

“I am not a racist but . . .”: mapping White college students’ racial ideology in the USA



Discourse & Society
 Copyright © 2000
 SAGE Publications
 (London,
 Thousand Oaks, CA
 and New Delhi)
 Vol 11(1): 50–85
 [0957-9265
 (200001) 11:1:
 50–85; 008598]

EDUARDO BONILLA-SILVA
 TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

TYRONE A. FORMAN
 UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

ABSTRACT. Survey-based research on Whites’ racial attitudes in the USA has characterized their views as either ‘tolerant’ or ‘ambivalent’. We argue that surveys on racial attitudes have systematically underestimated the extent of prejudice in the White population. The legal and normative changes created by the civil rights movement of the 1960s brought a new racial ideology (‘color blind racism’), with new topics and a new form. These matters were examined by collecting survey and interview data from college students in three universities. The main findings were that White respondents appear to be more prejudiced in the interviews than in the survey, use a new *racetalk* to avoid appearing ‘racist’, and that the themes and arguments that they mobilize are congruent with what other analysts have labeled as ‘laissez faire’ or ‘competitive’ racism.

KEY WORDS: *color blind, racial ideology, racism, semantic moves*

Introduction

Since the civil rights period it has become common for Whites to use phrases such as “I am not a racist, but . . .” as shields to avoid being labeled as “racist” when expressing racial ideas’ (Van Dijk, 1984:120). These discursive maneuvers or *semantic moves* are usually followed by negative statements on the general character of minorities (e.g. “they are lazy”, “they have too many babies”) or on government-sponsored policies and programs that promote racial equality (e.g. “affirmative action is reverse discrimination”, “no-one should be forced to integrate”).¹ Qualitative work has captured these discursive maneuvers on issues as diverse as crime, welfare, affirmative action, government intervention, neighborhood and school integration (Blauner, 1989; Feagin and Sikes, 1994; Feagin and Vera, 1995; MacLeod, 1995; Rieder, 1985; Rubin, 1994; Terkel, 1993; Weis and Fine, 1996; Wellman, 1977). For example, Margaret Welch, angry about not getting a scholarship in college, told

Studs Terkel: "I've never been prejudiced, but why the hell are you doing this to me?" (Terkel, 1993: 70). Doug Craigen, a 32-year-old White truck driver, declared to Lillian Rubin: "I am not a racist, but sometimes they [Asians] give me the creeps" (Rubin, 1994: 188). Finally, Lawrence Adams, a supervisor interviewed by Bob Blauner, stated his views on affirmative action as follows:

Now don't get me wrong. There are people . . . who are very capable and who are going to progress up the line. The fact that they would be able to progress faster than I would because of affirmative action is not the part that bothers me. The part that bothers me, I can name you as many of them who are an incompetent bunch of bastards who have no right being there, but are only there because their last name is Hispanic or Black or they are females – *and that's wrong*. (Blauner, 1989: 256)

These prejudiced expressions clash with research that suggests that racial attitudes have improved dramatically in the USA. Beginning with Hyman and Sheatsley's widely cited paper in *Scientific American* (1964), [survey research has documented substantial change in Whites' racial views](#) (e.g. Firebaugh and Davis, 1988; Lipset, 1996; Niemi, Mueller and Smith, 1989; Smith and Sheatsley, 1984; Schuman et al., 1988; Sniderman and Piazza, 1993). Sheatsley (1966), for instance, proclaimed that:

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. It will not be easy for most, but one cannot at this late date doubt their basic commitment. In their hearts they know that the American Negro is right. (p. 323)

The conflicting findings regarding the character of Whites' racial views based on interviews and surveys as well as the differing interpretations of survey-based attitudinal research (see Bobo and Hutchings, 1996; Hochschild, 1995; Kinder and Sanders, 1996; Lipset, 1996; Schuman et al., 1988, 1997; Sniderman and Carmines, 1997; Sniderman and Piazza, 1993) have produced a new puzzle: *What is the meaning of contemporary Whites' racial views?* How can *Whites* claim to believe in racial equality and yet oppose programs to reduce racial inequality? Why is it that a large proportion of *Whites*, who claim in surveys that they agree with the principle of integration, do not mind their kids mixing with non-Whites, have no objection to interracial marriages, and do not mind people of color moving into their neighborhoods continue to live in all-White neighborhoods and send their kids to mostly White schools? Finally, why is it that interview-based research consistently reports higher levels of prejudice among Whites?

To explore the meaning of contemporary Whites' views, this article examines White racial attitudes from both a different conceptual perspective and with a different methodology. Conceptually, we situate the racial attitudes of Whites as part of a larger racial ideology that functions to preserve the contemporary racial order.² Here we build on the work of others who have argued that the complexity of contemporary White racial attitudes reflects changes occurring in the USA since the late 1940s (Bonilla-Silva and Lewis, 1999; Brooks, 1990; Smith, 1995). Specifically, they claim that the dramatic social, political, economic and

demographic changes in the USA since the 1940s combined with the political mobilization of various minority groups in the 1950s and 1960s, forced a change in the US racial structure – the network of social, political, and economic racial relations that produces and reproduces racial positions. In general terms, White privilege since the 1960s is maintained in a new fashion, in covert, institutional, and apparently nonracial ways (Bobo et al., 1997; Bonilla-Silva and Lewis, 1999; Jackman, 1994, 1996; Kovel, 1984; Smith, 1995; Wellman, 1977).

In consonance with this new structure, various analysts have pointed out that a new racial ideology has emerged that, in contrast to the Jim Crow racism or the ideology of the color line (Johnson, 1943, 1946; Myrdal, 1944), **avoids direct racial discourse but effectively safeguards racial privilege** (Bobo et al., 1997; Bonilla-Silva and Lewis, 1999; Essed, 1996; Jackman, 1994; Kovel, 1984). That ideology also shapes the very nature and style of contemporary racial discussions. In fact, in the post civil rights era, overt discussions of racial issues have become so taboo that **it has become extremely difficult to assess racial attitudes and behavior using conventional research strategies** (Myers, 1993; Van Dijk, 1984, 1987, 1997). Although we agree with those who suggest that there has been a normative change in terms of what is appropriate racial discourse and even racial etiquette (Schuman et al., 1988), we disagree with their interpretation of its meaning. Whereas they suggest that there is a ‘mixture of progress and resistance, certainty and ambivalence, striking movement and mere surface change’ (p. 212), we believe (1) that there has been a rearticulation of the dominant racial themes (**less overt expression of racial resentment about issues anchored in the Jim Crow era such as strict racial segregation in schools, neighborhoods, and social life in general, and more resentment on new issues such as affirmative action, government intervention, and welfare**) and (2) that a new way of talking about racial issues in public venues – **a new *racetalk* – has emerged**. Nonetheless, the new racial ideology continues to help in the reproduction of White supremacy.

Notwithstanding that the study of ideology is related to the examination of Whites’ attitudes, it is not the same. Uncovering ideology involves finding common *interpretive repertoires*³ (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell and Potter, 1992), story lines or argumentation schemata (Van Dijk, 1984, 1987), thematics, and construction of the self. Consequently, although we highlight variance among our respondents – specific ways in which respondents mobilized arguments – we focus more intensely on tracking their *global* ideological views. Although we recognize that individual modalities in people’s accounts matter (Billig et al., 1988; Potter and Wetherell, 1987), our conceptual premise is group-rather than individual-centered. Thus our main concern in this article is tracking White college students’ interpretive repertoires on racial matters as expressed during in-depth interviews and comparing them to their views as expressed in responses to survey items. We do this in order to demonstrate that the survey research paradox of contemporary White views on race is not a paradox after all.

Research design

The 1997 Social Attitudes of College Students Survey was a sample of undergraduate students at four universities. One school was located in the south, another in the midwest, and two were located in the west. Data collection occurred during the spring of 1997. All students surveyed were enrolled in social science courses. The questionnaire was administered during a class period. Students were informed that participation in the study was voluntary. Fewer than 10 percent declined to participate and a total of 732 students completed the survey. There were no significant differences on demographic characteristics between students who chose to participate and those that did not. All of the analyses reported in this article use only White respondents ($N = 541$). The sample sizes of other racial groups are too small for reliable statistical comparison. The remaining 191 respondents were self-identified as Asian ($N = 73$), Black ($N = 61$), Latino ($N = 34$), Native American ($N = 6$), other ($N = 14$), and no racial self-identification ($N = 3$). The questionnaire included both traditional and contemporary questions on racial attitudes that were previously used in national surveys (e.g. General Social Survey, National Election Study, and Gallup). It also included several questions on affirmative action, housing integration, and other race-related policy questions in which respondents were asked to choose an answer from a close-ended question and provide a brief explanation of their answer. Although the survey instrument was somewhat long (20 pages), the completion rate was 90 percent.

We conducted in-depth interviews with a random sample of the White college students that had completed the survey because prior research has found differences in Whites' racial attitudes depending on mode of data collection (Dovidio and Gaertner, 1986; Dovidio et al., 1989; Groves, Fultz et al., 1992; Krysan, 1998; Sigall and Page, 1971). We were able to interview students at only three of the four universities, which reduced the White student sample size to 451. However, we were able to maintain the regional diversity of the larger survey study because the university that we were unable to conduct in-depth interviews was one of two located in the west. In order to facilitate our selection of respondents for the in-depth interviews, we asked each respondent surveyed to provide on the first page of the survey their name, telephone, and e-mail address. After the students were chosen the page was discarded. Over 80 percent of the 451 White college students who completed the survey at the three universities provided contact information. There were no significant differences between students that provided contact information and the 20 percent who did not on either several racial attitude items or demographic characteristics. We randomly selected 41 White college students (approximately 10%) who had completed the survey and provided contact information. Interviews were conducted during the spring of 1997. In order to minimize race of interviewer effects (see Anderson et al., 1988a, 1988b), the interviews were conducted by three White graduate students and two White advanced undergraduate students. Whenever possible, we

also matched respondents by gender (Kane and Macaulay, 1993). The interviews were conducted using an interview guide that addressed several issues explored in the survey instrument. The time of interviews ranged from 1 to 2.5 hours. The present study draws more extensively on the in-depth interview data, addressing White college students' general and specific racial attitudes, social distance preferences, and reported interactions with racial minorities.

Although this study is a convenience sample of undergraduate students and we are well aware of its limitations, we think it provides an important opportunity to examine a paradox in contemporary racial attitudes. That is, **why Whites seem more tolerant in survey research than they do in interviews.** Furthermore, whereas most studies that have used in-depth interviews to examine White racial attitudes have relied on lower social class White adults, we examine higher social class young adults. Given the importance of young adults in the changing racial attitude landscape it seems important to focus on them. Second, it is important to find out whether or not the racist views of Whites expressed in interviews are an artifact of the method or because the focus has been on interviewing lower SES Whites. Here we attempt to fill a void by focusing on the young and generally higher SES Whites since these undergraduate students are probably more liberal than the total White adult population on issues related to race. Yet, there are two reasons to be less concerned about the type of sample that we have. First, since the sample is of college students taking social science courses, the expectation, based on previous work, is that they should exhibit less racist views than other segments of the population (Adorno et al., 1950; Allport, 1954; Bobo and Licari, 1989; Jackman, 1978). For example, if the students – educated and mostly middle-class – seem prejudiced, then our results are most likely underestimates of the true nature of the racial views of the entire white population. Furthermore, if the survey and interview results differ significantly, then our data cast a reasonable doubt on the almost exclusive reliance on surveys as the instruments for examining people's racial views. Thus, although we cannot make any strong generalizations on the White population based on this sample, this research design allows us to make (1) a preliminary comment about the nature of contemporary White college students' racial attitudes and (2) a reasonable assessment of the interview method as a way of obtaining more valid data on Whites' racial attitudes.

