agree." In general, whites believe that discrimination has all but disappeared whereas blacks believe that discrimination—old and new—is alive and well. Since whites do not think that discrimination is central, they explain racially apparent matters as (1) aberrations committed by the few ignorant "racists" who are still out there or (2) blacks' own doing.

In this section I provide two examples of whites' denial of the structural character of discrimination, a frame that was deployed by 84 percent of the white respondents. One typical example is Sandra, a retail salesperson in her early forties, who answered the question on discrimination as follows:

> I think if you are looking for discrimination, I think it's there to be found. But if you make the best of any situation, and if you don't use it as an excuse . . . [Right] I think sometimes it's an excuse because ah, people felt they deserved a job, ah, whatever! I think if things didn't go their way I know a lot of people have tendency to use . . . prejudice or racism as whatever as an excuse. I think in some ways, yes there is . . . ummm . . . people who are prejudiced. It's not only blacks, it's about Spanish, or women. In a lot of way there [is] a lot of reverse discrimination. It's just what you wanna make of it.

Not surprisingly, since Sandra believes that antiblack racial discrimination is not very salient, she does not believe that being white is an advantage:

> I think at one time it used to be an advantage. Ummm and I think now it's probably becoming a disadvantage because you have to, as a white person, you basically have to be very careful [of] what you say and what you do because if something is taken the wrong way by anyone, then you can be considered a racist.

Henrietta, a transsexual school teacher in her fifties, replied the following to the question of discrimination:

> Trying to be an unbiased observer . . . because as a transsexual I am discriminated against. . . . I think if people act responsible they will not be discriminated against. People who are acting irresponsible, in other words, demanding things, ah, "I need this" or "You did this because of my skin color" . . . yeah then, they will be . . . discriminated against. People who are intelligent present themselves in a manner that is appropriate for the situation and will not be discriminated against.

Because whites do not believe that discrimination is a normal part of life in the United States, they view most race-targeted government programs as illegitimate. Furthermore, because they believe that the bulk of the problems afflicting the black community are self-inflicted, they do not consider programs to deal with the effects of past discrimination necessary. Thus, for example, Sandra answered a question on whether or not the government should have specific programs on behalf of blacks to deal with the history of discrimination as follows:

> No, no. Irish were persecuted when they came over. Polish, Russians, Germans, you name it. There aren't any individual programs for them. Everybody basically is listed and my grandparents taught me, you pull yourself up by your bootstraps. Don't count on anybody else to help you out. You have to help yourself first. So, ummm, should a program be done just because they were slaves? No!

And Henrietta answered the question on government intervention on blacks' behalf in the following manner:

> As a person who was once reversed discriminated against, I would have to say no. Because the government does not need those programs if they, if people would be motivated to bring themselves out of the poverty level. Ah, when we talk about certain programs,

> when the Irish came over, when the Italians, the Polish, and the Eastern European Jews, they all were immigrants who lived in terrible conditions too, but they had one thing in common, they all knew that education was the way out of that poverty. And they did it. I'm not saying . . . the blacks were brought over here maybe not willingly, but if they realize education's the key, that's it. And that's based on individuality.

The Style of Color Blindness

Ideologies include modalities, common phrases or "argumentation schemata," semantic strategies, and an overall style.[28] Color blindness is no exception. Because the normative climate of what can be said in public venues changed dramatically from the Jim Crow to the post–civil rights era, the rhetoric of color blindness is slippery, apparently contradictory, and often subtle. Since a discursive analysis of the various semantic moves typical of color blindness is beyond the scope of this chapter,[29] I will focus on showcasing how whites avoid using direct racial references and traditionally "racist" language and rely on covert, indirect, and apparently nonracial language to state their racial views.

