Racism without Racists

Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States

THIRD EDITION
(2010)

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(3RD EDITION)

ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD PUBLISHERS, INC.
Lanham • Boulder • New York • Toronto • Plymouth, UK

the book relatively affordable, I removed chapter 10 ("Queries: Answers to Questions from Concerned Readers"), the appendix with the interview schedule for the 1998 DAS, and the postscript from the text. However, Rowman & Littlefield has placed all of them on their website and they are now accessible to the public. I also edited slightly the original conclusion to include some comments on the Obama matter.

I end this preface by saying I wish historical circumstances had not forced me to write a third edition of this book. But once forced into a fight, one has to deliver. History and readers of this book will decide if my analysis of *Obamerica* (see endnote 1 of the new chapter) is accurate and a healthy contribution to democracy in America. But no matter what y'all say, I know I have done the best I can to win this fight and will continue smiling like the Cheshire cat (this allegory will only make sense to those who read the Obama chapter).

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August 2009

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The Strange Enigma of Race in Contemporary America

> There is a strange kind of enigma associated with the problem of racism. No one, or almost no one, wishes to see themselves as racist; still, racism persists, real and tenacious.
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> —Albert Memmi, *Racism*

RACISM WITHOUT "RACISTS"

Nowadays, except for members of white supremacist organizations,[1] few whites in the United States claim to be "racist." Most whites assert they "don't see any color, just people"; that although the ugly face of discrimination is still with us, it is no longer the central factor determining minorities' life chances; and, finally, that like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.,[2] they aspire to live in a society where "people are judged by the content of their character, not by the color of their skin." More poignantly, most whites insist that minorities (especially blacks) are the ones responsible for whatever "race problem" we have in this country. They publicly denounce blacks for "playing the race card," for demanding the maintenance of unnecessary and divisive race-based programs, such as affirmative action, and for crying "racism" whenever they are criticized by whites.[3] Most whites believe that if blacks and other minorities would just stop thinking about the past, work hard, and complain less (particularly about racial discrimination), then Americans of all hues could "all get along."[4]

But regardless of whites' "sincere fictions,"[5] racial considerations shade almost everything in America. Blacks and dark-skinned racial minorities

lag well behind whites in virtually every area of social life; they are about three times more likely to be poor than whites, earn about 40 percent less than whites, and have about an eighth of the net worth that whites have.[6] They also receive an inferior education compared to whites, even when they attend integrated institutions.[7] In terms of housing, black-owned units comparable to white-owned ones are valued at 35 percent less.[8] Blacks and Latinos also have less access to the entire housing market because whites, through a variety of exclusionary practices by white realtors and homeowners, have been successful in effectively limiting their entrance into many neighborhoods.[9] Blacks receive impolite treatment in stores, in restaurants, and in a host of other commercial transactions.[10] Researchers have also documented that blacks pay more for goods such as cars and houses than do whites.[11] Finally, blacks and dark-skinned Latinos are the targets of racial profiling by the police that, combined with the highly racialized criminal court system, guarantees their overrepresentation among those arrested, prosecuted, incarcerated, and if charged for a capital crime, executed.[12] Racial profiling on the highways has become such a prevalent phenomenon that a term has emerged to describe it: driving while black.[13] In short, blacks and most minorities are, "at the bottom of the well."[14]

How is it possible to have this tremendous degree of racial inequality in a country where most whites claim that race is no longer relevant? More important, how do whites explain the apparent contradiction between their professed color blindness and the United States' color-coded inequality? In this book I attempt to answer both of these questions. I contend that whites have developed powerful explanations—which have ultimately become justifications—for contemporary racial inequality that exculpate them from any responsibility for the status of people of color. These explanations emanate from a new racial ideology that I label *color-blind racism*. This ideology, which acquired cohesiveness and dominance in the late 1960s,[15] explains contemporary racial inequality as the outcome of nonracial dynamics. Whereas Jim Crow racism explained blacks' social standing as the result of their biological and moral inferiority, color-blind racism avoids such facile arguments. Instead, whites rationalize minorities' contemporary status as the product of market dynamics, naturally occurring phenomena, and blacks' imputed cultural limitations.[16] For instance, whites can attribute Latinos' high poverty rate to a relaxed work ethic ("the Hispanics are mañana, mañana, mañana—tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow")[17] or residential segregation as the result of natural tendencies among groups ("Does a cat and a dog mix? I can't see it. You can't drink milk and scotch. Certain mixes don't mix").[18]

Color-blind racism became the dominant racial ideology as the mechanisms and practices for keeping blacks and other racial minorities "at the bottom of the well" changed. I have argued elsewhere that contemporary racial inequality is reproduced through "New Racism" practices that are subtle, institutional, and apparently nonracial.[19] In contrast to the Jim Crow era, where racial inequality was enforced through overt means (e.g., signs saying "No Niggers Welcomed Here" or shotgun diplomacy at the voting booth), today racial practices operate in "now you see it, now you don't" fashion. For example, residential segregation, which is almost as high today as it was in the past, is no longer accomplished through overtly discriminatory practices. Instead, covert behaviors such as not showing all the available units, steering minorities and whites into certain neighborhoods, quoting higher rents or prices to minority applicants, or not advertising units at all are the weapons of choice to maintain separate communities.[20] In the economic field, "smiling face" discrimination ("We don't have jobs now, but please check later"), advertising job openings in mostly white networks and ethnic newspapers, and steering highly educated people of color into poorly remunerated jobs or jobs with limited opportunities for mobility are the new ways of keeping minorities in a secondary position.[21] Politically, although the Civil Rights struggles have helped remove many of the obstacles for the electoral participation of people of color, "racial gerrymandering, multimember legislative districts, election runoffs, annexation of predominantly white areas, at-large district elections, and anti–single-shot devices (disallowing concentrating votes in one or two candidates in cities using at-large elections) have become standard practices to disenfranchise" people of color.[22] Whether in banks, restaurants, school admissions, or housing transactions, the maintenance of white privilege is done in a way that defies facile racial readings. Hence, the contours of color-blind racism fit America's new racism quite well.

Compared to Jim Crow racism, the ideology of color blindness seems like "racism lite." Instead of relying on name calling (niggers, Spics, Chinks), color-blind racism otherizes softly ("these people are human, too"); instead of proclaiming God placed minorities in the world in a servile position, it suggests they are behind because they do not work hard enough; instead of viewing interracial marriage as wrong on a straight racial basis, it regards it as "problematic" because of concerns over the children, location, or the extra burden it places on couples. Yet this new ideology has become a formidable political tool for the maintenance of the racial order. Much as Jim Crow racism served as the glue for defending a brutal and overt system of racial oppression in the pre–Civil Rights era, color-blind racism serves today as the ideological armor for a covert and institutionalized system in the post–Civil Rights era. And the beauty of this new ideology is that it aids in the maintenance of white privilege without fanfare, without naming those who it subjects and those who it

rewards. It allows a president to state things such as, "I strongly support diversity of all kinds, including racial diversity in higher education," yet, at the same time, to characterize the University of Michigan's affirmation action program as "flawed" and "discriminatory" against whites.[23] Thus whites enunciate positions that safeguard their racial interests without sounding "racist." Shielded by color blindness, whites can express resentment toward minorities; criticize their morality, values, and work ethic; and even claim to be the victims of "reverse racism." This is the thesis I will defend in this book to explain the curious enigma of "racism without racists."[24]