Toward an analysis of contemporary White ideology

WHITE COLLEGE STUDENTS' VIEWS: SURVEY RESULTS

Table 1 shows the responses of White students to questions on affirmative action. The table provides results on the total sample (the three universities) as well as on the 41 students selected for the interviews. A number of things are clear from these data. First, the interview sample mirrors the total sample, something that holds for all the tables.⁴ If anything, the interview respondents are slightly more likely to support affirmative action measures. Second, Whites seem

to openly oppose or have serious reservations about these programs, regardless of how the question is worded. These findings are quite consistent with previous research on Whites' attitudes toward affirmative action (Kluegel, 1990; Kluegel and Smith, 1986; Lipset, 1996; Schuman and Steeh, 1996; Steeh and Krysan, 1996). For example, 65 percent of White respondents disagree with occasionally providing special consideration to Black job seekers, 51 percent are against and 36 percent are 'not sure' about reserving openings for Black students in colleges and universities, and 36 percent indicate that they would support a proposal to eliminate affirmative action in their locality. Third, most of the respondents fear the effects of affirmative action programs on their life chances. This fear is evident in the large proportion of respondents (70% or higher) who believe that it is "somewhat likely" or "very likely" that they will lose out on a job, promotion, or admission to a college due to affirmative action (see questions G1, G2, and G3). This finding is interesting because it goes against other research on affirmative action that shows that these programs have had little impact on Whites (Badgtee and Hartmann, 1995; Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995; Edley, 1996; Herring and Collins, 1995; Hochschild, 1995; Wicker, 1996). More significantly, the results are intriguing because these college students are from mostly middle-class backgrounds and are not in a vulnerable social position.

In Table 2 we show the results on social distance items. Our results in Table 2 are consistent with those of previous research. A very high proportion of Whites claim to approve of interracial marriage, friendship with Blacks, and with people of color moving into predominantly White neighborhoods (Firebaugh and Davis, 1988; Niemi et al., 1989; Schuman et al., 1988; Sniderman and Piazza, 1993). However, results based on two non-traditional measures of social distance from Blacks indicate something different. A majority of Whites (68%) state that they do not interact with any Black person on a daily basis and that they have not recently invited a Black person for lunch or dinner. Although suggestive, this finding is somewhat inconclusive since it is possible that Whites have changed their attitudes on social distance but do not have the opportunity to interact meaningfully with Blacks because of residential and school segregation (Massey and Denton, 1993; Orfield and Eaton, 1996; Wilson, 1987).

Finally, in Table 3 we display our results on Whites' beliefs about the significance of discrimination for Blacks' life chances. Interestingly, most Whites (87%) believe that discrimination affects the life chances of Blacks and approximately a third (30%) agree with the statement that "Blacks are in the position that they are because of contemporary discrimination" (for similar findings, see Lipset and Schneider, 1978). In contrast, a slight majority of White college students believe that preferences should not be used as a criterion for hiring (53.4% were "against") and 83 per cent of the White respondents also believe that Whites either want to give Blacks a "better break" or at least "don't care one way or the other". Again, these results are somewhat contradictory (Schuman et al., 1988).

TABLE 1. *White students' views on affirmative action items*

<i>Affirmative Action Questions</i>	<i>Survey sample (%)</i> (N = 410)	<i>Interview sample (%)</i> (N = 41)
B21. An anti-affirmative action proposition passed by a substantial margin in California in 1996. If a similar proposition was put on the ballot in your locality, would you support it, oppose it, or would you neither oppose nor support it?		
1. Support	25.8	37.5
2. Neither Support Nor Oppose	38.3	25.0
3. Oppose	35.9	37.5
χ^2		n.s.
C18. Sometimes Black job seekers should be given special consideration in hiring.		
1. Agree	13.3	17.9
2. Neither Agree Nor Disagree	21.6	17.9
3. Disagree	65.2	64.1
χ^2		n.s.
G1. Affirmative Action programs for Blacks have reduced Whites' chances for jobs, promotions, and admissions to schools and training programs.		
1. Agree	50.8	36.6
2. Neither Agree Nor Disagree	26.2	17.1
3. Disagree	23.0	46.3
χ^2		**
G2. What do you think are the chances these days that a White person won't get a job or a promotion while an equally or less qualified Black person gets one instead?		
1. Very Likely	11.1	17.9
2. Somewhat Likely	60.3	46.2
3. Not Very Likely	28.7	35.9
χ^2		n.s.
G3. What do you think are the chances these days that a White person won't get admitted to a school while an equally or less qualified Black gets admitted instead?		
1. Very Likely	26.3	15.0
2. Somewhat Likely	52.9	60.0
3. Not Very Likely	20.8	25.0
χ^2		n.s.
G4. Some people say that because of past discrimination it is sometimes necessary for colleges and universities to reserve openings for Black students. Others oppose quotas because they say quotas discriminate against Whites. What about your opinion – are you for or against quotas to admit Black students?		
1. For	12.4	22.5
2. Not Sure	36.7	27.5
3. Against	50.9	50.0
χ^2		n.s.

Source: Social Attitudes of College Students Survey, 1997.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, n.s. = not significant.

TABLE 2. White students' views on social distance items

Social Distance Questions	Survey sample (%) (N = 410)	Interview sample (%) (N = 41)
<i>Traditional Items</i>		
B2. If a Black family with about the same income and education as you moved next door, would you mind it a lot, a little, or not at all?		
1. Not at all	92.1	95.1
χ^2		n.s.
B12. Do you approve or disapprove of marriage between Whites and Blacks?		
1. Approve	79.4	90.2
2. Not Sure	13.7	4.9
3 Disapprove	6.9	4.9
χ^2		n.s.
B7. How strongly would you object if a member of your family had a friendship with a Black person?		
1. No objection	91.9	95.1
χ^2		n.s.
<i>Nontraditional Items</i>		
A13. Think of the five people with whom you interact the most on an almost daily basis. Of these five, how many of them are Black?		
1. None	67.7	68.3
2. One	19.6	24.4
3. Two or more	12.7	7.3
χ^2		n.s.
A15. Have you invited a Black person for lunch or dinner recently?		
1. No	67.8	75.0
2. Yes	32.2	25.0
χ^2		n.s.

Source: Social Attitudes of College Students Survey, 1997.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, n.s. = not significant.

Although most White college students believe that Blacks experience discrimination and that this explains in part their contemporary status; at the same time, they believe that most Whites want to give Blacks a "better break" or "don't care one way or another" and that preferences should not play any part in hiring and promotion decisions.

Accordingly, based on these survey results, we could construct a variety of interpretations of White college students' racial attitudes. If we based our analysis on the respondents' answers to traditional questions, we would conclude, as most social scientists do, that Whites are racially tolerant. If we use all of our survey findings, we could conclude, as Schuman and his colleagues do (1988), that **Whites have contradictory racial views**. Finally, if we give more credence to

TABLE 3. *White students' views on the significance of discrimination on Blacks' life chances*

<i>Significance of Discrimination Questions</i>	<i>Survey sample (%) (N = 410)</i>	<i>Interview sample (%) (N = 41)</i>
B13. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Discrimination against Blacks is no longer a problem in the United States		
1. Agree	8.1	7.3
2. Neither Agree nor Disagree	4.9	4.9
3. Disagree	87.0	87.8
χ^2		n.s.
B17. On the whole, do you think that most Whites in the USA want to see Blacks get a better break, do they want to keep Blacks down, or don't care one way or the other?		
1. Better Break	20.1	17.5
2. Don't Care One Way or the Other	62.9	65.0
3. Keep Blacks Down	17.0	17.5
χ^2		n.s.
E6. Some people say that because of past discrimination against Blacks, preference in hiring and promotion should be given to Blacks. Others say preferential hiring and promotion of Blacks is wrong because it gives Blacks advantages that they haven't earned. Are you for or against preferences in hiring and promotion to Blacks?		
1. Against	54.1	47.5
2. Not Sure	38.6	47.5
3. For	7.1	5.0
χ^2		n.s.
F5. Blacks are in the position that they are as a group because of contemporary discrimination.		
1. Agree	30.6	48.7
2. Neither Agree Nor Disagree	39.3	20.5
3. Disagree	30.1	30.8
χ^2		*

Source: Social Attitudes of College Students Survey, 1997.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, n.s. = not significant.

our respondents' answers to the modern racism questions (B17, C18, E6, G1, G2, G3, and G4) and some of the new questions (A13, A15, B21) than to their answers to traditional items, we could conclude that Whites are significantly more racially prejudiced in their views than previous research has concluded. In the next section we use the 41 in-depth interviews with White students to make sense of our conflicting survey findings.

White college students' views – in-depth interviews

"IF TWO PEOPLE LOVE EACH OTHER . . .": WHITES' VIEWS ON INTERRACIAL MARRIAGES

Our strategy for interpreting our interview data on intermarriage was as follows. First, we read carefully the respondents' answers to a specific question about whether or not they approved of interracial marriages. Then we examined their romantic history and what kind of friends they had throughout their lives. In some cases, we examined their views on other matters because they contained information relevant to interracial marriage. Based on the composite picture of the respondents that we obtained using this strategy, we classified them into six categories (see Table 4).

Five of the respondents (category 1) had lifestyles consistent with their views on intermarriages, 28 had reservations that ranged from serious to outright opposition (categories 3–6), and 7 claimed to approve of intermarriage but had lifestyles inconsistent with the interracial perspective that they presumably endorsed (category 2). For presentation purposes, we will provide one example of respondents in category 2 (since this was the hardest group to make sense of) and one of respondents in categories 4 (the modal category) and 6.

The first case is Ray, a student at a large midwestern university, an example of students in category 2. Ray answered the question about interracial marriage by stating that:

I think that there's . . . *I think that interracial marriage is totally legitimate. I think if two people love each other and they want to spend the rest of their lives together, I think they should definitely get married. And race should in no way be an inhibitive factor . . .*
(Interview # 150: 13)

Although Ray supports interracial marriages (despite using some *indirectness*), his life prior to college and during college was racially segregated. He grew up in a large city in the midwest, in an upper middle-class neighborhood that he characterized as "all *White*" (Interview # 150: 2) and described his friends as "what the average suburban kid is like nowadays" (Interview # 150: 3). More significantly,

TABLE 4. Views on interracial marriage (Total sample, N = 40)¹

	Respondents % (N)
Support Interracial Marriage/Integrated Life	12.5 (5)
Support Interracial Marriage/Segregated Life	17.5 (7)
Reservations toward Interracial Marriage/Integrated Life	10.0 (4)
Reservations toward Interracial Marriage/Segregated Life	52.5 (21)
Oppose Interracial Marriage/Integrated Life	0 (0)
Oppose Interracial Marriage/Segregated Life	7.5 (3)

¹ The question was not asked of one of the students in the sample.

Ray, who was extremely articulate in the interview, stuttered remarkably in the question (asked *before* the one on intermarriage) dealing with whether or not he had ever been attracted to Blacks. His response was as follows:

. . . Um, so, to answer that question, no. Um, but I would not . . . I mean, *I would not . . . I mean, I would not ever preclude, uh, a Black woman from being my girlfriend on the basis that she was Black.* Ya know, I mean . . . ya know what I mean? If you're looking from the standpoint of attraction, I mean, I think that, ya know . . . I think, ya know, I think, ya know, I think, ya know, all women are, I mean, all women have a sort of different type of beauty if you will. And I think that for Black women it's somewhat different than *White* women. Um, but I don't think it's, ya know, I mean, it's, it's . . . it's nothing that would ever stop me from like, uh . . . I mean, I don't know, I mean, I don't [know] if that's . . . I mean, that's just sort of been my impression. I mean, it's not like I would ever say, "no, I'll never have a Black girlfriend", *but it just seems to me like I'm not as attracted to Black women as I am to White women for whatever reason. It's not about prejudice, it's just sort of like, ya know, whatever. Just sort of the way . . . way . . . like, I see White women as compared to Black women, ya know?* (Interview # 150: 12)

As is evident from Ray's statement, he is not attracted to Black women, something that clashes with his self-proclaimed color-blind approach to love and his support for interracial marriages. More significantly, he seemed aware of how problematic that sounded and used all sorts of rhetorical strategies to save face.