Avoidance of "racist" terminology. Almost all whites in the interview sample avoided using the Jim Crow terminology to refer to blacks. Only 6 of the 67 whites involved used terms such as *colored* or *Negroes* to refer to blacks and not a single one used the term *nigger* as a legitimate term, and all of them were over 60 years old.[30] An example of these respondents is Lucy, a part-time commissary for a vending business in her sixties, who when asked to describe the racial makeup of her place of work, stated, "Oh, we used to have, um, about three colored girls that uh, had worked with us, but since then they have quit." Although none of the respondents in this study were racial progressives, it would be a mistake to regard them as "Archie Bunkers" just because they used the racial language of the past.[31] In truth, like Lucy, all of the other respondents were paternalistic whites who have not fully absorbed the racial language and style of the post–civil rights era. And based on what they said, some of these respondents seemed more open-minded than many of the younger respondents. For instance, Pauline, when asked if she had black friends while growing up, said,

> I always had black friends. Ah, even when I worked I had black friends. In fact, I had a couple of my best friends."

Although whites' self-reports of friendship with blacks are often problematic,[32] based on her own narrative, she seems to have had real associations with blacks. For example, she played with black kids while growing up and remembered fondly her black coworker. More significantly, Pauline has a niece who is dating a black "gentleman." When asked, "How do you feel about this relationship?" she responded,

> I feel like it's none of my business. She's had trouble . . . with ah, she's divorced. She's had a lot of trouble with her ex, and he's very, very abusive. This fellow she's going with is very kind. The kids like him so there you go. So maybe it's gonna be good for her and the kids. And for him too, who knows!

The rhetorical maze of color blindness. Since post–civil rights racial norms disallow the open expression of views and positions that are directly racial, whites have developed a new racetalk to voice their views (see Chapter 3). I will point out a few of the most common verbal strategies of post–civil rights racetalk.

"Yes and no, but. . . ." One common way of stating racial views without opening yourself to the charge of racism is apparently considering all sides of an issue. Although this has been regarded by discursive social psychologists as the way that people express their opinions all the time, I suggest that at least on racial matters, whites' dilemmatic statements contain, more often than not, strong *for* or *against* positions that are not so well hidden.[33] Since I have already presented a few quotations that show how whites use this strategy (e.g., Olga's and Darrell's answers on interracial marriage), I present only one example in this section to illustrate how whites used this strategy to address other difficult subjects. Sandra, the retail person cited above, used this rhetorical tactic to voice her opposition to affirmative action in a manner that allowed her to save face. Thus, Sandra's answer to the question, "Are you for or against affirmative action?":

> Yes . . . and no. I feel . . . someone should be able to . . . have something, education, job, whatever . . . ah . . . because they've

> earned it, they deserve it, they have the ability to do it. You don't want to put a six-year-old as a rocket scientist. They don't have the ability. It doesn't matter if the kid's black or white. Ah . . . as far as letting one have the job over another one just because of their race or their gender, I don't believe in that.

Sandra's "yes and no" answer on affirmative action is truly a strong "no" since she does not find any reason why affirmative action programs must be in place.

"I am not prejudiced, but. . . ." Phrases such as "I am not a racist" and "Some of my best friends are black" have become standard fare of post–civil rights racial discourse.[34] Therefore, it was not surprising to find that most whites used these rhetorical shields or semantic moves[35] in their responses. For example, Carrie, a retired woman in her late sixties, used the same move to safely express her extremely negative views on blacks. She inserted it to anchor her answer to the question on the significance of discrimination for blacks' life chances:

> I don't think it's the case [that blacks experience a lot of discrimination]. I think it, I think they're looking for an easy way out. Some of them, I mean, it's not your, ah, ah, well what I am trying to say, it's not your ah, ah . . . the ones who, your educated ones, it's not them. It's the other ones that are just too lazy to get up and get a job and they're looking for an easy way out. . . . Instead of studying, the world's against them, so they just sit and get into gangs and things like that. . . . It bothers, it, a lot of things bother me, I'm not trying to be racist or anything like that, but I just feel that ah, I think a lot of them hurt themselves.