WHITES' RACIAL ATTITUDES IN THE POST–CIVIL RIGHTS ERA

Since the late 1950s surveys on racial attitudes have consistently found that fewer whites subscribe to the views associated with Jim Crow. For example, whereas the majority of whites supported segregated neighborhoods, schools, transportation, jobs, and public accommodations in the 1940s, less than a quarter indicated they did in the 1970s.[25] Similarly, fewer whites than ever now seem to subscribe to stereotypical views of blacks. Although the number is still high (ranging from 20 percent to 50 percent, depending on the stereotype), the proportion of whites who state in surveys that blacks are lazy, stupid, irresponsible, and violent has declined since the 1940s.[26]

These changes in whites' racial attitudes have been explained by the survey community and commentators in four ways. First, are they *racial optimists*. This group of analysts agrees with whites' common sense on racial matters and believes the changes symbolize a profound transition in the United States. Early representatives of this view were Herbert Hyman and Paul B. Sheatsley, who wrote widely influential articles on the subject in *Scientific American*. In a reprint of their earlier work in the influential collection edited by Talcott Parsons and Kenneth Clark, *The Negro American*, Sheatsley rated the changes in white attitudes as "revolutionary" and concluded,

> The mass of white Americans have shown in many ways that they will not follow a racist government and that they will not follow racist leaders. Rather, they are engaged in the painful task of adjusting to an integrated society. It will not be easy for most, but one cannot at this late date doubt the basic commitment. In their hearts they know that the American Negro is right.[27]

In recent times, Glenn Firebaugh and Kenneth Davis, Seymour Lipset, and Paul Sniderman and his coauthors, in particular, have carried the torch for racial optimists.[28] Firebaugh and Davis, for example, based on their analysis of survey results from 1972 to 1984, concluded that the trend toward less antiblack prejudice was across the board. Sniderman and his coauthors, as well as Lipset, go a step further than Firebaugh and Davis because they have openly advocated color-blind politics as *the* way to settle the United States' racial dilemmas. For instance, Sniderman and Edward Carmines made this explicit appeal in their recent book, *Reaching beyond Race*,

> To say that a commitment to a color-blind politics is worth undertaking is to call for a politics centered on the needs of those most in need. It is not to argue for a politics in which race is irrelevant, but in favor of one in which race is relevant so far as it is a gauge of need. Above all, it is a call for a politics which, because it is organized around moral principles that apply regardless of race, can be brought to bear with special force on the issue of race.[29]

The problems with this optimistic interpretation are twofold. First, as I have argued elsewhere,[30] relying on questions that were framed in the Jim Crow era to assess whites' racial views today produces an artificial image of progress. Since the central racial debates and the language used to debate those matters have changed, our analytical focus ought to be dedicated to the analysis of the new racial issues. Insisting on the need to rely on old questions to keep longitudinal (trend) data as the basis for analysis will, by default, produce a rosy picture of race relations that misses what is going on on the ground. Second, and more important, because of the change in the normative climate in the post–Civil Rights era, analysts must exert extreme caution when interpreting attitudinal data, particularly when it comes from single-method research designs. The research strategy that seems more appropriate for our times is mixed research designs (surveys used in combination with interviews, ethnosurveys,[31] etc.), because it allows researchers to cross-examine their results.

A second, more numerous group of analysts exhibit what I have labeled elsewhere as the *racial pesoptimist* position.[32] Racial pesoptimists attempt to strike a "balanced" view and suggest that whites' racial attitudes reflect progress and resistance. The classical example of this stance is Howard Schuman.[33] Schuman has argued for more than thirty years that whites' racial attitudes involve a mixture of tolerance and intolerance, of acceptance of the principles of racial liberalism (equal opportunity for all, end of segregation, etc.) and a rejection of the policies that would make those principles a reality (from affirmative action to busing).[34]

Despite the obvious appeal of this view in the research community (the appearance of neutrality, the pondering of "two sides," and this view's "balanced" component), racial pesoptimists are just closet optimists. Schuman, for example, has pointed out that, although "White responses to questions of principle are . . . more complex than is often portrayed . . . they nevertheless do show in almost every instance a positive movement over time."[35] Furthermore, it is his belief that the normative change in the United States is real and that the issue is that whites are having a hard time translating those norms into personal preferences.

A third group of analysts argues that the changes in whites' attitudes represent the emergence of a *symbolic racism*.[36] This tradition is associated with the work of David Sears and his associate, Donald Kinder.[37] They have defined symbolic racism as "a blend of anti-black affect and the kind of traditional American moral values embodied in the Protestant Ethic."[38] According to these authors, symbolic racism has replaced biological racism as the primary way whites express their racial resentment toward minorities. In Kinder and Sanders's words:

> A new form of prejudice has come to prominence, one that is preoccupied with matters of moral character, informed by the virtues associated with the traditions of individualism. At its center are the contentions that blacks do not try hard enough to overcome the difficulties they face and that they take what they have not earned. Today, we say, prejudice is expressed in the language of American individualism.[39]

Authors in this tradition have been criticized for the slipperiness of the concept "symbolic racism," for claiming that the blend of antiblack affect and individualism is new, and for not explaining why symbolic racism came about. The first critique, developed by Howard Schuman, is that the concept has been "defined and operationalized in complex and varying ways."[40] Despite this conceptual slipperiness, indexes of symbolic racism have been found to be in fact different from those of old-fashioned racism and to be strong predictors of whites' opposition to affirmative action.[41] The two other critiques, made forcefully by Lawrence Bobo, have been partially addressed by Kinder and Sanders in their recent book, *Divided by Color*. First, Kinder and Sanders, as well as Sears, have made clear that their contention is not that this is the first time in history that antiblack affect and elements of the American Creed have combined. Instead, their claim is that this combination has become *central* to the new face of racism. Regarding the third critique, Kinder and Sanders go at length to explain the transition from old-fashioned to symbolic racism. Nevertheless, their explanation hinges on arguing that changes in blacks' tactics (from civil disobedience to urban violence) led to an onslaught of a new form of racial resentment that later found more fuel in controversies over welfare, crime, drugs, family, and affirmative action. What is missing in this explanation is a materially based explanation for why these changes occurred. Instead, their theory of prejudice is rooted in the "process of socialization and the operation of routine cognitive and emotional psychological processes."[42]

Yet, despite its limitations, the symbolic racism tradition has brought attention to key elements of how whites explain racial inequality today. Whether this is "symbolic" of antiblack affect or not is beside the point and hard to assess, since as a former student of mine queried, "How does one test for the unconscious?"[43]

The fourth explanation of whites' contemporary racial attitudes is associated with those who claim that whites' racial views represent a *sense of group position*. This position, forcefully advocated by Lawrence Bobo and James Kluegel, is similar to Jim Sidanius's "social dominance" and Mary Jackman's "group interests" arguments.[44] In essence, the claim of all these authors is that white prejudice is an ideology to defend white privilege. Bobo and his associates have specifically suggested that because of socioeconomic changes that transpired in the 1950s and 1960s, a *laissez-faire racism* emerged that was fitting of the United States' "modern, nationwide, postindustrial free labor economy and polity."[45] Laissez-faire racism "encompasses an ideology that blames blacks themselves for their poorer relative economic standing, seeing it as the function of perceived cultural inferiority."[46]

Some of the basic arguments of authors in the symbolic and modern racism[47] traditions and, particularly, of the laissez-faire racism view are fully compatible with my color-blind racism interpretation. As these authors, I argue that color-blind racism has rearticulated elements of traditional liberalism (work ethic, rewards by merit, equal opportunity, individualism, etc.) for racially illiberal goals. I also argue like them that whites today rely more on cultural rather than biological tropes to explain blacks' position in this country. Finally, I concur with most analysts of post–Civil Rights' matters in arguing that whites do not perceive discrimination to be a central factor shaping blacks' life chances.