The next case is an example of students who had reservations about interracial marriages who lived a primarily segregated life (category 4), the modal group in our sample. We found regularities (Brown and Yule, 1983) in the structure of their answers similar to the ones we found among those who responded "yes and no" to the affirmative action question. Their answers usually included the rhetorical moves of *apparent agreement* and *apparent admission* – a formal statement of support for interracial marriages followed or preceded by statements qualifying the support in terms of what might happen to the kids, how the relationship might affect the families, or references to how their parents would never approve of such relationships.

The next example is Sally, a student at a large midwestern university. She replied to the interracial marriage question as follows:

I certainly don't oppose the marriage, not at all. Um . . . depending on where I am, if I had to have a concern, yes, it would be for the children . . . Ya know, it can be nasty and then other kids wouldn't even notice. I think . . . I could care less what anyone else does with their lives, as long as they are really happy. And if the parents can set a really strong foundation at home, it can be conquered, but I'm sure, in some places, it could cause a problem. (Interview # 221: 5)

Sally's answer included displacement (concerns for the children and the certainty that interracial marriages would be problematic in some places) and indirectness ("I could care less what *anyone else* does . . . as long as *they* are really happy") alongside her initial apparent admission semantic move ("I certainly don't oppose the marriage"). Sally's apprehension on this subject matched the nature of her life and her specific views on Blacks. Sally's life was, in terms of

interactions, relationships, and residence, almost entirely racially segregated. When questioned about her romantic life, Sally said that she had never dated a person of color and recognized that "I've never been attracted to a Black person" and that "I never look at what they look like . . . it just hasn't occurred in my life" (Interview # 221: 5).

The final case is Eric, a student at a large midwestern university, an example of the students who openly expressed serious reservations about interracial marriages (category 6). It is significant to point out that even the three students who stated that they would not enter into these relationships, claimed that there was nothing wrong with interracial relationships per se. Below is the exchange between Eric and our interviewer on this matter.

Eric: Uh . . . (sighs) I would say that I agree with that, I guess. I mean . . . *I would say that I really don't have much of a problem with it but when you, ya know, If I were to ask if I had a daughter or something like that, or even one of my sisters, um . . . were to going to get married to a minority or a Black, I . . . I would probably . . . it would probably bother me a little bit just because of what you said . . . Like the children and how it would . . . might do to our family as it is. Um . . . so I mean, just being honest, I guess that's the way I feel about that.*

Int.: What would, specifically, if you can, is it . . . would it be the children? And, if it's the children, what would be the problem with, um . . . uh . . . adjustment, or

Eric: For the children, yeah, I think it would just be . . . I guess, through my experience when I was younger and growing up and just . . . ya know, those kids were different. Ya know, they were, as a kid, I guess you don't think much about why kids are different or anything, you just kind of see that they are different and treat them differently. Ya know, because you're not smart enough to think about it, I guess. And the, the other thing is . . . *I don't know how it might cause problems within our family if it happened within our family, ya know, just . . . from people's different opinions on something like that. I just don't think it would be a healthy thing for my family. I really can't talk about other people.*

Int.: But would you feel comfortable with it pretty much?

Eric: Yeah. Yeah, that's the way I think, especially, um . . . ya know, *grandparents of things like that. Um, right or wrong, I think that's what would happen.* (Interview # 248: 10)

Eric used the *apparent admission* semantic move ("I would say that I agree with that") in his reply but could not camouflage very well his true feelings ("If I were to ask if I had a daughter or something like that, or even one of my sisters, um . . . were [sic] to going to get married to a minority or a Black, I . . . I would probably . . . it would probably bother me a little bit"). Interestingly, Eric claimed in the interview that he had been romantically interested in an Asian-Indian woman his first year in college. However, that interest "never turned out to be a real big [deal]" (Interview # 248: 9). Despite Eric's fleeting attraction to a person of color, his life was racially segregated: no minority friends and no meaningful interaction with any Black person.

The results in this section clash with our survey results. **Whereas in the survey the students seemed to favor interracial contacts of all kinds with Blacks, the**

interview data suggest otherwise. Whites' serious reservations if not opposition to interracial marriages are expressed as "concerns" for the welfare of the offspring of those relationships, upsetting the family, or the reaction of the larger community to the marriage. All these statements – a number of the respondents themselves classified these arguments as excuses – seem to be rationalizations to *discursively* avoid stating opposition to interracial marriages. This is quite significant since they could easily *state* that they have no problems with intermarriage. The fact that very few do so in an unequivocal manner, gives credence to the argument that Whites' racial aversion for Blacks is deeply ingrained into their unconscious (Fanon, 1967; Hernton, 1988; Jordan, 1977; Kovel, 1984). Finally, the respondents' comments about their romantic lives and friendships clearly indicate that rather than being color-blind, they are very color conscious.

"I kind of support and oppose . . .": Whites' views on affirmative action

Intentionally, we did not define affirmative action in our interview protocol. We were particularly interested in how the respondents themselves defined the various programs that have emerged since the 1970s to enhance the chances of minorities getting jobs, promotions, access to institutions of higher learning, etc.⁵ Although some of the students hesitated and asked for a definition of the program, to which our interviewers replied "what do you think it is?", most answered based on what they thought affirmative action meant.

Content analysis of the responses of the 41 students interviewed shows that most (85%) oppose affirmative action. This degree of opposition was somewhat higher than the results obtained in the survey. However, unlike in the survey, only a quarter (10 out of 41) came out and opposed affirmative action in a straightforward manner. In part, this may be the result of a general belief that if they express their views too openly on affirmative action, diversity, or any other race-related issue, they are going to be labeled as "racist".⁶ Although we were able to detect some of this reticence through discursive analysis, many respondents expressed their concern explicitly. For instance, Bob, a student at a large southern university and who openly opposed affirmative action, said, "I oppose them [affirmative action programs], mainly because, *I am not a racist but because I think you should have the best person for the job*" (Interview # 6: 13). Mark, a student, at a large midwestern university, who said that he couldn't give a "definite answer" on affirmative action, later mentioned that companies need to diversify because "we need diversity, and if you don't have diversity, *then people call you a racist and you have to deal with all of those accusations*" (Interview # 6: 24).

Since respondents were very sensitive to not appearing "racist", most (26 out of 41) expressed their opposition to affirmative action indirectly. Brian, a student at a large southern university, responded to the affirmative action questions by saying: "Man . . . that's another one where [laughs] . . . *I kind of support and oppose*

it" (Interview # 10: 8). If we had based our analysis only on the students' responses to this one question, we would have had to conclude that most Whites are truly torn apart about affirmative action, that they have "non attitudes" (see Converse, 1964, 1970, 1974), or are "ambivalent" (Katz et al., 1986). However, we included several questions in the interview schedule that dealt either directly or indirectly with affirmative action. Therefore we were able to make sense of respondents' vacillations concerning affirmative action.

In many cases, a thorough reading of the complete response to the primary affirmative action question helped us to understand that **the "yes and no" responses really meant "no"**. For example, Brian, the student cited earlier who was seemingly ambivalent about affirmative action, went on to say, "Pretty much the same thing I said before . . . I don't know, *if I come*, I don't know, *somebody underqualified shouldn't get chosen*, you know?" (Interview # 6: 8). After being probed about whether he thought that what he had just described was an example of reverse discrimination, Brian replied, "Um, pretty much, I mean, yeah".

Furthermore, Brian's response to a specific question asking if he supported a program to give minorities unique opportunities in education suggests that his hesitations and his *topic avoidance by claiming ignorance and ambivalence* ("I don't know" and "I am not sure") in the earlier quote were just semantic moves that allowed him to voice safely his opposition to affirmative action ("somebody underqualified shouldn't get chosen") (see Van Dijk, 1984: 109, 131–2). Brian's response to a question about providing unique educational opportunities to minorities was the following:

Brian: Um . . . mmm, that's a tough one. *I don't, you mean, unique opportunities, as far as, just because you are, they are that race, like quotas type of thing or . . .*

Int.: Well, why don't you stipulate the kind of program that you would support and where your limits might be for that.

Brian: All right . . . Um . . . mmm, let's see, uh . . . I, I don't know (laughs), *I am not sure about like, the problem is like, I don't know, like, 'cause I don't think race should come into like the picture at all, like I don't think they should be given unique opportunities . . .* (Interview # 10: 8)

In Brian's case as well as in many of the other cases where students apparently wavered on affirmative action, we looked at their responses to questions dealing with job-related cases at the fictitious ABZ company.⁷ Brian's answers to these questions clearly indicate that he believes that programs that give *any* additional opportunities to minorities to compensate for past and present discrimination amount to reverse discrimination. For instance, Brian's response to the first scenario included the displacement semantic move, "It seems like *the White guy* might be a little upset", although at the end of his statement he resorted to apparent admission by saying, "I guess I don't have a problem with it". Moments later, when probed about how he would respond to someone who characterized the company's decision as reverse racism, Brian said that "I would say, *yeah, it is*" (Interview # 6: 9).

Mark, the student cited earlier, stated his position on affirmative action as follows:

Yes and no. This is probably the toughest thing I have deciding. I really . . . cuz I've thought about this a lot, but I can make a pro-con list and I still wouldn't like . . . I've heard most of the issues on this subject, and I honestly couldn't give a definite answer. (Interview # 6: 21)

Mark's response is illustrative of the classic apparent ambivalence of our respondents on this issue. However, later on, after recognizing that minorities do not have similar opportunities because they start "from so much lower" and even suggesting that they "should be granted some additional opportunities", Mark complained, using the displacement semantic move that "most people [who] disagree with affirmative action think that the programs raise them to a higher level than they deserve to be at" (Interview # 6: 22). What he said immediately after reveals that Mark is actually against affirmative action.

. . . I don't know what I think about this. I mean, yeah, I think affirmative action programs are . . . needed. But . . . I don't know. Because, I mean, I'm gonna be going out for a job next year, and I'll be honest, I'd be upset if I'm just as qualified as someone else. And individually, I'd be upset if a company takes, you know, like an African American over me just because he is an African American. I think that would – ya know? I wouldn't. (Interview # 6: 22)

Mark also did not support providing unique educational opportunities for minorities. When asked about whether he would support hiring an equally qualified (equal results in a test) Black candidate over a White at the ABZ company, he said: "If I'm that person, I'm not gonna support it. If I'm the majority getting rejected just because I'm a different race" (Interview # 6: 24).

The final case is Rachel, a student at a large midwestern university, who used the *topic avoidance by claiming ambivalence* move in her response to the direct affirmative action question.