Rhetorical incoherence. Rhetorical incoherence is not a strategy but a consequence of the post–civil rights racial discursive climate. Even though all natural speech exhibits a certain degree of incoherence, the level of incoherence increases noticeably when the respondents in my studies discussed racially sensitive subjects.[36] One area that elicited high levels of rhetorical maneuvering and thus incoherence was the sequence of questions on interracial relationships. For example, Dorothy, a retired worker from an automobile company in her seventies,[37] who was very articulate and talkative throughout the interview, became almost incomprehensible when she answered the question on intermarriage:

> Eh, well, I donno, but I, I, I feel that uh, I donno, I just feel like, that uh, you should stick to your own race for marriage. [Hmm, and why is that?] Uh because I feel that there's uh proble . . . there would be problems on both sides. A girl would feel hurt . . . if uh, if his parents, you know were [end of tape—interviewer asked her to continue her answer]. Yeah, I really do. Well, I donno . . . they have different culture than we do, really . . . and I think that his family would be, would probably be just as upset. . . . I watch this on TV every day and see how, you know, how they uh, they have a different, I donno, I hear the men, I know I hear that the black men on TV say that the . . . black women are so, you know, so wild and mad, you know . . . tempers, you know what I mean. And I just feel that's the limit. . . . I donno. If my dau . . . if one of my daughters would ah married one, I would have accepted it because it's my daughter . . . and I would, I wo, and I would have never be, I would never be nasty to them. Because I feel they're just as human as we are. If they treat me decent, I'm gonna treat them decent. That's my feelings!

Dorothy's incoherence makes sense in light of her openly expressed opposition to interracial marriages. However, since openly opposing interracial marriage is controversial and violates the notion of color blindness, white respondents who took this stance felt forced to "soften" the blow. That is why Dorothy added all the qualifications about what she would have done if one of her own daughters had "married one" and why she felt compelled to insert the profoundly awkward statement about the equality of the races ("they're just as human as we are").

Lynn, a human resource manager in her early fifties, expressed her reservations about dating black men in her response to a question on dating:

> I don't know. Just . . . well . . . I think I would have been very uncomfortable, okay, I really do. I mean, it would just be, I wouldn't want to go out with a, ah . . . ah . . . really dark Middle Eastern man, or Indian, or Oriental. I mean, I, I just would be uncomfortable. If they're closer to me in looks, okay. That's just always the way I felt. Not that I didn't like men of ethnic diversity, but I just . . . you have a certain taste, you know. I think I do.

Since Lynn had stated something that could be interpreted as "racist," she had to do lots of rhetorical work to explain her position on interracial marriage:

> I have mixed emotions on it. I feel that two people can fall in love and it, you know, can build a strong . . . bond with one another, but also, you know, there are consequences to that unfortunately in this world, and so it would be a very difficult relationship. If my daughter or son were to date somebody of another ethnic background, black especially, I'd be uncomfortable. But not any more so than if they were dating, like I said, an Indian, or a ah . . . ah Mexican or a non-Caucasian. I just would be [Um-humm]. Even an Italian. I don't know why, I mean, it, 'cause I'm not . . . in fact, I, I, you know, I think the black race is one of the most gentle races of all of them. I think that they are violent out of emotion not out of indecisiveness or evilness. They are not that spicy, but, I don't know.

As in Dorothy's case, Lynn felt obliged to clarify that she is not a racist and to insert a truly odd statement about the gentleness of blacks at the same time she claims that blacks are violent by nature.