Although most of my differences with authors in the symbolic racism and laissez-faire traditions are methodological (see below), I have one central theoretical disagreement with them. Theoretically, most of these authors are still snarled in the prejudice problematic and thus interpret actors' racial views as *individual psychological* dispositions. Although Bobo and his associates have a conceptualization that is closer to mine, they still retain the notion of prejudice and its psychological baggage rooted in interracial hostility.[48] In contrast, my model is not anchored in actors' affective dispositions (although affective dispositions may be manifest or

latent in the way many express their racial views). Instead, it is based on a materialist interpretation of racial matters and thus sees the views of actors as corresponding to their systemic location. Those at the bottom of the racial barrel tend to hold oppositional views and those who receive the manifold wages of whiteness tend to hold views in support of the racial status quo. Whether actors express "resentment" or "hostility" toward minorities is largely irrelevant for the maintenance of white privilege. As David Wellman points out in his *Portraits of White Racism*, "[p]rejudiced people are not the only racists in America."[49]

KEY TERMS: RACE, RACIAL STRUCTURE, AND RACIAL IDEOLOGY

One reason why, in general terms, whites and people of color cannot agree on racial matters is because they conceive terms such as "racism" very differently. Whereas for most whites racism is prejudice, for most people of color racism is systemic or institutionalized. Although this is not a theory book, my examination of color-blind racism has etched in it the indelible ink of a "regime of truth"[50] about how the world is organized. Thus, rather than hiding my theoretical assumptions, I state them openly for the benefit of readers and potential critics.

The first key term is the notion of *race*. There is very little formal disagreement among social scientists in accepting the idea that race is a socially constructed category.[51] This means that notions of racial difference are human creations rather than eternal, essential categories. As such, racial categories have a history and are subject to change. And here ends the agreement among social scientists on this matter. There are at least three distinct variations on how social scientists approach this constructionist perspective on race. The first approach, which is gaining popularity among white social scientists, is the idea that because race is socially constructed, it is not a fundamental category of analysis and praxis. Some analysts go as far as to suggest that because race is a constructed category, then it is not real and social scientists who use the category are the ones who make it real.[52]

The second approach, typical of most sociological writing on race, gives lip service to the social constructionist view—usually a line in the beginning of the article or book. Writers in this group then proceed to discuss "racial" differences in academic achievement, crime, and SAT scores as if they were truly racial.[53] This is the central way in which contemporary scholars contribute to the propagation of racist interpretations of racial inequality. By failing to highlight the social dynamics that produce these racial differences, these scholars help reinforce the racial order.[54]

The third approach, and the one I use in this book, acknowledges that race, as other social categories such as class and gender, is constructed but insists that it has a *social* reality. This means that after race—or class or gender—is created, it produces real effects on the actors racialized as "black" or "white." Although race, as other social constructions, is unstable, it has a "changing same"[55] quality at its core.

In order to explain how a socially constructed category produces real race effects, I need to introduce a second key term: the notion of *racial structure*. When race emerged in human history, it formed a social structure (a racialized social system) that awarded systemic privileges to Europeans (the peoples who became "white") over non-Europeans (the peoples who became "nonwhite").[56] Racialized social systems, or white supremacy[57] for short, became global and affected all societies where Europeans extended their reach. I therefore conceive a society's racial structure as *the totality of the social relations and practices that reinforce white privilege*. Accordingly, the task of analysts interested in studying racial structures is to uncover the particular social, economic, political, social control, and ideological mechanisms responsible for the reproduction of racial privilege in a society.

But why are racial structures reproduced in the first place? Would not humans, after discovering the folly of racial thinking, work to abolish race as a category as well as a practice? Racial structures remain in place for the same reasons that other structures do. Since actors racialized as "white"—or as members of the dominant race—receive material benefits from the racial order, they struggle (or passively receive the manifold wages of whiteness) to maintain their privileges. In contrast, those defined as belonging to the subordinate race or races struggle to change the status quo (or become resigned to their position). Therein lies the secret of racial structures and racial inequality the world over.[58] They exist because they benefit members of the dominant race.

If the ultimate goal of the dominant race is to defend its collective interests (i.e., the perpetuation of systemic white privilege), it should surprise no one that this group develops rationalizations to account for the status of the various races. And here I introduce my third key term, the notion of *racial ideology*. By this I mean *the racially based frameworks used by actors to explain and justify* (dominant race) or *challenge* (subordinate race or races) *the racial status quo*. Although all the races in a racialized social system have the *capacity* of developing these frameworks, the frameworks of the dominant race tend to become the master frameworks upon which *all* racial actors ground (for or against) their ideological positions. Why? Because as Marx pointed out in *The German Ideology*, "the ruling *material* force of society, is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force."[59] This does not mean that ideology is almighty. In fact, as I will show in chapter 6,

ideological rule is always partial. Even in periods of hegemonic rule,[60] such as the current one, subordinate racial groups develop oppositional views. However, it would be foolish to believe that those who rule a society do not have the power to at least color (pun intended) the views of the ruled.

Racial ideology can be conceived for analytical purposes as comprising the following elements: common frames, style, and racial stories (details on each can be found in chapters 2, 3, and 4). The frames that bond together a particular racial ideology are rooted in the group-based conditions and experiences of the races and are, at the symbolic level, the representations developed by these groups to explain how the world is or ought to be. And because the group life of the various racially defined groups is based on hierarchy and domination, the ruling ideology expresses as "common sense" the interests of the dominant race, while oppositional ideologies attempt to challenge that common sense by providing alternative frames, ideas, and stories based on the experiences of subordinated races.

Individual actors employ these elements as "building blocks . . . for manufacturing versions on actions, self, and social structures" in communicative situations.[61] The looseness of the elements allows users to maneuver within various contexts (e.g., responding to a race-related survey, discussing racial issues with family, or arguing about affirmative action in a college classroom) and produce various accounts and presentations of self (e.g., appearing ambivalent, tolerant, or strong minded). This loose character enhances the legitimating role of racial ideology because it allows for accommodation of contradictions, exceptions, and new information. As Jackman points out about ideology in general: "Indeed, the strength of an ideology lies in its loose-jointed, flexible application. *An ideology is a political instrument, not an exercise in personal logic:* consistency is rigidity, the only pragmatic effect of which is to box oneself in."[62]

Before I can proceed, two important caveats should be offered. First, although whites, because of their privileged position in the racial order, form a social group (the dominant race), they are fractured along class, gender, sexual orientation, and other forms of "social cleavage." Hence, they have multiple and often contradictory interests that are not easy to disentangle and that predict a priori their mobilizing capacity (Do white workers have more in common with white capitalists than with black workers?). However, because all actors awarded the dominant racial position, regardless of their multiple structural locations (men or women, gay or straight, working class or bourgeois) benefit from what Mills calls the "racial contract,"[63] *most* have historically endorsed the ideas that justify the racial status quo.