Um . . . affirmative action programs? Um . . . like I was saying, I think . . . uh . . . I don't know if I do because . . . I don't I mean, I think they established it was just to make up for the 200 and some years of slavery. And . . . umm . . . it's just trying to, like, for us, just trying to make up for the past. And, uh . . . on the Blacks', on that end, I feel that they are kind of . . . I would feel . . . bad, ya know because, oh, I . . . I am getting in because the color of my skin, not because of my merits. And I'd feel kind of inferior, ya know, like, I'd feel that the whole affirmative action system would inferiorize (sic) me. Just because . . . maybe I'll get a better placement in a school just because . . . the color of my skin. I don't know. (Interview # 276: 16)

Rachel mentioned in her response to a question on affirmative action in college admissions that people who are in colleges (Whites) "have *worked hard* to get where they are" and added:

. . . I think . . . the people who are in . . . the opportunities have worked hard to get where they are. And they haven't just slacked off or anything. And they would be sad to see if somebody who's worked really hard to be where they are today and . . . ya know . . . just

because *they, these people* are . . . ya know, not necessarily privileged, um . . . ya know, *get in ahead of you*, and maybe have done *half as much of what you have done in your lifetime*. I don't know. (Interview # 276: 15)

Rachel also did not support any of the affirmative action hiring decisions of the hypothetical ABZ company.

The student's comments on affirmative action in interviews suggest that there is even more opposition to affirmative action than our survey results indicate. Also, the opposition to affirmative action of our respondents seems to be related to racial prejudice. However, we recognize that many survey analysts doubt this interpretation and suggest that Whites' opposition to these programs is 'political', 'ideological', or that it expresses 'value duality' (Katz et al., 1986; Kluegel and Smith, 1986; Lipset, 1996; Sniderman and Piazza, 1993) Thus, to strengthen our case, we add another piece of information. In the elaboration of their arguments against affirmative action, 27 of the 41 respondents used spontaneously one of two story-lines or argumentation schemata (Van Dijk, 1984, 1987). The fact that so many of the respondents used the same 'stories' underscores the fact that Whites seem to have a shared cognition and that these stories have become part of the ideological racial repertoire about how the world is and ought to be. The two stories were "The past is the past" and "Present generations cannot be blamed for the mistakes of past generations" and were mobilized as justification for not doing anything about the effects of past and contemporary discrimination.

We present one example to illustrate how these stories were mobilized. The example is Sally, a student at a large midwestern university, who answered the question about whether or not Blacks should be compensated for the history of oppression that they have endured by saying:

Absolutely no. How long are you gonna rely on it? I had nothing to do with it . . . I think it's turning into a crutch that they're getting to fall back on their histories . . . I just think that every individual should do it for themselves and achieve for themselves. (Interview # 221: 10)

Sally's angry tone in this answer saturated all her responses to the affirmative action questions. For instance, she stated in her response to another question that minorities feel like 'supervictims' and asked rhetorically, inspired by the arguments from Shelby Steele that she learned in her sociology course, "For how long are you gonna be able to rely on an oppressed history of your ancestors?" (Interview # 221: 11-12).

"I believe that they believe . . .": White beliefs about contemporary discrimination against Blacks

We asked the subjects to define racism for us and then followed up with five related questions.⁸ The students that we interviewed defined racism as "prejudice based on race", "a feeling of racial superiority", "very stupid . . . lots of

ignorance”, “psychological war”, “hating people because of their skin color”, and “the belief that one race is superior to the other”. Only five of the subjects mentioned or implied that racism was societal, institutional, or structural, and of these only two truly believed that racism is part and parcel of American society. More importantly, very few of the subjects described this country as “racist” or suggested that minorities face systemic disadvantages, in this or in any other part of the interviews. Thus, **Whites primarily think that racism is a belief that a few individuals hold** and which might lead them to discriminate against some people.

Notwithstanding these findings, it is important to explore Whites’ beliefs about the prevalence of discrimination against minorities and about how much it affects the life chances of minorities in the USA. Our analysis revealed that most of the subjects (35 out of 41) expressed serious doubts about whether discrimination affects minorities in a significant way. As in the cases of their responses to the affirmation action and intermarriage questions, very few respondents (14%) who expressed doubts about the significance of discrimination did so consistently in all the questions.

In the following, we provide an example of respondents who hesitated in a serious manner and another who denied explicitly and without discursive reservations that discrimination affects significantly the life chances of minorities. In general, the first group of respondents used *expressives* (Taylor and Cameron, 1987) – utterances where the speaker makes known her or his attitudes to the hearer. The students provided several examples, suggesting that minorities use racism as an excuse, that discrimination works against Whites nowadays, that discrimination is not such an important factor in the USA, and that other factors such as motivation, values, or credentials may account for Blacks’ lack of mobility.

The first case is Emily, a student at a large midwestern university, and one of the 30 students who hesitated in expressing her doubts about the significance of discrimination for Blacks’ life chances. She used the ‘topic avoidance by claiming ignorance’ semantic move to state her views.

I personally don't see that much racism happening, but I am White, so maybe I don't see it that much because I never experience it myself. And there could be, but as far as I know, I don't understand that there is really . . . There is some, but not as much as there used to be in the past. (Interview # 339: 14)

Sixteen of the respondents used this move in answering the discrimination questions. Specifically, the respondents claimed that they could not answer because they were not Black. Although this seems like a legitimate answer, since the respondents are not Black and do not associate with Blacks often, the fact that they still answered the question and provided racially charged answers suggests that their statements were in fact semantic moves. Obviously, Emily does not believe that discrimination is an important factor affecting minorities’ life chances (“there is some but not as much . . .”) but, by adding the qualifying statement that because she is White she may not “see [discrimination] that much

because I never experience it myself", the racial character of her doubts is concealed. Emily used the same strategy of adding some qualification in her responses to the other questions on discrimination. Accordingly, when explaining her view on the claim that some minorities have about the significance of discrimination in jobs and promotions, Emily replied, "I think *maybe some companies might do that*. But I think, generally, that they have equal opportunities in jobs, I think". In her response to the question about whether discrimination was the reason for the overall status of Blacks in this country, Emily said "I don't really think it's due to discrimination" but added that:

I think that maybe that in the past that they were treated badly, and it is . . . I don't know. Like that they're, I don't know, maybe that their families have, like for a long time been poor, and they really don't like, see how they could get out of it. Like they don't really know about, like, opportunities they might have to better themselves. I mean, they just, they maybe, I don't know, just try to go day by day, and maybe they don't realize that they could be doing better things for themselves . . . *But I don't really think that's because . . . I mean, maybe it was racism in the past that kinda kept it the way it is, but maybe . . . I think it seems to be getting better now.* (Interview # 339: 14)

Finally, when asked why she thought so few minorities are at the top of the occupational structure, Emily stated indecisively:

I think it's because they don't have enough money for that. Maybe, I don't know. Just that *those jobs were for White people*, I think. And that they . . . most of the people that are in those jobs are White, and *they don't know, feel that they can really*, I don't know . . . *I really, don't know what to say.* (Interview # 339: 15)

Immediately after this answer the interviewer probed Emily since, despite her qualifications, she seemed to be saying that the best jobs in the economy are reserved for rich *White* people. However, in the follow-up questions, Emily restated that the best jobs go to people that "have more money" and that *White* employers "may be *sometimes* discriminatory, but I don't think it happens on a very large scale" (Interview # 339: 15).

If Whites such as Emily do not understand or appreciate how race matters for minorities in the USA and yet hear them complaining about discrimination, then the obvious next step is to regard minorities' complaints as whining, excuses, or untrue (Hochschild, 1995). This specific charge was made directly by 14 of the respondents. For example, Kara, a student at a large midwestern university, denied explicitly and without discursive reservations that discrimination affects significantly the life chances of minorities, in her answer to the first question on discrimination:

Int.: Some Black people claim that they face a great deal of racism in their daily lives, and a lot of other people claim that that's not the case. What do you think?

Kara: I would think, presently speaking, like people in my generation, I don't think it's . . . as much that there is racism that, *but Black people almost go into their experiences feeling like they should be discriminated against and I think that makes them hypersensitive.* (Interview. # 251: 13)

Kara went on to say that she believes that Blacks receive preferential treatment in admissions or, in her words “being Black, if you just look at applying to graduate schools or things, that’s a big part”. To the question of why she thinks Blacks have worse jobs, income, and housing than Whites she replied:

. . . part of me wants to say like work ethic, but I don’t know if that is being fair . . . I just don’t know, I think that if you look at the inner city, you can definitely see they’re just stuck, like those people cannot really get out . . . like in the suburbs . . . I don’t know why that would be. I mean, I am sure they are discriminated against but . . . (Interview # 251: 13)

Immediately after, Kara answered the question about whether or not Blacks are lazy by saying that:

I think, to some extent, that’s true. Just from like looking at the Black people that I’ve met in my classes and the few I knew before college that . . . not like they’re – *I don’t want to say waiting for a handout, but [to] some extent, that’s kind of what I am hinting at.* Like almost like they feel like they were discriminated against hundreds of years ago, now what are you gonna give me? Ya know, or maybe even it’s just their background, that they’ve never, like maybe they’re first generation to be in college so they feel like, just that is enough for them. (Interview # 251: 14)

Although some Whites acknowledge that minorities experience discrimination or racism, they still complain about reverse racism, affirmative action, and a number of other racially perceived policies. This occurs in part because in their view, **racism is a phenomenon that affects few minorities or affects them in minor ways, and thus has little impact on the life chances of minorities**, in particular, and American society more generally. For many Whites, racism is a matter of a few rotten apples such as David Duke, Mark Fuhrman, and the policemen who beat Rodney King rather than a ‘system of social relations in which Whites typically have more access to the means of power, wealth, and esteem than Blacks [and other minorities]’ (Hartman and Husband, 1974: 48). Furthermore, Whites either do not understand or do not believe the new institutional, subtle, and apparently non-racial character of the American racial structure (Bonilla-Silva and Lewis, 1999; Carmichael and Hamilton, 1967; Hochschild, 1995; Jackman, 1994; Smith, 1995). These two factors combined may explain why Whites regard the complaints of minorities about discrimination as exaggerations or excuses. If Whites ‘don’t see’ discrimination and do not understand the systemic racial character of our society (Kluegel and Smith, 1982, 1986), then they must interpret minorities’ claims of discrimination as false (Essed, 1996) and blame minorities for their lower socioeconomic status (Kluegel, 1990).

Color-blind racism: toward an analysis of White college students’ collective representations in the USA

In the previous sections we demonstrated that White students use a number of rhetorical strategies that allow them to safely voice racial views that might be

otherwise interpreted as racist. In this section, we examine whether or not what students were saying through the rhetorical maze of "I don't know", "I am not sure", and "I am not a racist, but" fits the themes of color blind racism, the dominant racial ideology in the post-civil rights era (Bonilla-Silva, 1998). In our analysis we assume, as discourse analysts do, that people use language (talk) to construct *versions* of the social world (Wetherell and Potter, 1987). However, unlike conversational analysts (Psathas, 1995), we strive to unravel the ideological stance of interlocutors, that is, to see where people *fit* in the larger racial ideological battlefield of a social formation (Van Dijk, 1998; for a full elaboration of the notion of racial ideology, see Bonilla-Silva, 1998). As Billig (1991) has argued, opinion expressing is argumentative and thus persuasive; actors 'take sides' in social controversies and use arguments to make their opinions believable and reasonable.

THE CENTRAL THEMES OF COLOR-BLIND RACISM

In recent work, Bobo and his coauthors (Bobo and Kluegel, 1997, Bobo et al., 1997) have labeled post civil rights racial ideology as 'laissez faire racism'. Laissez faire racism, unlike Jim Crow racism, is 'an ideology that blames Blacks themselves for their poorer relative economic standing, seeing it as a function of perceived cultural inferiority' (Bobo and Kluegel, 1997: 95). Other social analysts have pointed out that post civil rights racial hostility is 'muted' (Jackman, 1994) or is expressed as 'resentment' (Kinder and Sanders, 1996). We argue that post civil rights racial ideology should be called *color-blind racism* since the notion of color blindness is the global justification Whites use to defend the racial status quo. Table 5 presents the central elements of color-blind racism and of alternative racial ideologies (Bonilla-Silva, 1998; Crenshaw, 1996; Essed, 1996; Jackman, 1994; Kovel, 1984).