The Storylines of Color Blindness

All ideological formations produce common stories that become part of the racial folklore and thus are shared, used, and believed by members of the dominant race (see Chapter 3). These narratives provide powerful emotional, almost visceral, accounts about why the world is the way it is or, in some cases, reasons why the world ought to be different. During Jim Crow, for example, the storyline of the black rapist served as a justification for maintaining the racial and gender order.[38] The post–civil rights era has produced to date four primary storylines, which are (1) "The past is the past," (2) "I didn't own slaves," (3) "My (friend or relative) didn't get a (job or promotion) because a black (usually man) got it," and (4) "If (ethnic groups such as Jews, Italians, Irish, or Chinese) made it, how come blacks have not?" The first storyline was used by whites to punctuate one of either two things. Some respondents used the storyline to suggest that U.S. citizens must put this element of their history behind and move on, while others used it to suggest that slavery ended so long ago that blacks cannot use it as an excuse for their predicament today. The second storyline was used to criticize race-targeted programs and to rationalize not doing anything about blacks' contemporary plight in the United States.[39] These two related stories were used

by 78 percent of the white respondents in the DAS. The argument behind the third storyline is self-evident. The storyline was usually inserted when discussing race-targeted programs (e.g., affirmative action) and was used by about half of the white respondents who believe that affirmative action is "preferential treatment" or "reverse discrimination." The last storyline has a relatively long history (a question based on this storyline has been used in surveys since the 1960s) and is used to suggest that blacks lack something (work ethic, proper social values, intelligence, etc.) that accounts for their standing.

"The past is the past" and "I didn't own any slaves." Diana, an employment manager in her late twenties, inserted these two storylines in her answer to a question on whether or not the government should help blacks to overcome the effects of past discrimination:

> No, and I, you know, I have to say that I'm pretty supportive of . . . anything to help people, but um . . . I don't know why that slavery thing has a . . . I've got a chip on my shoulder about that. It's like it happened so long ago and yeah you've got these 16 year old kids . . . saying, "Well, I deserve this because my great-great granddaddy was a slave." Well, you know what, that doesn't affect you. Me as white person, I had nothing to do with slavery. You as a black person, you never experience it. It was . . . so long ago, I just don't see how that pertains to . . . what's happening to the race today. So . . . you know, that's one thing that I'm just like "God, shut up!" You know, it, it's so long ago, get over it! Um, you know, it's kinda like the South still thinking the Civil War was yesterday. [Right.] Yeah, no, I, those are things I just feel like, "Let it go."

Here Diana combined "The past is the past" with a mild version of "I didn't own any slaves" to state her opposition to race-targeted programs. Diana is a strong opponent of affirmative action and used "The past is the past" storyline again later on in the interview to explain why she opposes a hypothetical company hiring a black applicant to compensate for past discrimination by the company. In her words:

> I think, I . . . I think I disagreed with that. . . . I don't think you can fix something you've done wrong in the past. I think you can identify what you've done in the past and just don't do it again, but don't do something to try to make up for it.

Roland, an electrical engineer in his forties, inserted the two storylines in his answer to the question of reparations:

> I think they've gotten enough. I don't think we need to pay them anything or I think as long as they are afforded the opportunities and avail themselves to the opportunities like everybody else . . . I, I don't know why we should give them any reparation for something that happened, you know . . . I can't help what happened in the 1400s, er the 1500s or the 1600s when the blacks were brought over here and put into slavery. I mean . . . I had no control over that, neither did you, so I don't think we should ah . . . we should do anything as far as reparations.

"My friend did not get a job because a black man got it." Although researchers have found that just between 1 and 3 percent of the employment discrimination cases filed with EEOC fit the "reverse discrimination" mold and that most of these cases are brought by disappointed whites whom the courts have found "to be less qualified than the job winners," many whites believe that they have experienced it.[40] Whites translate this belief into stories of friends or relatives who vouch that they did not get a job or a promotion or were not admitted to certain colleges because these organizations had to hire or admit less qualified blacks. A quarter of the white Detroit respondents used this storyline. For example, Monica, a medical transcriber in her fifties, used this storyline to explain her opposition to affirmative action.