Second, although not every single member of the dominant race defends the racial status quo or spouts color-blind racism, *most* do. To explain this point by analogy, although not every capitalist defends capitalism (e.g., Frederick Engels, the coauthor of *The Communist Manifesto,* was a capitalist) and not every man defends patriarchy (e.g., *Achilles Heel* is an English magazine published by feminist men), *most* do in some fashion. In the same vein, although some whites fight white supremacy and do not endorse white common sense, *most* subscribe to substantial portions of it in a casual, uncritical fashion that helps sustain the prevailing racial order.

HOW TO STUDY COLOR-BLIND RACISM

I will rely mostly on interview data to make my case. This choice is based on important conceptual and methodological considerations. Conceptually, my focus is examining whites' racial ideology, and ideology, racial or not, is produced and reproduced in communicative interaction.[64] Hence, although surveys are useful instruments for gathering general information on actors' views, they are severely limited tools for examining how people explain, justify, rationalize, and articulate racial viewpoints. People are less likely to express their positions and emotions about racial issues by answering "yes" and "no" or "strongly agree" and "strongly disagree" to questions. Despite the gallant effort of some survey researchers to produce methodologically correct questionnaires, survey questions still restrict the free flow of ideas and unnecessarily constrain the range of possible answers for respondents.[65]

Methodologically, I argue that because the normative climate in the post–Civil Rights era has made illegitimate the public expression of racially based feelings and viewpoints,[66] surveys on racial attitudes have become like multiple-choice exams in which respondents work hard to choose the "right" answers (i.e., those that fit public norms). For instance, although a variety of data suggest racial considerations are central to whites' residential choices, more than 90 percent of whites state in surveys that they have no problem with the idea of blacks moving into their neighborhoods.[67] Similarly, even though about 80 percent of whites claim they would not have a problem if a member of their family brought a black person home for dinner, research shows that (1) very few whites (fewer than 10 percent) can legitimately claim the proverbial "some of my best friends are blacks" and (2) whites rarely fraternize with blacks.[68]

Of more import yet is the insistence by mainstream survey researchers' on using questions developed in the 1950s and 1960s to assess changes in racial tolerance. This strategy is predicated on the assumption that "racism" (what I label here racial ideology) does not change over time. If

instead one regards racial ideology as in fact changing, the reliance on questions developed to tackle issues from the Jim Crow era will produce an artificial image of progress and miss most of whites' contemporary racial nightmares.

Despite my conceptual and methodological concerns with survey research, I believe well-designed surveys are still useful instruments to glance at America's racial reality. Therefore, I report survey results from my own research projects as well as from research conducted by other scholars whenever appropriate. My point, then, is not to deny attitudinal change or to condemn to oblivion survey research on racial attitudes, but to understand whites' new racial beliefs and their implications as well as possible.

DATA SOURCES

The data for this book come primarily from two similarly structured projects. The first is the 1997 Survey of Social Attitudes of College Students, based on a convenient sample of 627 college students (including 451 white students) surveyed at a large midwestern university (MU henceforth), a large southern university (SU), and a medium-sized West Coast university (WU). A 10 percent random sample of the white students who provided information in the survey on how to contact them (about 90 percent) were interviewed (41 students altogether, of which 17 were men and 24 women and of which 31 were from middle- and upper-middle-class backgrounds and 10 were from the working class).

Although the data from this study are very suggestive and, I believe, essentially right, the study has some limitations. First, it is based on a convenient, rather than a representative, sample, limiting the capacity for generalizing the findings to the white population at large. Nevertheless, it is worth pointing out that the bias in that sample is 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.[69] Another limitation of the study is that interviews were conducted only with white respondents. Thus, this data set does not allow us to examine whether or not their views are different from blacks'. Finally, due to budget constraints, the sample was small, albeit large when compared to most interview-based work.[70]

The second data source for this book is the 1998 Detroit Area Study (DAS). This data set overcomes many of the limitations of the college students' data set, since the former 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 (66 were whites and 17 were blacks). The interviews were race matched, followed a structured interview protocol, were conducted in the respondents' homes, and lasted about one hour.

The major limitation of the 1998 DAS data set is that the respondents are black and white only. As the United States has become a multiracial society, one has to be concerned about the generalizability of an analysis based on findings on blacks and whites. Although I posit color-blind racism is the general ideology of the post–Civil Rights era, I realize that a fuller analysis should include the views of other people of color. Thus, I will bring to bear data from other sources in my conclusion to show how other people of color fit into the notion of color-blind racism. On a final note regarding the 1997 Survey of Social Attitudes of College Students and the 1998 DAS, I am well aware that some readers may question their continued validity. However, both survey research as well as interview-based research (e.g., Bush 2004; Gallagher 2002; etc.) done since have produced similar results, thus adding strength to my arguments in this book.

POLITICS, INTERPRETATION, AND OBJECTIVITY

Social scientific research is always a political enterprise. Despite the Enlightenment's dream[71] of pure objectivity, the problems we pose, the theories we use, the methods we employ, and the analyses we perform are social products themselves and to an extent reflect societal contradictions and power dynamics. This view has become more acceptable in the social sciences today than it was ten or twenty years ago.[72] Accordingly, it is harder for social scientists today to defend sociologist Max Weber's call for a separation between researcher, method, and data.[73]

My scholarly goals in this book are to describe the main components of color-blind racism and explain their functions and to use these components to theorize how future U.S. race relations might look. I hope this effort helps social analysts to get over the present impasse on the nature and meaning of whites' racial views. Yet, by accomplishing my scholarly goals, I also hope to attain a much larger and important political goal: uncovering the basic profile of the main ideology reinforcing contemporary racial inequality. By definition, then, my work is a challenge to post–Civil Rights white common sense; to the view that race no longer matters; and to anyone who believes that the problems afflicting people of color

are fundamentally rooted in their pathological cultures.[74] More specifically, I want to advance an argument (the sophisticated nature of color-blind racism), an approach (analyzing racial ideology rather than "prejudice"), and a politics (fighting racial domination based on a group rights'[75] agenda) that assist scholars and activists alike in their research and struggle against color-blind nonsense. I also hope that this book will serve as a wake-up call to color-blind liberal and progressive whites and confused members of minority communities who may favor equal opportunity but not affirmative action, who believe discrimination is not an important factor shaping the life chances of people of color, or who still wonder if racial minorities do in fact have an inferior culture that accounts for their status in America. Nevertheless, recognizing the political nature of research is not a green light for sloppiness and one-sidedness or for relying on unsystematically gathered data to make broad generalizations. Hence, I support my arguments with systematic interview data and reference where my data or analysis differs from that of mainstream analysts so that readers can find alternative interpretations to mine.