Since a detailed discourse analysis of the 41 interviews is beyond the scope of this paper, we analyze two cases in each section below (one typical student and one dissenter per section for a total of four cases). Although there are many possible discourse categories for dissecting texts (see Van Dijk, 1998), we chose to emphasize two central matters. First, we examined whether or not the White respondents created a *discourse of difference* about racial minorities (Wodak, 1996). This discourse of difference as Wodak suggests (1996, 1997), is articulated by Whites by presenting the 'other' (in the USA, racial minorities) as different, deviant, or as a threat. We also examined the strategies of group definition and construction (we-they) used by the students as central to the construction of 'other' and 'same'. Second, following Billig and his co-authors (1988), Van Dijk (1997), and Potter and Wetherell (1987), we examined whether racial inequality was rationalized in a 'pragmatic' way when the ideology of liberalism did not fit some specific situations. Specifically, we checked for argumentative strategies of *Apparent Sympathy, Justification: The Force of Facts, Reversal* (blaming the victim), and *Fairness*.⁹

TABLE 5. *Central Elements of Dominant and Alternative Contemporary Racial Interpretive Repertoires in the USA.*

<i>Dominant Framework (Color-Blind Ideology)</i>	<i>Alternative Frameworks (Cultural Pluralism, Nationalism, & Others)</i>
1. <i>Abstract and decontextualized</i> notions of liberalism (e.g. "Race should not be a factor when judging people")	<i>Concrete and contextualized</i> notions of liberalism or more radical egalitarian theories for distributing social goods
2. <i>Cultural</i> rationale for explaining the status of racial subjects in society (e.g. "Blacks are lazy" or "Blacks lack the proper <i>work ethic</i> ")	<i>Political</i> rationale for explaining the status of racial subjects in society (e.g. "Blacks have been left behind by the system")
3. Avoidance of racist language and direct racial references in explaining racially based or racially perceived issues such as affirmative action, school busing, or interracial dating. (Note: Color-blinders utilize indirect subtle and racially coded words to talk about racial matters)	
4. <i>Naturalization</i> of matters that reflect the effects arguments (e.g. explaining segregation or limited interracial marriage as a natural outcome)	Explanation of race-related issues with race-related of White supremacy (e.g. segregation as the product of the racialized actions of the state, realtors, and individual Whites)
5. Denial of <i>structural</i> character of 'racism' and discrimination viewed as limited, sporadic, and declining in significance	Understanding racism as 'societal' and recognition of new forms of discrimination
6. Invoke the <i>free-market</i> or <i>laissez faire</i> ideology thus to justify contemporary racial inequality (e.g. "Kids should be exposed to all kinds of cultures but it cannot be imposed on them through busing")	Recognition that 'market' outcomes have a racial bent and support of special programs to ameliorate racial inequities

"THEY ARE" AND "WE ARE": OTHERIZING TALK AMONG STUDENTS

If the USA had truly achieved the color blind dream of Martin Luther King, Whites would not see Blackness as otherness, as difference that entails inferiority. However, in interview after interview, White students constructed a 'we-they' dichotomy of Blacks and Whites.

For instance, Bob, a student at a southern university from a working-class background, argued that Blacks have a different culture than Whites. He states:

I think it's true. Um, I think that Blacks have a lot stronger sense of family. Well at least from my own um I always hear about my friends going to family picnics and going to the park and stuff and church, um. My parents, um, I know I have over thirty cousins, and I know like three of them. So I, I think, I think it has to do with family values. (Interview # 6: 8)

Although Bob seems to have positive valuation of Blacks' culture, his next comment suggests otherwise. Bob's answer to the question, "Do you think the origins of these differences, are they natural, cultural, environmental?" was the following:

I think it's cultural, the way they were raised, the way their parents were raised. My parents worked, my grandparents worked, so they didn't have a lot of strong family outings and gatherings, like Easter, stuff like that, that's about it, um . . . that's what I think. (Interview # 6: 8)

As evident from this statement, Bob's apparently positive evaluation of the family life of Blacks is tied to his belief that Blacks do not work. Hence, he believes that, unlike Whites, Blacks have time to concentrate on family matters. This interpretation of Bob's views was confirmed by Bob himself later on in the interview in his response to a question dealing with why Blacks have worse jobs, income, and housing than Whites. After pointing out that discrimination "may play a factor", Bob added that there were other factors. We cite him at length because his answer clearly illustrates his negative views on Blacks' culture.

Like . . . motivation, uh, family values . . . Here I, I know I argued a minute ago that they have stronger family values but I know a lot of my [minority] friends didn't have fathers, and they don't have . . . Their mothers were gone all the time, so they'd stay out and play all day. If they wanted something, they'd go out and steal it. Um, they don't have the money to have a lawn mower, so they can't mow yards like I did. And granted, I didn't even have to do that. I mean, my parents wouldn't give me things I asked, but if I really needed something, I'd get it. Um, if I, they'd let me work it off but these kids, they couldn't do that, so they'd get stuck in a rut, they'd start making minimum wage, they get a girlfriend, get her pregnant and they get stuck stuck in a big ongoing cycle, a big circle, and their kids, and their kids, like that. Um whereas like immigrants, like say . . . Jewish people, came over this country and had, you know, they, it was like in their heads that they were going to do better. And that's why I think nowadays they own a lot of things. People who were persecuted against in other countries come here and do *real* well, but it you're here all along, well, for a long time, you get used to how you are . . . (Interview # 6:9)

Here Bob clearly states his belief that Blacks' family values are *inferior* to those of Whites. Black families are described as pathological, Black children as out of control, and Blacks in general as lacking the work ethic. In contrast, Bob views Whites as people who are entrepreneurial (mow yards even though they don't really need that extra money), can control their impulses (Blacks get their girlfriends "pregnant" and "get stuck in a rut"), and fight against all odds to overcome life's obstacles (White immigrants struggled but were able to overcome).

Although based on our analysis of the students' responses to the interview questions on affirmative action, interracial marriage, and the significance of discrimination for Blacks' life chances, most students were not racially tolerant (36 out of 41), we classified five of them as racial progressives. These racial progressives did not subscribe to the 'we-they' dichotomy, were more likely to

find problems with the way in which Whites see Blacks, and were more understanding of the significance of discrimination in society. These students formulated their positions from alternative racial ideological frameworks (see Table 5). For instance, Lynn, a student at a large midwestern university from a lower middle-class background who grew up in a small town, began her interview by acknowledging that her community was very racist. She said that her village was a “hick town” and that “there was a lot of stereotypes” (Interview # 196: 1). Whereas most White students felt quite comfortable with their segregated neighborhoods and did not even realize that they were segregated, racial progressives such as Lynn disliked the lack of diversity in their communities. In Lynn’s words:

Um, I actually disliked it a lot because there was a lot of, . . . um a lot of racist people and it was nothing for my friends to make very racist remarks . . . especially because they didn’t know anybody of any other race, so it didn’t bother them. And they were feeding off the stereotypes . . . that were really negative. (Interview # 196: 2)

Lynn also recognized that discrimination is central in explaining Blacks’ status in the USA. For example, Lynn’s response to a question on why there are so few minorities at the top of the occupational structure was the following:

Uh, discrimination. Um . . . just cuz they’ve had to come back from slavery and everything, and . . . they’re not fully integrated into . . . ya know . . . they just still aren’t accepted. A lot of the old views are there. (Interview # 196: 10)

More significantly, although most Whites recognized that there are “racists out there”, racial progressives such as Lynn were more likely to acknowledge that they themselves had problems. Lynn’s response to a question on dealing with Blacks’ claim that they face a great deal of racism in their daily lives elicited the following response:

I would say . . . I’d say yeah, they do, probably. Um . . . just, um, like I know . . . I do this, I’ve been trained to do this. Like, when I walk down the street at night . . . by myself, and I meet a White guy on the street, I’m not as scared as if I meet a Black guy on the street. I keep telling myself that’s stupid, but . . . that’s how I’ve been trained. I mean just little things like that. I mean, I don’t think they’re like discriminating. I guess, on a large scale every single day, but . . . yeah, in little ways like that. (Interview # 196: 9)

Although we believe that White progressives *tended* to formulate their views from an alternative racial ideology, they were not totally free from the influence of the dominant racial ideology. For instance, Lynn, who had agreed with the decision of a hypothetical ABZ company to hire an equally qualified Black applicant over a White to increase diversity “because obviously if they’re 97 percent White . . . they’ve probably been discriminating in the past” (Interview # 196: 12), opposed hiring the Black candidate when the justification was that the ABZ company had discriminated in the past. Using a variety of semantic moves to shield her from being perceived as prejudiced, she stated:

I think I’d disagree because, I mean, even though it’s kinda what affirmative action . . . well, it’s not really, because . . . um . . . I don’t think like . . . my generation

should have to . . . I mean, in a way, we should, but we shouldn't be . . . punished really harshly for the things that our ancestors did, on the one hand. But on the other hand, I think that . . . how we should try and change the way we do things. So we aren't doing the same things that our ancestors did. (Interview # 196: 14)

Furthermore, although Lynn had stated that she supported affirmative action because "the White male is pretty instilled . . . very much still represses . . . um, people and other minorities" (Interview # 196: 12), she vented anger toward the program and even said that if she was involved in an affirmative action type of situation, "it would anger me . . . I mean, because, ya know, *I* as an individual got . . . ya know, ripped off and, ya know, getting a job . . . even though, even if I thought I was more qualified" (Interview # 196: 14–15). Finally, although she expressed concern about the lack of diversity in the village where she grew up, had taken classes with racial minorities while at university, and had even reported having had Black acquaintances in her first year in college, all her primary associations at the time of the interview were with Whites.

THE REASONABLE RACIST: LIBERAL AND PRAGMATIC JUSTIFICATIONS FOR THE RACIAL STATUS QUO

In the postmodern world not even members of the KKK want to be called racist (Berbrier, 1998). Yet, most Whites support equal opportunity, but are against affirmative action. They believe in residential and school integration, but oppose government intervention to guarantee it. They approve of interracial marriage, but qualify their support. These dilemmas (Billig, 1988) become mute as Whites find justifications to exhibit prejudicial views or support positions that maintain White privilege. Whites talk as 'reasonable racists' (Billig et al., 1988) or 'reasonable negrophobes' (Armour, 1997) and argue, using elements of liberal humanism combined with the pragmatism of free market ideologues, that little can be done to change the racial status quo.

One set of questions that elicited a lot of 'reasonable racism' concerned the hypothetical ABZ company. For instance, Sue, a student at a large southern university self-described as middle class, expressed her support toward affirmative action – albeit in a very hesitant way – in the direct question on the issue as follows:

Um . . . affirmative action programs are programs that help the minorities? I guess I support them . . . because I think they're necessary. (Interview # 1: 9)

However, in her response to the practical questions on affirmative action (the ABZ company), she strongly disagreed with the program using *reversal* and *fairness*.