> My cousin had a 100 percent on his promotion tests many, many times and he was passed over because he was white. That's not right. You know, um, I think (affirmative action) made a lot of opportunities for people to get a foothold into companies where they weren't before. I've seen people get jobs that were not qualified and they sit there and take it for granted and they dare you to criticize them. Because you can't fire me anyhow because I got in on affirmative action. My daughter, both my daughters said, don't give me a promotion because I'm the first woman. Give me the promotion because I'm the best person for the job. Um, I think, our qualifications are more important than our color, our gender. You know, because if you're selected on your qualifications then nobody should be able to complain or argue the issue.

Tony, a carpet installer in his late twenties, used the storyline to explain why his girlfriend was denied welfare. Tony's answer to the

question on whether or not being white is an advantage in the United States was as follows:

> Some times a disadvantage [Is it?] Yeah. [Can you say more about that?] Oh yeah. Like when my girlfriend went to get on aid, the lady told her if she was black, she could have gotten help. But she wasn't black and she wasn't getting no help. But that's the only thing I think is unfair.

"If Jews made it, how come blacks have not?" When we asked in the survey the question, "Irish, Italian, Jewish, and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks and other minorities should do the same without any special favors. Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree?" white and black respondents differed dramatically in their responses. Whereas 74.4 percent of whites chose the "strongly agree" or "agree" response, only 38.3 percent of blacks did so. About 20 percent of white respondents used this storyline spontaneously in the interviews to suggest that not all minorities are "lazy," thus implying that blacks are lazy, or to point out that other groups use the opportunities available to them while blacks do not. Because I cited an example of this storyline already (Henrietta), I will just cite two more cases that illustrate a variation, focusing on contemporary matters but still using the experiences of other ethnic groups as a counterpoint to explain blacks' status.

The first example is Mandy, a registered nurse in her thirties. She used the storyline to address the question on whether blacks are where they are because of their values.

> Ummm, generally I think that's probably true. Now are you talking about all minorities? [Um-humm.] 'Cause I don't (think) all minorities do. . . . When you look at the people coming from Asia, Japan, and China and, ah, they're making the honor roll. When you look at the honor here in Rochester, they're all foreign names. You know, some of those kids from minority families figured out that they had to work and strive and work harder if they were going to make it all the way to the top. [Okay. So you're saying that you would classify minorities by race and go from there?] Not all minorities are lazy [Okay] . . . and lay on the couch all the time.

Ian, the information security manager in an automotive company cited above, used the same version of the storyline as Mandy in his

awkward attempt to define racism. I cite his answer in an edited fashion:

> What is racism in my view? [Although a commonly used word, it's not usually defined.] Yeah . . . I guess, I would kind of define it as havin, having your personal opinions about somebody formed, uh, by their race [the respondent comments on his problems with black workers and with blacks in general while he was growing up]. . . . I've been, this is the way I am and it's seeing what they've done, and just the same thing I've always been around Jewish kids, Jewish people. OK? They're always fighting to be the best that—I don't know if that's good or bad, OK? They're always striving to do better. I don't see that in the black people. I see it in Japanese, I see it in Chinese, Indians. . . . I don't see it in blacks.

Conclusion

In this chapter I documented primarily three things. First, I showed that white Detroiters use the frames of color-blind racism at high rates ranging from a low of 43 percent to a high of 96 percent. Second, I suggested that the style of color-blind racism, unlike the openly "racist" and direct style associated with Jim Crow racism, is subtle, full of double-talk, and replete with apparent contradictions. I specifically showed how white Detroiters avoid traditional racist speech, use a variety of semantic moves to safely voice their racial views, and become rhetorically incoherent when addressing racially sensitive issues. Finally, I showcased four of the dominant storylines that have emerged as part of post–civil rights racial folklore.