Let me now say a word on the matter of interpretation. It is true that "the spoken word has always the residue of ambiguity, no matter how carefully we word the questions and how carefully we report or code the answers."[76] Hence, it is possible for others to read the data differently. To satisfy the intellectual concerns of those who doubt my interpretation, whenever possible I present cases that do not nicely fit my interpretation (particularly in chapter 7). Nevertheless, I do not eschew the dangerous but necessary role of the analyst. I will make a strong case for the view that most whites endorse the ideology of color blindness and that this ideology is central to the maintenance of white privilege. The alternatives to this interpretive role of analysts, which I see as more problematic, are timid descriptions usually accompanied by a forest of caveats in which actors' self-reports of events becomes the ultimate goal of the research itself. Although I do not deny that "people's accounts count,"[77] my goals are interpretive (what do people's accounts mean?) and political (what do people's accounts help accomplish in society). Description and data presentation without interpretation, without analysis, is like going to a beach without a swimsuit.

Does this mean that my interpretation is infallible because I have some degree of authority, which somehow confers me a special gaze? In truth, given the situational and partial character of all knowledge,[78] neither I, nor my potential critics hold the monopoly over the right way of interpreting data. All of us try our best to construct robust explanations of events and hope that in the tilted market of ideas (tilted toward the interpretations of the powerful) the most plausible ones achieve legitimacy.

But if research is political by nature and my interpretation of the data is guided by my theoretical and political orientation, how can readers ascertain if my interpretation is better than those of other analysts? That is, how can we avoid the trap of relativism,[79] of the idea that "all thinking is merely the expression of interest or power or group membership?" My answer to these questions is that my explanations—as well as those of other analysts—ought to be judged like maps. Judge my cartographic effort of drawing the boundaries of contemporary white racial ideology in terms of its usefulness (Does it help to better understand whites' views?), accuracy (Does it accurately depict whites' arguments about racial matters?), details (Does it highlight elements of whites' collective representations not discussed by others?), and clarity (Does it ultimately help you move from here to there?).[80]

ONE IMPORTANT CAVEAT

The purpose of this book is not to demonize whites or label them "racist." Hunting for "racists" is the sport of choice of those who practice the "clinical approach" to race relations—the careful separation of good and bad, tolerant and intolerant Americans. Because this book is anchored in a structural understanding of race relations,[81] my goal is to uncover the collective practices (in this book, the ideological ones) that help reinforce the contemporary racial order. Historically, many good people supported slavery and Jim Crow. Similarly, most color-blind whites who oppose (or have serious reservations about) affirmative action, believe that blacks' problems are mostly their own doing, and do not see anything wrong with their own white lifestyle are good people, too. The analytical issue, then, is examining how many whites subscribe to an ideology that ultimately helps preserve racial inequality rather than assessing how many hate or love blacks and other minorities.

Even with this caveat, some readers may still feel discomfort while reading this book. Since color-blind racism is the dominant racial ideology, its tentacles have touched us all and thus most readers will subscribe to some—if not most—of its tenets, use its style, and believe many of its racial stories. Unfortunately, there is little I can do to ease the pain of these readers, since when one writes and exposes an ideology that is at play, its supporters "get burned," so to speak. For readers in this situation (good people who may subscribe to many of the frames of color blindness), I urge a personal and political movement away from claiming to be "nonracist" to becoming "antiracist."[82] Being an antiracist begins with understanding the institutional nature of racial matters and accepting that all actors in a racialized society are affected *materially* (receive bene-

fits or disadvantages) and *ideologically* by the racial structure. This stand implies taking responsibility for your unwilling participation in these practices and beginning a new life committed to the goal of achieving real racial equality. The ride will be rough, but after your eyes have been opened, there is no point in standing still.

THE PLAN OF THE BOOK

Color-blind racism emerged as a new racial ideology in the late 1960s, concomitantly with the crystallization of the "new racism" as America's new racial structure. Because the social practices and mechanisms to reproduce racial privilege acquired a new, subtle, and apparently nonracial character, new rationalizations emerged to justify the new racial order. I explore in detail the dominant frameworks of color-blind racism in chapter 2.

All ideologies develop a set of stylistic parameters; a certain way of conveying its ideas to audiences. Color-blind racism is no exception. In chapter 3, I document the main stylistic components of this ideology. In chapter 4, I delve into the story lines ("The past is the past" or "I didn't get a job or promotion—or was not admitted to a certain college—because a black man got it") and personal stories that have emerged in the post–Civil Rights era to provide color blind-racism's gut-level emotionality.

If we take seriously whites' self-profession to color blindness, one would expect significantly high levels of racial interaction with minorities in general and blacks in particular. Using the data from these two projects, in chapter 5 I examine whites' patterns of interracial interactions and conclude that they tend to navigate in what I label as a "white habitus" or a set of primary networks and associations with other whites that reinforces the racial order by fostering racial solidarity among whites and negative affect toward racial "others."

In chapter 6 I address "race traitors,"[83] or whites who do not endorse the ideology of color blindness. After profiling college students and DAS respondents who fit the racial progressive mold, I suggest white women from working-class origins are the most likely candidates to commit racial treason in the United States. Nevertheless, I also show that color-blind racism has affected even these progressive whites. If color-blind racism has affected racial progressives, has it affected blacks, too? Attempting to answer this question is the focus of chapter 7. Using DAS data, I contend that although blacks have developed an oppositional ideology, color-blind racism has affected blacks in a mostly indirect fashion. Rather than totally controlling blacks' field of ideas and cognitions, color-blind racism has confused some issues, restricted the possibility of discussing others, and, overall, blunted the utopian character of blacks' oppositional views. In chapter 8 I challenge the assertions that the United States is still organized along a biracial divide and posit that the United States is slowly moving toward a triracial or "plural" order similar to that found in many Latin American and Caribbean countries. In chapter 9 I examine the Obama phenomenon and suggest it is not emblematic of post-racialism but part of the color-blind drama I examine in this book. In chapter 10 I conclude by assessing the implications of color-blind racism, of the Latin Americanization of racial stratification, and of *Obamerica* for the struggle for racial and social justice in this country.

NOTES

1. Even members of these organizations now claim that they are not racist, simply pro-white. For David Duke's discussion on this matter, see his website, www.duke.org/.

2. Some, such as former president George H. W. Bush, use Dr. King's dictum to oppose affirmative action. Interestingly, when Bush was in Congress, he opposed most of the civil rights legislation advocated by King. Furthermore, few whites have ever read the speech in which King used this phrase. If they had, they would realize that his dream referred to the future, that he emphasized that the "Negro [was] still not free." King also emphasized that there could not be peace without justice. In his words, "There will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges." See Martin Luther King Jr., *A Call to Conscience: The Landmark Speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*, edited by Clayborne Carson and Kris Shephard (New York: Intellectual Properties Management, in association with Warner Books, 2001).