Um, I think A, that I mean, they are being biased with like who they're gonna, who they're gonna hire just because of their race or whatever. But they do have, I mean, they do both have the same score, so I mean, I think that that would be OK to hire the Black person or whatever. But for B, I think that that would be reverse discrimination or whatever. They should not hire the person just because of their race or whatever because the White person has scored higher on that entrance thing or whatever, entrance test. [And what about case C . . . what if now they are doing it because

they've discriminated in the past?] Um . . . I still think that, you know, for both of those that it still applies because you shouldn't hire someone because of their race, and that would still be reverse discrimination. (Interview # 1: 10)

Sue's opposition to the ABZ company's hiring decisions in cases B and C – again, a company that we described as 97 percent White – were framed as a matter of *fairness*. When she was pushed by our interviewer to explain the lack of diversity in the company, Sue replied:

Um . . . I don't really . . . I mean, if they have . . . I don't see it as, yeah, sure, they might not be diverse because of the different races they have or whatever but I mean, if they're fair in who they hire and whatever, and they're giving equal opportunity to people to apply then I don't see problem. (Interview # 1: 10)

Sue, as most White students, had a *formal* and *abstract* view on fairness and equality which allowed her to defend all sorts of *substantively* unfair and unequal situations such as a company being 97 percent White. A more telling case was her view on school integration. Sue, who had attended an 'integrated' school (she acknowledged that because of tracking she basically had a White experience in her school) and claimed that integration was a good thing, opposed busing to achieve school integration. In her words:

Um, like I said, I don't think that you should, you know, I don't think that it may be necessary to bus them miles and miles and miles away and so they have a two hour bus ride every day just to go to school. I mean, they should be provided with an equal education in the areas around them. (Interview # 1: 9)

Sue's argument here, framed as *apparent sympathy* and *force of facts* (they live far from us so busing makes no sense), amounts to a modern version of the 'separate but equal' argument.

If they're as qualified as everybody else. If they're . . . if their credentials are lower and they're only letting him in because of his race . . . no. Because they could have taken the opportunity when they were in school to do better, and they didn't choose to take the opportunity. (Interview # 7: 8)

In contrast to the arguments used by the reasonable racists to justify the racial status quo, the racial progressives argued that discrimination was widespread, contextualized their answers, and, generally speaking, were sympathetic to state intervention to remedy the effects of past and contemporary discrimination. For example, Mandy, a student at a large western university from a working-class background, recognized the "we-they" discursive strategy of Whites. In her response to the question on whether there are fundamental differences between the races, she said that there are cultural differences "but those differences aren't negative . . . differences doesn't mean that there's anything wrong" (Interview # 504: 8). However, she recognized later on in the interview that her peers in high school believed that Blacks were inferior compared to Whites: "If they thought about Black people, they'd say 'All gangs. Nothing's [good]'. They are all gang members there and all the women are teenage mothers on welfare . . ." (Interview # 504: 9).

Mandy's description of her high school peers' views on Blacks matches what most White students in our sample said about Blacks.

Mandy, unlike most White students, believed that discrimination is a central reason why Blacks are worse off than Whites in the USA today. She even narrated a case of racial discrimination that she witnessed. Mandy said that while she was shopping in a store, the clerk totally ignored her as soon as a Black man entered the store and pointed out that she "could've stuck anything in my backpack if I wanted to" (Interview # 504: 10). Mandy narrated what happened after as follows:

[The clerk] went over to the guns, picking out a gun, and I am standing there with money in my hand, and this guy goes "Can I help you?" to the guy. He says, "Do you need something, sir? Is there anything you need?" and just keep looking at him. And so I said, you know, "Here's my money (laughs) if you want to take it." And he's all "Sorry" and he is taking my money, but he's still keeping an eye on this guy, and I looked at the guy, and he had this look on his face that just broke my heart because you could tell . . . that he has to deal with this, and I had never had to deal with that. (Interview # 504: 10)

Whereas the typical White student interpreted Blacks' status as Blacks' own fault, Mandy acknowledged the role of discrimination and even understood the significance of White privilege. She states:

Oh, definitely [the overall inferior status of Blacks is] due to discrimination. It's not a coincidence . . . that a large population in this country lives in substandard housing, and, and, substandard jobs and schools . . . but I went to middle school in a richer neighborhood because my mom lied about where we lived, but I think that if you were Black in the community and tried to go over to a White school that was more wealthy . . . you wouldn't be able to do that because people would know exactly where you came from . . . and I just think that there is something at work keeping people in their spot. (Interview # 504: 11)

Finally, Mandy's answers concerning the ABZ company hiring practices, exemplifies how racial progressives framed racially perceived issues differently than reasonable racists. For example, Mandy supported the company's decision in the second case (White applicant scored 85 and Black applicant 80) and pointed out that "I thought that five percentage points wasn't enough of a difference in terms of a score" (Interview # 504: 18). When she was probed about whether these decisions could be construed as reverse racism, she said that "if the country [has] a history of hiring White people over Black people, then it's about damn time they hired a Black person, and if it's discriminatory toward the White person, too bad. They need a little dose of what it feels like" (Interview # 504: 17).

Discussion

Four points emerged from our examination of White college students' views on fundamental racial issues – affirmative action, interracial marriage, and the significance of discrimination. *First*, White students exhibited more prejudiced views

in the interview than in their survey responses. This cannot be attributed to 'selection bias' since the survey answers of the 41 respondents selected for interview mirrored the results of the total sample and, in some cases, appeared to have a slightly more 'racially progressive' outlook than the entire sample (see Tables 1 to 3). For example, on intermarriage the differences were quite large. The 80 to 90 percent who approved of it in the survey (see Table 2) dropped to 30 percent (12 out of 40) in the interviews, and more than half of the 30 percent approved of it without having an interracial lifestyle themselves. Although we interpret the various discursive maneuvers of the remaining 70 percent as semantic strategies to avoid voicing personal reservations toward interracial marriages, the fact remains that many of them exhibited serious 'concerns' about these unions. Therefore, Whites' support for interracial marriages as reported in our survey (80 to 90% of Whites approve of interracial marriages) may be much less in reality. We found similar patterns in their responses to the affirmative action and the significance of discrimination questions.

Second, although, based on the interview data, the respondents were more prejudiced than in the survey, they used a variety of semantic moves to save face. Interview respondents consistently used phrases such as "I don't know", "I am not sure", "I am not prejudiced", or "I agree and disagree", rather than explicitly expressing their racial views. In addition, they often incorporated discursive elements into their answers that expressed social distance (indirectness) or projection (displacement), usually followed by statements that betrayed these hesitations. Teun van Dijk explains why Whites resort to strategic talk as follows:

Given the strict social norms against ethnic prejudice, discrimination, and racism, who wants to be considered a racist? People have, or try to maintain, a positive self-image of tolerant, understanding, cooperative citizens, on the one hand, and of kind persons, on the other. (1984: 46)

The large degree to which respondents used semantic moves was astounding. Our respondents used these moves from 68 percent of the time on the affirmative action question to 85 percent on the direct intermarriage and significance of discrimination questions. This amounts to a new *racetalk*. Unlike during the Jim Crow period, when Whites openly expressed their racial views (Dollard, 1938; Johnson, 1943, 1946; Myrdal, 1944), today Whites express their racial views in a sanitized way. (For a similar finding in South Africa, see Schutte, 1985.) Although our sample does not allow us to make generalizations to the entire White population, our results are quite consistent with the semantic moves that appear in the *racetalk* of White workers (Blauner, 1989; Rubin, 1994; Terkel, 1993; Weis and Fine, 1996). Although previous research has documented stylistical differences in racial talk about minorities between middle- and working-class Whites (Van Dijk, 1984), future research should examine whether or not class background affects the degree to which semantic moves are used.

Third, we showed how useful a discursive approach is for deciphering the meaning of Whites' racial views. For instance, based on our analysis, it is obvious

that liberal ideology is neither racist nor progressive (Sniderman and Carmines, 1997; Hochschild, 1995; Myrdal, 1944). A total of 5 of the 41 respondents (our racial progressives) used the ideas of liberal ideology to support interracial marriage, affirmative action, and to state their beliefs about the continuing significance of discrimination as a central factor shaping the life chances of racial minorities. However, unlike most White respondents, the racial progressives used the ideas of liberal ideology *in context*, that is, they defended affirmative action or busing by recognizing the effects of past and contemporary discrimination and were concerned with *substantive* rather than *abstract* equality and fairness. In addition, the argument that Whites experience 'ambivalence' or a 'dilemma' between their commitment to equality of opportunity and their treatment of Blacks and other minorities seems to be more of an interpretive artifact rather than a reality (Hochschild, 1995; Myrdal, 1944; Schuman et al., 1988; 1997). As we showed, our respondents were not truly ambivalent about crucial racial issues. Their hesitations were part of a strategic talk to avoid appearing racist. Our respondents did not seem to experience cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) because their opposition to affirmative action and other racially coded programs was couched *within* the discourse of liberalism. Thus, the apparent discursive contradictions and hesitations ("Yes and no" or "I am not sure about that one") were *resolved* by turning liberalism into an *abstract* matter. This strategy allowed them to feel that it is the government and Blacks who are being unfair. Moreover, the students' strong principled position collapsed when issues of past discrimination were raised. That is, students moved from the philosophical principles of liberalism into practical rationality (Billig et al., 1988; Wetherell and Potter, 1992). Virtually no policy alternatives were envisioned as feasible for addressing the profound inequality existing between Blacks and Whites. This casts serious doubt on arguments that suggest that class-based or color-blind policies can unite Whites and racial minorities (Sniderman and Carmines, 1997; Wilson, 1987). Finally, 27 of the respondents used either "The past is the past" or "Present generations cannot be blamed for the mistakes of past generations" anti-egalitarian story lines in their responses to the question, "Do you believe that the history of oppression endured by minorities merits the intervention of the government on their behalf?". Similar story lines have emerged in Western racialized societies such as South Africa, New Zealand, and the Netherlands (Essed, 1996; Schutte, 1996; Wetherell and Potter, 1992). This discursive flexibility in moving from strict liberalism to practical matters is central to racial ideology. In order to work, all ideologies must allow some 'room' to handle contradictions, exceptions, and change. Rather than being eternally fixed, ideologies should be conceived as processes or as ideological practices (Jackman, 1994; Wetherell and Potter, 1992).

Fourth, based on the analysis of our data, we found that the students' defense of White supremacy is no longer based on the parameters of Jim Crow racism but is instead based on a new racial ideology. As many analysts have pointed out (Bobo et al., 1997; Bonilla-Silva and Lewis, 1999; Essed, 1996; Prager, 1982), the crux of the post civil rights racial ideology is twofold. First, Whites resolutely

deny that racial inequality is structural and, second, they explain it as the result of Blacks' "cultural deficiency" (e.g. they are lazy, their families are in shambles, their communities are bursting with crime). On the first issue, we showed that although the White students believe that Blacks experience discrimination, they also believe that it is due to a small number of prejudiced White individuals. They also added that Blacks use discrimination as an excuse and that they need to work harder and complain less if they want to succeed. On the matter of Black culture, as we showed in the last section of this article, most White students, despite their 'color blind dreams', still conceive Blacks as the 'other'. (For a similar finding, see Lewis et al., 1998.) Specifically, they construe Blacks as culturally inferior; as living in a tangle of pathology. Thus, not surprisingly, most of our White respondents blamed Blacks themselves for their lower status. At best, the students felt pity for Blacks, at worst many openly expressed contempt and hostility toward Blacks.

Thirty-six of our respondents mobilized arguments of liberal ideology such as 'fairness' and 'equal opportunity' – with little regard for the glaring group consequences of historical and contemporary racial discrimination – combined with a pragmatic stance to make their arguments. We highlighted how students used the argumentative strategies of *Apparent Sympathy*, *Fairness*, *Reversal*, *Justification: Force of Facts*, to justify the racial status quo. By invoking *abstract* elements of liberalism, making pragmatic claims (e.g. these are the facts), and transforming the notion of equality into 'meritocracy', our respondents could display moral fervor and indignation toward "undeserving minorities" who "take their jobs" and their "places in colleges" (for similar arguments on the role of liberal ideology, see Gans, 1973; Ryan, 1981).