At this point I can piece together the puzzle formed by color blindness. Whites believe that the United States has de facto extended equal opportunities to all of its citizens and is, for the most part, a race-neutral society. Therefore, they exhibit little sympathy if not outright resentment for affirmative action, race-targeted government programs, or minorities' demands for their fair shares. The belief that the United States is truly the land of opportunity for all allows whites to use liberal arguments—although in an abstract and decontextualized manner—to explain racial inequality and justify all sorts of race-related matters (e.g., residential segregation and limited interracial socialization). Furthermore, because whites believe that discrimination is no longer a salient factor in the United States, they believe

that blacks' plight is the result of blacks' cultural deficiencies (e.g., laziness, lack the proper values, and disorganized family life).

Taken together, whites' views represent nothing less than a new, formidable racial ideology: new because the topics of color blindness have replaced, for the most part, those associated with Jim Crow racism;[41] formidable because these topics leave little intellectual, moral, and practical room for whites to support the policies that are needed to accomplish significant racial change in this country. Furthermore, because color-blind racism seems reasonable and has frames that are so different from those typical of Jim Crow racism and because its style is so slippery, this new ideology provides an almost impenetrable defense of postmodern white supremacy.

Despite the formidableness of color-blind racism, this ideology does not control the entire racial ideological universe. Although most whites breathe color blindness, some do not. In previous work, I estimated that about 10 percent of white college students were racial progressives.[42] The students, as well as members of the population at large, most likely to be racial progressives or "ideological dissidents"[43] were women from working-class backgrounds. Although this finding may be surprising to mainstream social analysts, it is consistent with previous work.[44] If we apply very strict criteria for defining racial progressives (respondents who did not use any of the topics of color blindness), only 4 percent of the whites I have interviewed in the DAS survey qualify as such. However, if we use a more flexible definition (respondents who subscribed to less than two topics in a mild fashion), the number of progressives doubles.

If a small segment of the white population does not subscribe to color blindness, to what extent do blacks themselves buy into this ideology? Have they developed a totally different ideology to explain racial matters? Do blacks use the same style to communicate their racial views? Do they believe the stories propagated by the racial folklore? These are the main questions I attempt to answer in the next chapter.

Notes

1. The quotation is from van Dijk, *Ideology* (London: Sage, 1999), p. 91. The concept of "tool kit" is from Ann Swidler, "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies," *American Sociological Review* 51 (1984): 273–286.

2. Thompson, *Studies in Theory and Ideology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984), p. 25.

3. Color-blind racism is not the only racial ideology in play in the United States. My argument is, however, that the racial ideologies typical of the Jim Crow era based on overt white supremacy have declined in significance and have become secondary.

4. Ryan, *Blaming the Victim* (New York: Random House, 1976), p. 20.

5. Brooks, *Rethinking the American Race Problem* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990). For a similar argument about how racial inequality is produced in the post–civil rights United States, see Smith, "'Politics' Is Not Enough: The Institutionalization of the African American Freedom Movement," pp. 97–126 in *From Exclusion to Inclusion: The Long Struggle for African American Political Power,* edited by Ralph C. Gomes and Linda Faye Williams (New York and London: Greenwood Press).

6. Ryan, *Blaming the Victim*; Kovel, *White Racism: A Psychohistory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984); Essed, *Diversity: Gender, Color, and Culture* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996); Bobo, Kluegel, and Smith, "Laissez Faire Racism: The Crystallization of a Kinder, Gentler, Antiblack Ideology," pp. 15–42 in *Racial Attitudes in the 1990s,* edited by Steven A. Tuch and Jack K. Martin (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997).

7. Schuman et al., *Racial Attitudes in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997). See also Bonilla-Silva and Forman, "'I Am Not a Racist but . . .': Mapping White College Students' Racial Ideology in the USA," *Discourse and Society* 11, no. 1 (2000): 51–86.

8. For a review of how survey researchers interpret whites' attitudes, see Chapter 3.

9. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future* (New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1966), p. 92.