3. These views have been corroborated in survey after survey. For instance, a recent nationwide survey found that 66 percent of whites thought the disadvantaged status of blacks in America was due to blacks' welfare dependency and 63 percent thought blacks lacked the motivation to improve their socioeconomic status. Tom W. Smith, "Intergroup Relations in Contemporary America," in *Intergroup Relations in the United States: Research Perspectives*, edited by Wayne Winborne and Renae Cohen, 69–106 (New York: National Conference for Community and Justice, 2000).

4. This phrase was made popular by Rodney King immediately after his first trial. Curiously, the phrase was provided to King by his white lawyer and a movie producer. See Houston A. Baker, "Scene . . . Not Heard," in *Reading Rodney King, Reading Urban Uprising*, edited by Robert Gooding-Williams, 38–50 (New York: Routledge, 1993), 45.

5. This term was coined in Joe R. Feagin and Hernán Vera, *White Racism: The Basics* (New York: Routledge, 1995), to refer to whites' myths about race in contemporary America, particularly their self-delusions.

6. See Melvin Oliver and Thomas Shapiro, *Black Wealth/White Wealth* (New York: Routledge, 1995). See also Juliane Malveaux, "Black Dollar Power: Economics in the Black Community," *Essence* 10 (October 1999), 88–92; John Goering (ed.), *Fragile Rights in Cities* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, Forthcoming), and Thomas M. Shapiro, *The Hidden Cost of Being African American: How Wealth Perpetuates Inequality* (London: Oxford University Press, 2004).

7. For a vivid description of the educational inequalities between blacks and whites, see Jonathan Kozol, *Savage Inequalities* (New York: Crown, 1992). For a discussion of resegregation and its consequences, see Gary Orfield, Susan Eaton, and the Harvard Project on School Desegregation, *Dismantling Desegregation: The Quiet Reversal of* Brown v. Board of Education (New York: New York Press, 1996). For a discussion of racial matters in "integrated" campuses, see Joe R. Feagin, Hernán Vera, and Nikitah Imani, *The Agony of Education: Black Students at White Colleges and Universities* (New York: Routledge, 1996); and chapter 2 in Roy Brooks, *Integration or Separation? A Strategy for Racial Equality* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996).

8. William J. Collins and Robert A. Margo, "Race and the Value of Owner-Occupied Housing, 1940–1990," Working Papers Series (Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y.: Bard College, Levy Economics Institute, August 2000).

9. Douglas Massey and Nancy E. Denton, *American Apartheid* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993); John Yinger, *Closed Doors, Opportunities Lost: The Continuing Costs of Housing Discrimination* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1995); Judith N. Desena, "Local Gatekeeping Practices and Residential Segregation," *Sociological Inquiry* 64, no. 3 (1994): 307–21.

10. Joe R. Feagin and Melvin Sikes, *Living with Racism: The Black Middle Class Experience* (Boston: Beacon, 1994); Peter Siegelman, "Racial Discrimination in 'Everyday' Commercial Transactions: What Do We Know . . . ," in *A National Report Card on Discrimination in America: The Role of Testing*, edited by Michael Fix and Margery Austin Turner, chapter 4 (Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute, March 1999).

11. Oliver and Shapiro, *Black Wealth/White Wealth;* Siegelman, "Racial Discrimination."

12. Katheryn K. Russell, *The Color of Crime* (New York: New York University Press, 1998).

13. David A. Harris, *Driving While Black: Racial Profiling on Our Nation's Highways*, Special Report (New York: American Civil Liberties Union, June 1999).

14. Derrick Bell, *Race, Racism and American Law* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1992).

15. The work of William A. Ryan and Joel Kovel represent early efforts to understand the parameters of post–Civil Rights racial ideology. See William A. Ryan, *Blaming the Victim* (New York: Random House, 1976); Joel Kovel, *White Racism: A Psychohistory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

16. Melvin Thomas has found that this perspective deeply affects social science research on racial matters. Melvin Thomas, "Anything but Race: The Social Science Retreat from Racism," *African American Research Perspectives* (Winter 2000): 79–96.

17. This statement is from the top officer of a cart transport company in Chicago. William Julius Wilson, *When Work Disappears* (New York: Norton, 1996), 112.

18. These comments are from a resident of Canarsie, New York. Jonathan Rieder, *Canarsie: The Jews and Italians of Brooklyn against Liberalism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), 58.

19. See my chapter with Amanda E. Lewis, "The 'New Racism': Toward an Analysis of the U.S. Racial Structure, 1960–1990s," in *Race, Nation, and Citizenship*, edited by Paul Wong, 100–150 (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1999). For a more recent, updated version, see chapter 3 in my *White Supremacy and Racism in the Post Civil Rights Era* (Boulder, Colo.: Rienner, 2001).

20. For general findings on housing matters, see John Yinger, *Closed Doors.* For gatekeeping practices, see Judith A. Desena, "Local Gatekeeping Practices and Residential Segregation," *Sociological Inquiry* 64, no. 3 (1994): 307–21.

21. Bonilla-Silva, *White Supremacy*, 11–117.

22. Bonilla-Silva, *White Supremacy*, 100–101.

23. CBS, "Bush Enters Affirmative Action Fray," CBS.com, January 16, 2003. For a discussion of the contradiction between President Bush opposing affirmative action and his own affirmative action–like admission to Phillips Academy and Yale, see Ellis Henican, "When It Comes to Hypocrisy, He's Brilliant!" *Newsday.com*, January 17, 2003. In *Grutter v. Bollinger* et al., the Supreme Court decided that Michigan could use race as one factor among many in its admissions policy. Although President Obama has appointed Judge Sonia Sotomayor to the court, the court is still center-right and may further restrict affirmative action.

24. I must caution, however, that at no point in history have dominant groups, whether capitalists, men, or whites, proclaimed that their domination is rooted in unfairness and oppression or characterized their behavior as abominable. Hence, whether in the slavery, Jim Crow, or post–Civil Rights eras, whites have never acknowledged any wrongdoing. From a social-psychological standpoint, this makes perfect sense since, as William Ryan stated in his famous book, *Blaming the Victim*, "no one [wants to think] of himself as a son of a bitch" (20).

25. Howard Schuman et al., *Racial Attitudes in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997).

26. For data on stereotypes, see Mark Peffley and Jon Hurwitz, "Whites' Stereotypes of Blacks: Sources and Political Consequences," in *Perception and Prejudice: Race and Politics in the United States*, edited by Jon Hurwitz and Mark Peffley, 58–99 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press); John F. Dovidio and Samuel L. Gaertner, "Changes in the Expression and Assessment of Racial Prejudice," in *Opening Doors*, edited by Harry J. Knopke et al., 119–50 (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1991); Paul M. Sniderman and Edward G. Carmines, *Reaching Beyond Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997). See also Anti-Defamation League, *Highlights from the Anti-Defamation League Survey on Racial Attitudes in America* (New York: Anti-Defamation League, 1993).

27. Paul B. Sheatsley, "White Attitudes toward the Negro," in *The Negro Ameri-*

can, edited by Talcott Parsons and Kenneth B. Clark, 303–24 (Boston: Beacon, 1966), 323.

28. Glenn Firebaugh and Kenneth E. Davis, "Trends in Antiblack Prejudice, 1972–1984: Region and Cohort Effects," *American Journal of Sociology* 94 (1988): 251–72; Paul M. Sniderman and Thomas Piazza, *The Scar of Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993); Seymour Lipset, *American Exceptionalism* (New York: Norton, 1996); Sniderman and Carmines, *Reaching beyond Race*.