We want to conclude this article with a comment on the politics of color-blind racism. The interview data reveal that the liberal, free market, and pragmatic rhetoric of color-blind racism allows Whites to defend White supremacy in an apparently nonracial manner (Bobo and Hutchings, 1996; Bobo and Smith, 1994; Carmines and Merriman, 1993; Kluegel and Bobo, 1993; Jackman, 1994). Color-blind racism allows Whites to appear 'not racist' ("I believe in equality"), preserve their privileged status ("Discrimination ended in the sixties!"), blame Blacks for their lower status ("If you guys just work hard!"), and criticize any institutional approach – such as affirmative action – that attempts to ameliorate racial inequality ("Reverse discrimination!"). Hence, the task of progressive social analysts is to blow the whistle on color-blind racism. We must unmask color-blind racists by showing how their views, arguments, and lifestyles are (White) color-coded. We must also show how their color-blind rationales defend systemic White privilege. Analytically this implies developing new questions for our surveys and using new strategies for the analysis of contemporary racial attitudes. Politically it implies that we must concentrate our efforts in fighting the new racists, all the nice Whites who tell us "I am not a racist but . . ."

NOTES

1. Semantic moves are 'strategically managed relations between propositions' (Van Dijk, 1987: 86). They are called *semantic* because the strategic function of a proposition is determined by the 'content of speech act sequences', that is, by the link between a proposition and a preceding or subsequent proposition. The overall goal of these moves, the *semantic strategy*, is to save face, that is, to avoid appearing 'racist'.
2. By racial ideology we mean the *changing* dogma that provides 'the rationalizations for social, political, and economic interactions between the races' (Bonilla-Silva, 1997: 474). The central function of racial ideology is explaining and, ultimately, justifying racial inequality (Prager, 1982). Unlike the notion of attitudes, which is bounded by methodological individualism, the notion of racial ideology regards the beliefs of actors as fundamentally shaped by their group interests. Whereas attitudes ultimately represent degrees of affect toward non-Whites, racial ideology signifies the collective views and interests of Whites. Thus it is possible for Whites to have non-prejudiced attitudes and still subscribe to the central themes of the dominant racial ideology (Hartman and Husband, 1974: 54–5; Pettigrew, 1985).
3. Wetherell and Potter (1992) define interpretive repertoires as:
broadly discernible clusters of terms, descriptions and figures of speech often assembled around metaphors or vivid images. In more structuralist language we can talk of these things as systems of signification and as the building blocks used for manufacturing versions of actions, self and social structures in talk. They are some of the resources for making evaluations, constructing factual versions and performing particular actions. (p. 90)
4. Chi-square tests confirm that the interview sample is comparable to the larger sample for all items except two.
5. This approach is congruent with the symbolic interaction tradition in sociology. As symbolic interactionists, we believe that 'the meanings that things have for human beings are central in their own right', that those meanings 'are socially produced through interaction with one's fellows, and that in the process of interaction, the meanings of things are interpreted and reinterpreted' (Blumer, 1969: 2–5). However, unlike many followers of this tradition, we pay attention to how the larger social system produces the themes and boundaries of the meanings produced through interaction.
6. Although we recognize that all people engage in what social psychologists label as *self-presentation*, it is clear that our subjects primarily resorted to *ideal* and *tactical* rather than *authentic* self-presentation (Baumeister, 1982; Swann, 1987).
7. The specific wording of the three questions was the following:
 - (a) Suppose that two candidates apply for a job at the ABZ company, a company that has a workforce that is 97 percent White. They take an examination and both applicants score 80 (70 was the minimum score required to pass the test). The company decides to hire the Black applicant over the White applicant because the company is concerned with the lack of diversity of its workforce. Under these conditions, do you agree or disagree with the decision of the ABZ company?
 - (b) Suppose that the Black applicant in the above case scored 80 on the exam and the White candidate scored 85 (70 was the minimum score required to pass the test). The company, despite the fact that the White applicant did slightly better than the Black applicant, decided to hire the Black applicant because of its concern with the lack of diversity of its workforce. Under these conditions, do you agree with the decision of the ABZ company?

(c) Suppose that the decision of hiring the Black applicant over the White applicant in the previous two cases was justified by the ABZ company not in terms of the need to diversify its workforce but because the company had discriminated in the past against Blacks in terms of hiring. Under these conditions, would you agree or disagree with the decision of the ABZ company?

8. The specific wording of the questions was:

- (1) Some Blacks claim that they face a great deal of racism in their daily lives. Many people claim that this is not the case. What do you think?
- (2) Many Blacks and other minorities claim that they do not get access to good jobs because of discrimination and that, when they get the jobs, they are not promoted at the same speed and to the same jobs as their White peers. What do you think?
- (3) On average, Blacks have worse jobs, income, and housing than Whites. Do you think that this is due to discrimination or something else?
- (4) Many Whites explain the status of Blacks in this country today as a result of Blacks lacking motivation, not having the proper work ethic, or being lazy. What do you think?
- (5) How do you explain the fact that very few minorities are at the top of the occupational structure in this country?

9. Van Dijk (1997) defines these strategies as follows:

Apparent Sympathy = When arguments or positions that place minorities at a disadvantage are constructed as being 'for their own good'.

Fairness = When arguments that affect the welfare of racial minorities are presented as embedded in the tradition of liberal humanism but with a concern for practical matters. In the European context, they are exemplified by the expression of being 'firm but fair'.

Justification: The Force of Facts = Negative positions toward the 'other' are justified in terms of 'facts'.

Reversal = This is the classic 'blaming the victim' move.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was supported in part by a research grant from the American Sociological Association/National Science Foundation Fund for the Advancement of the Discipline. The authors thank Jessie Daniels, Joe Feagin, James Kluegel, Amanda Lewis, Pat Preston and Bruce Williams for comments on an earlier version of this paper. The authors also acknowledge the assistance of Aaron Ahlstrom, Colin Beckles, Joe Feagin, Thomas Guglielmo, Amanda Lewis, Janet Maki, Eileen O'Brien, and Jose Padin in the collection of the survey and interview data.

REFERENCES

- Adorno, Theodore, Frenkel-Brunswick, Else, Levinson, Daniel J. and Sandford, R.N. (1950) *The Authoritarian Personality*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Allport, Gordon W. (1954) *The Nature of Prejudice*. New York: Addison-Wesley.
- Anderson, Barbara, Silver, Brian and Abramson, Paul (1988a) 'The Effects of Race of the Interviewer on Measures of Electoral Participation by Blacks in SRC National Election Studies', *Public Opinion Quarterly* 52(1): 53-83.
- Anderson, Barbara, Silver, Brian and Abramson, Paul (1988b) 'The Effects of the Race of Interviewer on Race-Related Attitudes of Black Respondents in SCR/CPS National Election Studies', *Public Opinion Quarterly* 52(3): 289-324.
- Armour, Jody David (1997) *Negrophobia and Reasonable Racism*. New York: New York University Press.

- Baumeister, R.F (1982) 'A Self-Presentational View of Social Phenomena', *Psychological Bulletin* 91(1): 3–26.
- Berbrrier, Mitch (1998) '“Half the Battle”: Cultural Resonance, Framing Processes, and Ethnic Affectations in Contemporary White Separatist Rhetoric', *Social Problems* 45(4): 431–50.
- Billig, Michael (1991) *Ideology and Opinions: Studies in Rhetorical Psychology*. London: Sage.
- Billig, Michael, Condor, Susan, Edwards, Derek, Gane, Mike, Middleton, David and Radley, Alan (1988) *Ideological Dilemmas: A Social Psychology of Everyday Thinking*. London: Sage.
- Blauner, Bob (1989) *Black Lives, White Lives: Three Decades of Race Relations in America*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Blumer, Herbert (1967) *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Bobo, Lawrence, and Hutchings, Vincent (1996) 'Perceptions of Racial Competition in a Multiracial Setting', *American Sociological Review* 61(6), December: 951–72.
- Bobo, Lawrence and Kluegel, James R. (1993) 'Opposition to Race-Targeting: Self-Interest, Stratification Ideology, or Racial Attitudes?', *American Sociological Review* 58: 443–64.
- Bobo, Lawrence and Kluegel, James R. (1997) 'Status, Ideology, and Dimensions of Whites' Racial Beliefs and Attitudes; Progress and Stagnation', in Steven A. Tuch and Jack Martin (eds) *Racial Attitudes in the 1990s: Continuity and Change*, pp. 93–120. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Bobo, Lawrence, Kluegel, James and Smith, Ryan (1997) 'Laissez faire Racism: The Crystallization of a Kinder, Gentler, Antiblack Ideology', in Steven A. Tuch and Jack Martin (eds) *Racial Attitudes in the 1990s: Continuity and Change*, pp. 15–42. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Bobo, Lawrence and Licari, Frank (1989) 'Education and Political Tolerance: Testing the Effects of Cognitive Sophistication and Target Group Affect', *Public Opinion Quarterly* 53, Fall: 285–308.
- Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo (1997) 'Rethinking Racism: Toward a Structural Interpretation', *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 62(3), June: 465–80.
- Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo (1998) 'Racial Attitudes or Racial Ideology: Toward a New Paradigm for Examining Whites' Racial Views', unpublished manuscript, Texas A&M University.
- Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo and Lewis, Amanda E. (1999) 'The New Racism: Racial Structure in the United States, 1960s–1990s', in Paul Wong (ed.) *Race, Ethnicity, and Nationality in the United States: Toward the Twenty-First Century*, pp. 55–101. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Brooks, Roy L. (1990) *Rethinking the American Race Problem*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Brown, Gillian, and Yule, George (1983) *Discourse Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Campbell, Angus (1971) *White Attitudes Toward Black People*. Ann Arbor, MI: Institute for Social Research.
- Carmichael, Stokely and Hamilton, Charles V. (1967) *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Carmines, Edward G. and Merriman, W. Richard, Jr (1993) 'The Changing American Dilemma: Liberal Values and Racial Polices', in Paul M. Sniderman, Philip E. Tetlock and Edward G. Carmines (eds) *Prejudice, Politics, and the American Dilemma*, pp. 237–55. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Converse, Phillip E. (1964) 'The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics', in David E. Apter (ed.) *Ideology and Discontent*, pp. 206–61. London: Free Press of Glencoe.