10. Bonilla-Silva and Forman, "'I Am Not a Racist but. . . .'"

11. Lawrence Bobo and Fred Licari, "Education and Political Tolerance: Testing the Effects of Cognitive Sophistication and Target Group Affect," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 53 (1989): 285–308; Schuman et al., *Racial Attitudes in America.*

12. According to Steinar Kvale (*An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing* [Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996]), most interview-based projects use between ten and fifteen subjects.

13. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, "'This Is a White Country': The Racial Ideological Convergence of the Western Nations of the World-System," *Research in Politics and Society* 6 (1999): 96.

14. Politicians such as former president George H. Bush, former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, and Louisiana Governor Mike Foster claimed to be color-blind and praised Martin Luther King. However, Congressperson Bush opposed the civil rights legislation in the 1960s, Newt Gingrich orchestrated the "Contract with America" full of racial implications, and Mike Foster signed an order banning affirmative action in agencies under his control.

15. My cowriter and I define white habitus as the social and residential racial isolation experienced by whites at youth and adulthood. We postulate that this white habitus conditions and creates whites' racial taste, perceptions, feelings, emotions, and even their views on racial matters and limits the likelihood of cross-racial friendships with blacks. See Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and Saenz, "'If Two People Are in Love . . .': Color-Blind Dreams, (White) Color-Coded Reality Among White College Students" (forthcoming).

16. For a marvelous critique of these arguments, see chapter 7 in Ellis Cose, *Color-Blind* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997).

17. Van Dijk, *Ideology.*

18. This notion is from Pierre Andre Taguieff, "The New Cultural Racism in France," *Telos* 83 (spring 1990): 109–122.

19. I borrow this term from Jody D. Armour, *Negrophobia and Reasonable Racism: The Hidden Costs of Being Black in America* (New York and London: New York University, 1997).

20. The contradiction between Richard's belief in meritocracy and the way his own company does business is not perceived as such by him—or at least does not concern him much—because, as Mary Jackman has pointed out *(Velvet Glove)*, ideology, as a *political* tool, needs to be flexible to work.

21. Bonilla-Silva and Saenz, "'If Two People Are in Love. . . .'" See also Bonilla-Silva and Forman, "'I Am Not a Racist but. . . .'"

22. See John F. Dovidio and Samuel L. Gaertner, "Changes in the Expression and Assessment of Racial Prejudice," pp. 119–140 in *Opening Doors: Perspectives on Race Relations in Contemporary America*, edited by Harry J. Knopke, R. J. Norrell, and R. W. Rogers (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1991). See also Schuman et al., *Racial Attitudes in America.*

23. For examples, see Lipset, *American Exceptionalism*; Sniderman and Piazza, *The Scar of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); Sniderman and Carmines, *Reaching Beyond Race* (Cambridge, MA, and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1997); and Schuman et al., *Racial Attitudes in America.*

24. This idea is discussed by Jackman, *The Velvet Glove*, and Kinder and Sanders, *Divided by Color* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

25. As a general rule, elite whites were *less likely* than poorer whites to use these frames in a blunt and coarse manner. This finding fits well Jackman's argument that elite whites have the cultural apparatus to better express their racialized views. Mary R. Jackman and Michael J. Muha, "Education and Intergroup Attitudes: Moral Enlightenment, Superficial Democratic Commitment, or Ideological Refinement? *American Sociological Review* 49 (1984): 751–769.

26. For data on residential and social matters, see Chapter 3. For data on interracial unions, see Matthijs Kalmijn, "Trends in Black/White Intermarriage," *Social Forces* 72 (1993): 119–146; and Kalmijn, "Inter-

marriage and Homogamy: Causes, Patterns, Trends," *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998): 395–421.

27. This stance also affects social analysts' views. See Melvin Thomas, "Anything but Race: The Social Science Retreat from Racism," *African American Research Perspectives* 79 (winter 2000): 96.

28. For details, see van Dijk, *Prejudice in Discourse: An Analysis of Ethnic Prejudice in Cognition and Conversation* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1984). See also chapter 27 in van Dijk, *Ideology*.