29. Sniderman and Carmines, *Reaching beyond Race*, 138.

30. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and Tyrone Forman, " 'I Am Not a Racist But . . .': Mapping White College Students' Racial Ideology in the USA," *Discourse and Society* 11, no. 1 (2000): 50–85.

31. For a discussion on this methodology, see Douglas S. Massey, R. Alarcon, J. Durand, and H. Gonzalez, *Return to Aztlan: The Social Process of International Migration from Western Mexico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

32. See the introduction to Bonilla-Silva, *White Supremacy*.

33. See Tom W. Smith, "Measuring Inter-Racial Friendships: Experimental Comparisons" (paper presented at the 1999 American Sociological Association meeting in San Francisco).

34. The earliest statement of Schuman's paradoxical views can be found in Angus Campbell and Howard Schuman, *Racial Attitudes in Fifteen American Cities* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Survey Research Center, June 1968).

35. Schuman et al., *Racial Attitudes in America*.

36. In truth, there are at least four versions of this tradition (symbolic, aversive, modern, and subtle racism). Yet, despite small differences, all of them make the claim that antiblack prejudice has gone underground and is now expressed symbolically through apparently nonracist means.

37. The foundational paper here was David O. Sears and Donald R. Kinder, "Racial Tensions and Voting in Los Angeles," in *Los Angeles: Viability and Prospects for Metropolitan Leadership*, edited by Werner Z. Hirsch (New York: Praeger, 1971).

38. Donald R. Kinder and David O. Sears, "Prejudice and Politics: Symbolic Racism versus Racial Threats to the Good Life," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 40, no. 1 (1981): 414–31, 416.

39. David R. Kinder and Lynn M. Sanders, *Divided by Color: Racial Politics and Democratic Ideals* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 106.

40. Schuman et al., *Racial Attitudes in America*, 293.

41. Michael Hughes, "Symbolic Racism, Old-Fashioned Racism, and Whites' Opposition to Affirmative Action," in *Racial Attitudes in the 1990s*, edited by Steven A. Tuch and Jack K. Martin, 45–75 (Westport, Conn.: Praeger 1997).

42. Lawrence Bobo, James A. Kluegel, and Ryan A. Smith, "Laissez-Faire Racism: The Crystallization of a Kinder, Gentler, Antiblack Ideology," in *Racial Attitudes in the 1990s*, 15–44 (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1997), 21. For a similar critique, see chapter 1 in Mary R. Jackman, *The Velvet Glove: Paternalism and Conflict in Gender, Class, and Race Relations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

43. This comment was made by Susanna Dolance, a graduate student at Michigan.

44. Jim Sidanius et al., "It's Not Affirmative Action, It's the Blacks," in *Racialized Politics*, edited by David O. Sears, Jim Sidanius, and Lawrence Bobo, 191–235 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Jackman, *The Velvet Glove*.

45. Bobo, Kluegel, and Smith, "Laissez-Faire Racism," 21. Philomena Essed has developed a similar argument and claims that in the modern world the dominant racial ideology is that of "competitive racism." See Philomena Essed, *Diversity: Gender, Color, and Culture* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996). See also my " 'This Is a White Country': Racial Ideological Convergence among the Western Nations of the World-System," *Sociological Inquiry* 70, no. 2 (2000):188–214.

46. Lawrence Bobo and James R. Kluegel, "Status, Ideology, and Dimensions of Whites' Racial Beliefs and Attitudes: Progress and Stagnation," in *Racial Attitudes in the 1990s*, 93–120 (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1997), 95.

47. John B. McConahay and J. C. Hough, "Symbolic Racism," *Journal of Social Issues* 32, no. 2 (1976): 23–46; John B. McConahay, "Modern Racism, Ambivalence, and the Modern Racism Scale," in *Prejudice, Discrimination, and Racism*, edited by John F. Dovidio and Samuel L. Gaertner (New York: Academic, 1986).

48. This critique of the prejudice problematic (and of Bobo's work) was issued first by Jackman, *The Velvet Glove*, 55–58.

49. David T. Wellman, *Portraits of White Racism*, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

50. See Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Random House, 1973).

51. A few highly visible social scientists such as Charles Murray, Arthur Jensen, Pierre van den Berghe, and Edward O. Wilson still conceive of race as a biological or primordial category. However, they are in a minority and are severely criticized by most people in academia.

52. For an example of this view, see Yehudi O. Webster, *The Racialization of America* (New York: St. Martin's, 1992). However, this view is much more extensive and has been publicly stated by radical scholars such as Todd Gitlin. I have seen the growing influence of this stance among many "radical" scholars who now proclaim to be disillusioned with what they label as "identity politics" (in truth, they never got onboard with the radical gender and racial agendas of their minority and women's colleagues) and thus argue that gender and race are divisive categories preventing the unity of the working class.

53. For a biting critique of statistical racial reasoning, see Tukufu Zuberi, "Deracializing Social Statistics: Problems in the Quantification of Race," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 568 (2000): 172–85.

54. It is largely irrelevant whether these authors are "racist" (that is, hold negative views about racial minorities) or not. "That knowledge [that produced by race scholars unwilling to accept the centrality of racial stratification as the basic force behind the data they uncover], sometimes wittingly, sometimes unwittingly, operates to reinforce the fear and hatred of others by providing rationales for hierarchizing differences." Thomas L. Dunn, "The New Enclosures: Racism in the Normalized Community," in *Reading Rodney King, Reading Urban Uprising*, edited by Robert Gooding-Williams, 178–95 (New York: Routledge, 1993), 180.

55. I borrow this phrase from Michael G. Hanchard, *Orpheus and Power*

(Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994). Too many postmodern-inspired readings on race insist on the malleability and instability of all social constructions. This, they believe, is the best antidote to essentialism. In my view, however, by focusing on the instability of race as a category, they miss its continuity and social role in shaping everyday dynamics. Even worse, in some cases, the views of some of these authors come close to those of right-wing scholars who advocate the elimination race as a category of analysis and discourse. From the perspective advanced in this book, the elimination of race from above without changing the material conditions that makes race a *socially* real category would just add another layer of defense to white supremacy.

56. I have argued in my work that race emerged as a category of human division in the 15th and 16th centuries as Europeans expanded their nascent world system. However, other analysts believe that the category has existed since antiquity and cite evidence of "racism" from the Roman and Greek civilizations. Although I believe that they confuse xenophobia and ethnocentrism with what I call a racialized social system, our disagreement is not central to the point at hand.

57. Although many analysts resent this concept and think that is inappropriate, I am persuaded by the arguments advanced by philosopher Charles W. Mills. This notion forces the reader to understand the systemic and power elements in a racialized social system, as well as the historical reality that such systems were organized and are still ordained by Western logics. For a discussion on this matter, see my book, *White Supremacy*, or consult Charles W. Mills, *Blackness Visible* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998).