- Converse, Phillip E. (1970) 'Attitudes and Non-attitudes: Continuation of a Dialogue', in E.R. Tuft (ed.) *The Quantitative Analysis of Social Problems*, pp. 168–89. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Converse, Phillip E. (1997) 'Comment: The Status of Nonattitudes', *American Political Science Review* 68: 650–66.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé Williams (1997) 'Color-blind Dreams and Racial Nightmares: Reconfiguring Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era', in Toni Morrison and Claudia Brodsky Lacour (eds) *Birth of a Nation'hood*, pp. 97–168. New York: Pantheon.
- Dollard, John (1937) *Caste and Class in a Southern Town*. London: Yale University Press.
- Dovidio, John F. and Gaertner, Samuel L. (1986) 'How Do Attitudes Guide Behavior?', in R.M. Sorrentino and E.T. Higgins (eds) *The Handbook of Motivation and Cognition: Foundations of Social Behavior*, pp. 204–43. New York: Guilford Press.
- Dovidio, John F. and Gaertner, Samuel L. (1991) 'Changes in the Expression and Assessment of Racial Prejudice', in Harry J. Knopke et al. (eds) *Opening Doors: Perspectives on Race Relations in Contemporary America*, pp. 119–50. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.
- Dovidio, John F., Mann, J.E. and Gaertner, Samuel L. (1989) 'Resistance to Affirmative Action: The Implications of Aversive Racism', in F. Blanchard and F. Crosby (eds) *Affirmative Action in Perspective*, pp. 81–102. New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Edley, Christopher Jr (1996) *Not All Black and White: Affirmative Action and American Values*. New York: Hill and Wang.
- Essed, Philomena (1996) *Diversity: Gender, Color, and Culture*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Fanon, Frantz (1967) *Black Skins, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press.
- Feagin, Joe and Sikes, Melvin (1994) *Living With Racism: The Black Middle Class Experience*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Feagin, Joe and Vera, Hernan (1995) *White Racism: The Basics*. New York: Routledge.
- Festinger, Leon (1957) *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*. Evanston, IL: Row, Peterson, and Company.
- Firebaugh, Glen and Davis, Kenneth E. (1988) 'Trends in Anti-Black Prejudice, 1972–1984: Region and Cohort Effects', *American Journal of Sociology* 94: 251–72.
- Gans, Herbert J. (1973) *More Equality*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Glass Ceiling Commission (1995) *Good for Business: Making Full Use of the Nation's Human Capital*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.
- Groves, Robert, Fultz, Nancy H. and Martin, Elizabeth (1992) 'Direct Questioning About Comprehension in a Survey Setting', in Judith M. Tanur (ed.) *Questions About Questions: Inquiries Into the 4 Cognitive Bases of Surveys*, pp. 49–61. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Hartman, Paul and Husband, Charles (1974) *Racism and the Mass Media: A Study of the Role of the Mass Media in the Formation of White Beliefs and Attitudes in Britain*. London: David Porter.
- Herring, Cedric, and Collins, Sharon (1995) 'Retreat from Equal Opportunity? The Case of Affirmative Action', in Michael Peter Smith and Joe Feagin (eds) *The Bubbling Cauldron*, pp. 163–81. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Hernton, Calvin C. (1988) *Sex and Racism in America*. New York: Anchor Books/Doubleday.
- Hochschild, Jennifer (1995) *Facing Up to the American Dream: Race, Class, and the Soul of the Nation*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Hyman, Herbert H. and Sheatsley, Paul B. (1964) 'Attitudes Toward Desegregation', *Scientific American* 195 (Dec): 35–9.

- Jackman, Mary R. (1978) 'General and Applied Tolerance: Does Education Increase Commitment to Racial Integration?', *American Journal of Political Science* 22(2) May: 302–32.
- Jackman, Mary R. (1994) *Velvet Glove: Paternalism and Conflict in Gender, Class, and Race Relations*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Jackman, Mary R. (1996) 'Individualism, Self-Interest, and White Racism', *Social Science Quarterly* 77(4): 760–7.
- Johnson, Charles S. (1943) *Patterns of Negro Segregation*. New York: Harper and Brothers.
- Johnson, Charles S. (1946) *Racial Attitudes: Interviews Revealing Attitudes of Northern and Southern White Persons of a Wide Range of Occupational and Educational Levels, Toward Negroes*. Nashville, TN: Social Science Institute, Fisk University.
- Jordan, Withrop D. (1977) *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550–1812*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Kane, Emily and Macaulay, Laura (1993) 'Interviewer Gender and Gender Attitudes', *Public Opinion Quarterly* 57(1): 1–28.
- Katz, Irwin, Wackenhut, Joyce and Hass, R. Glen (1986) 'Racial Ambivalence, Value Duality, and Behavior', in John Dovidio and Samuel L. Gaertner (eds) *Prejudice, Discrimination, and Racism*, pp. 35–60. Orlando, FL: Academic Press.
- Kinder, Donald and Sanders, Lynn M. (1996) *Divided by Color: Racial Politics and Democratic Ideals*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Kluegel, James R. (1990). 'Trends in Whites' Explanations of the Gap Black–White Socioeconomic Status, 1977–1989', *American Sociological Review* 55(4), August: 512–25.
- Kluegel, James R. and Smith, Eliot R. (1982) 'Whites' Beliefs about Blacks' Opportunity', *American Sociological Review* 47: 518–32.
- Kluegel, James R. and Smith, Eliot R. (1986) *Beliefs About Inequality: Americans' Views of What Is and What Ought to Be*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Kovel, Joel (1984) *White Racism: A Psychohistory*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Krysan, Maria (1998) 'Privacy and the Expression of White Racial Attitudes', *Public Opinion Quarterly* 62(4): 506–44.
- Lewis, Amanda, Chesler, Mark, and Forman, Tyrone (1998) "'I'm not Going to Think of You as Black, I'll Just Think of You as my Friend": Color-blind Ideologies and Exclusionary Race Relations on a Predominantly White College Campus', unpublished manuscript, University of Michigan.
- Lipset, Seymour M. (1996) *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword*. New York and London: W.W. Norton.
- Lipset, Seymour and Schneider, William (1978) 'The Bakke Case: How Would It Be Decided at the Bar of Public Opinion', *Public Opinion* 1(1): 38–44.
- MacLeod, Jay (1995) *Ain't No Makin' It: Aspirations and Attainment in a Low-Income Neighborhood*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- McConahay, J.B. and Hough, J.C. (1976) 'Symbolic Racism', *Journal of Social Issues* 32(1): 23–45.
- Massey, Douglas S. and Denton, Nancy A. (1993) *Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Meertens, Roel W. and Pettigrew, Thomas F. (1997) 'Is Subtle Prejudice Really Prejudice?', *Public Opinion Quarterly* 61: 54–71.
- Myers, Samuel L. (1993) 'Measuring and Detecting Discrimination in the Post-Civil Rights Era', in John H. Stanfield II and Rutledge M. Dennis (eds) *Race and Ethnicity in Research*, pp. 172–97. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Myrdal, Gunnar (1944) *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy I*. New York and London: Harper and Brothers Publishers.

- Niemi, Richard G. Mueller, John and Smith, Tom W. (1989) *Trends in Public Opinion: A Compendium of Survey Data*. New York: Greenwood Press.
- Orfield, Gary and Eaton, Susan, E. (1996) *Dismantling Desegregation: The Quiet Reversal of Brown v. Board of Education*. New York: New York Press.
- Pettigrew, Thomas F. (1985) 'New Black-White Patterns: How Best to Conceptualize Them?', *Annual Review of Sociology* 11: 329-46.
- Potter, Jonathan and Wetherell, Margaret (1987) *Discourse and Social Psychology: Beyond Attitudes and Behavior*. London: Sage.
- Prager, Jeffrey (1982) 'American Racial Ideology as Collective Representation', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 5(1), January: 99-119.
- Psathas, George (1995) *Conversation Analysis: The Study of Talk-in-Interaction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Rieder, Jonathan (1985) *Carnasarie: The Jews and Italians of Brooklyn against Liberalism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Rubin, Lillian (1994) *Families on the Fault Line: America's Working Class Speaks about the Family, the Economy, Race, and Ethnicity*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Ryan, William (1981) *Equality*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Schuman, Howard and Steeh, Charlotte (1996) 'The Complexity of Racial Attitudes in America', in Silvia Pedraza and Ruben Rumbaut (eds) *Origins and Destinies*, pp. 455-69. Belmont, MA: Wadsworth.
- Schuman, Howard, Steeh, Charlotte and Bobo, Lawrence (1988) *Racial Attitudes in America: Trends and Interpretations*. Boston, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Schuman, Howard, Steeh, Charlotte, Bobo, Lawrence and Krysan, Maria (1997) *Racial Attitudes in America: Trends and Interpretations*, rev edn, Boston, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Schutte, Gerhard (1995) *What Racists Believe: Race Relations in South Africa and the United States*. London: Sage.
- Sheatsley, Paul (1966) 'White Attitudes Toward the Negro', in Talcott Parsons (ed.) *The Negro American*, pp. 303-24. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Sigall, Harold and Page, Richard (1971) 'Current Stereotypes: A Little Fading, A Little Faking', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 18(2), January: 247-55.
- Smith, Robert C. (1995) *Racism in the Post Civil Rights Period: Now You See It, Now You Don't*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Smith, Tom W. and Sheatsley, Paul B. (1984) 'American Attitudes toward Race Relations', *Public Opinion* 7(5): 14-15, 50-3.
- Spiegelman, Art (1997) 'Getting in Touch with my Inner Racist', *Mother Jones*, September-October: 51-2.
- Sniderman, Paul M. and Piazza, Thomas (1993) *The Scare of Race*. Boston, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Sniderman, Paul M. and Carmines, Edward G. (1997) *Reaching Beyond Race*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Steeh, Charlotte and Krysan, Maria (1996) 'Affirmative Action and the Public, 1970-1995', *Public Opinion Quarterly* 60: 128-58.
- Swann, W.B., Jr (1987) 'Identity Negotiation: Where Two Roads Meet', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 53(6): 1038-51.
- Taylor, Talbot A. and Cameron, Deborah (1987) *Analysing Conversation: Rules and Units in the Structure of Talk*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Terkel, Studs (1993) *Race: How Black and Whites Think and Feel About The American Obsession*. New York: Doubleday.
- Van Dijk, Teun A. (1977) *Text and Context Explorations in the Semantics and Pragmatics of Discourse*. London and New York: Longman.

- Van Dijk, Teun A. (1984) *Prejudice in Discourse: An Analysis of Ethnic Prejudice in Cognition and Conversation*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins Publishing Co.
- Van Dijk, Teun A. (1987) *Communicating Racism: Ethnic Prejudice in Thought and Talk*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Van Dijk, Teun A. (1997) 'Political Discourse and Racism: Describing Others in Western Parliaments', in Stephen Harold Riggins (ed.) *The Language and Politics of Exclusion: Others in Discourse*, pp. 31–64. Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Van Dijk, Teun A. (1998) *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach*. London: Sage.
- Weis, Lois, and Fine, Michelle (1996) 'Narrating the 1980s and 1990s: Voices of Poor and Working-Class White and African American Men', *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 27(4): 493–516.
- Wellman, David (1977) *Portraits of White Racism*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Wetherell, Margaret and Jonathan Potter (1992) *Mapping the Language of Racism: Discourse and the Legitimation of Exploitation*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Wicker, Tom (1996) *Tragic Failure: Racial Integration in America*. New York: William Morrow and Company.
- Wilson, William Julius (1987) *The Truly Disadvantaged*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Wodak, Ruth (1996) 'The Genesis of Racist Discourse in Austria Since 1989', in Carmen Rosa Caldas-Coulthard (ed.) *Texts and Practices: Readings in Critical Discourse Analysis*, pp. 107–28. London: Routledge.
- Wodak, Ruth (1997) 'Daus Ausland and Anti-Semitic Discourse: The Discursive Construction of the Other', in Stephen Harold Riggins (ed.) *The Language and Politics of Exclusion: Others in Discourse*, pp. 65–87. Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage.



EDUARDO BONILLA-SILVA is an assistant professor of sociology at Texas A&M University. His paper 'Rethinking Racism: Toward a Structural Interpretation' appeared in the *American Sociological Review* (June 1997). He is currently working on survey and interview data gathered in the Detroit area as part of the 1998 Detroit Area Study and on a paper entitled 'Color Blind Dreams, (White) Color Coded Reality: White College Students' Views on Intermarriage' ADDRESS: Department of Sociology, Texas A&M University, 311 Academic Building, College Station, TX 77843. USA [email: bonilla@unix.tamu.edu]

TYRONE A. FORMAN is a PhD candidate in sociology at The University of Michigan. He is currently writing a dissertation on the racial attitudes of White youth in the post civil rights period in the USA. ADDRESS: Department of Sociology, University of Michigan, 3012 LSA Building, Ann Arbor, MI 48109, USA [email: tyforman@umich.edu]