29. For an example, see Bonilla-Silva and Forman, "'I Am Not a Racist but. . . .'"

30. I have no data on how whites refer to minorities in private. It is interesting to point out that anecdotal (Otis-Graham, *Member of the Club: Reflections on Life in a Racially Polarized World* [New York: HarperCollins, 1995]; interview (Feagin and Sykes, *Living with Racism: The Black Middle Class Experience* [Boston: Beacon Press, 1994]; Feagin and Vera, *White Racism: The Basics* [New York: Routledge, 1995]); and ethnographic work with blacks and whites (John Hartigan, Jr., *Racial Situations: Class Predicaments of Whiteness in Detroit* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999]) suggests that whites use these words more often than they did in my interviews. I suspect that the structured and formal nature of our interview process made it a public matter and thus caused respondents to be cautious.

31. Using racial terminology a "racist" does not necessarily make. Today, for example, there are many working-class whites who live in or near racial ghettos and use the word "*nigger*" in a nonracist manner. In the same vein, many "liberals," who would never use this terminology, endorse wholeheartedly the topics of color-blindness and thus the racial status quo. For an insightful analysis of how working-class whites use the word "*nigger*," see Hartigan's *Racial Situations: Class Predicaments of Whiteness in Detroit*. For an early analysis of liberal white middle-class racial blues, see Judith Caditz, *White Liberals in Transition: Current Dilemmas of Ethnic Integration* (New York: Spectrum Publications Inc., 1976).

32. Benjamin DeMott, *The Trouble with Friendship: Why Americans Can't Think Straight About Race* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1995). See also Bonilla-Silva and Saenz, "'If Two People Are in Love. . . .'"

33. Here I take issue with discursive social psychologists such as Michael Billig et al., *Ideological Dilemmas: A Social Psychology of Everyday Thinking* (London: Sage Publications, 1988), and Wetherell and Potter, *Discourse and Social Psychology: Beyond Attitudes and Behaviour* (London: Sage Publications, 1987), for whom *all* speech is dilemmatic. I contend that at least in terms of racial matters, the dilemmatic character of speech is mostly strategic and, as I will show, it barely conceals whites' positions on a variety of hotly contested issues.

34. These disclaimers have been studied by discourse analysts for years. See Teun A. van Dijk, *Elite Discourse and Racism* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1993).

35. Semantic moves are "strategically managed relations between propositions" that allow interlocutors to achieve the goal of saving face. Teun A. van Dijk, *Communicating Racism* (Newbury Park, Beverly Hills, London, and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1987), p. 86.

36. For a similar finding, see van Dijk, *Prejudice in Discourse* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1984).

37. We found similar levels of incoherence among young college students. See Bonilla-Silva and Forman, "'I Am Not a Racist but. . . .'"

38. Patricia Hill-Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

39. For a similar analysis, see Amy E. Ansell and James M. Statman, "'I Never Owned Slaves,'" *Research in Politics and Society* 6 (1999): 151–174.

40. Tom Wicker, *Tragic Failure: Racial Integration in America* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1996), p. 98.

41. For a similar analysis, see Bobo, Kluegel, and Smith, "Laissez Faire Racism: The Crystallization of a Kinder, Gentler, Antiblack Ideology."

42. Bonilla-Silva and Forman, "'I Am Not a Racist but. . . .'"

43. See van Dijk, *Ideology.*

44. Herbert Apthteker, *Anti-Racism in U.S. History: The First Two Hundred Years* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992); Feagin and Vera, *White Racism: The Basics.* For an interesting study on the limitations of white liberals on racial matters, see Ruth Frankenburg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993). For a study on the possibilities of antiracism, see Eileen O'Brien, "Mind, Heart, and Action: Understanding the Dimensions of Antiracism," *Research in Politics and Society* 6 (1999): 305–322.