58. I have been criticized for holding this position (see my debate with Mara Loveman in the pages of the *American Sociological Review*, December 1999), yet the view that race relations have a material foundation has a long history in American sociology. This notion formed part of the classic work of W. Lloyd Warner, in *Social Class in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), and John Dollard, in *Caste and Class in a Southern Town* (New York: Doubleday, 1957); later, it could be found in the work of Herbert Blumer, Hubert Blalock, Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton, and Robert Blauner.

59. My emphasis. Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*, edited and with an introduction by C. J. Arthur (New York: International, 1985), 64.

60. Hegemonic rule means that dominant groups actively attempt to achieve the consent of the subordinated groups through a variety of means.

61. Margaret Wetherell and Jonathan Potter, *Mapping the Language of Racism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 91.

62. My emphasis. Jackman, *The Velvet Glove*, 69.

63. Black philosopher Charles W. Mills argues that with the advent of modern imperialism (the 15th and 16th centuries onward), whites developed a political, moral, and epistemological "racial contract" to maintain white supremacy over nonwhites. See *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997).

64. Volosinov, the great Russian psychologist, stated a long time ago that ideology, and even self-awareness and consciousness, are "always verbal [communicative], always a matter of finding some specifically suitable verbal complex." Vladimir N. Volosinov, *Freudianism: A Marxist Critique* (New York: Academic, 1976), 86. For treatises on how language is embedded in ideology, see Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power* (London: Longman, 1989) and *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (London: Longman, 1995).

65. For an example of the efforts of survey researchers to craft better survey instruments, see Judith Tanur, ed., *Questions about Questions* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1994).

66. Teun A. van Dijk, *Prejudice in Discourse* (Philadelphia: Benjamins, 1984). See also Howard Schuman et al., *Racial Attitudes in America.*

67. The specific wording of this survey question is: "If a black family with about the same income as you moves into your neighborhood, would you mind it a little, a lot, or not at all?" See Schuman et al., *Racial Attitudes in America.*

68. For data on traditional social distance questions, see chapter 3 in Schuman et al., *Racial Attitudes in America.* For data on the limited level of white-black friendship, see Mary R. Jackman and Marie Crane, " 'Some of My Best Friends are Black . . .': Interracial Friendship and Whites' Racial Attitudes," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 50 (Winter 1986): 459–86. For more recent data on Whites' racial attitudes see Kristen Myers', *Racetalk: Racism Hiding in Plain Sight* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005) and Melanie Bush's, *Breaking the Code of Good Intentions: Everyday Forms of Whiteness* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004). Data on limited fraternization between white and black college students will be provided in chapter 5.

69. Lawrence Bobo and Fred Licari, "Education and Political Tolerance: Testing the Effects of Cognitive Sophistication and Target Group Affect," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 53, no. 5 (Fall 1989): 285–308; Schuman et al., *Racial Attitudes in America.*

70. According to Steinar Kvale, *Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing* (London: Sage, 1996), most interview-based projects use between ten and fifteen subjects.

71. For a critique of the Enlightenment project as a racialized project, see Zygmut Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991); David T. Goldberg, *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1993).

72. See, for example, Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, eds., *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2000). Yet, this critical approach can be found in Dollard, *Caste and Class*, and more definitely, in Myrdal. For example, Myrdal wrote more than sixty years ago, in addressing the idea that "hard facts" debunk biases: It must be maintained, however, that *biases in social science cannot be erased simply by "keeping to the facts" and by refined methods of statistical treatment of the data.* Facts, and the handling of data, sometimes show themselves even more previous to tendencies toward bias than does "pure thought." . . . When, in an attempt to be factual, the statements of theory are reduced to a minimum, biases are left a freer leeway than if they were more explicitly set forth and discussed. (My emphasis) Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1944), 1041.

73. See Max Weber, "Objectivity in Social Science and Social Policy," edited and translated by Edward A. Shils and H. A. Finch (New York: Free Press, 1949).

74. I am aware that a few blacks and minority scholars and politicians—some

chapter 6, this segment of the black community is very small and does not represent the views of the community at large.

75. This controversial agenda will be developed in chapter 8. My argument is not new. For similar arguments, see Harold Cruse, *Plural but Equal: A Critical Study of Blacks and Minorities and America's Plural Society* (New York: Morrow, 1987); David Ingram, *Group Rights: Reconciling Equality and Difference* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000); and, particularly, chapter 8, "Antiracist Strategies and Solutions," in Joe R. Feagin, *Racist America: Roots, Realities, and Future Reparations* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

76. Andrea Fontana and James H. Frey, "The Interview: From Structured Questions to Negotiated Text," in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, 645–72 (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2000).

77. Terri L. Orbuch, "People's Accounts Count: The Sociology of Accounts," *Annual Review of Sociology* 23 (1997): 455–78. The position I am elaborating here has been marvelously captured by philosopher of science Brian Fay. "So must we comprehend others in their own terms? *Yes*, in the sense that we cannot grasp intentional phenomena and their products as intentional without ascertaining what they mean for those engaged in them. But *No*, in the sense that explaining these phenomena often will require outstripping the conceptual resources of those being studied." Brian Fay, *Contemporary Philosophy of Social Science* (Oxford, England: Blackwell, 1996), 134.

78. Situational because those in the business of interpreting the world, "whether they admit it or not, always have points of view, disciplinary orientations, social or political groups with which they identify." (Joel L. Kinchelor and Peter McLaren, "Rethinking Critical Theory and Qualitative Research," in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, 279–314 [Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2000], 288.) Partial because we can never capture either the totality of events affecting a process or the process itself.

79. Fay, *Contemporary Philosophy of Social Science*, 220.

80. This idea is also from Fay, *Contemporary Philosophy of Social Science*.

81. For a full elaboration, see my "Rethinking Racism."

82. I owe this idea to Eileen O'Brien, a sociology professor at the State University of New York-New Paltz.

83. I borrow this phrase from the journal *Race Traitors*.

2

The Central Frames of Color-Blind Racism

> The master defense against accurate social perception and change is always and in every society the tremendous conviction of rightness about any behavior form which exists.
>
> —John Dollard, *Class and Caste in a Southern Town*

If Jim Crow's racial structure has been replaced by a "new racism," what happened to Jim Crow racism? What happened to beliefs about blacks' mental, moral, and intellectual inferiority, to the idea that "it is the [black man's] own fault that he is a lower-caste . . . a lower-class man" or the assertion that blacks "lack initiative, are shiftless, have no sense of time, or do not wish to better themselves";[1] in short, what happened to the basic claim that blacks are subhuman?[2] Social analysts of all stripes agree that most whites no longer subscribe to these tenets. However, this does not mean the "end of racism,"[3] as a few conservative commentators have suggested. Instead, a new powerful ideology has emerged to defend the contemporary racial order: the ideology of color-blind racism. Yet, color-blind racism is a curious racial ideology. Although it engages, as all ideologies do, in "blaming the victim," it does so in a very indirect, "now you see it, now you don't" style that matches the character of the new racism. Because of the slipperiness of color-blind racism, in this chapter I examine its central frames and explain how whites use them in ways that justify racial inequality.

THE FRAMES OF COLOR-BLIND RACISM

Ideologies are about "meaning in the service of power."[4] They are expressions at the symbolic level of the fact of dominance. As such, the ideolo-