EIGHT The Politics of Race

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The argument over racial policy, we shall suggest, has become at its core an argument over politics. Remarkably, this is a controversial suggestion, as many of the chapters in this book make plain. But if it is not possible to escape controversy on so emotionally charged a subject as race, it is possible to minimize it, and we propose to do so by sketching what it means to offer a political—as opposed to, say, a more psychological or sociological—account of the clash over racial policy.[1]

Invoking politics naturally is not a magic elixir; there are aspects of the clash over race that can be plumbed only from other perspectives. But in casting an eye over the work of the last decade, we have been struck by how the actual political character of the contemporary argument over racial policies has been slighted. Citizens, it seems to us essential to recognize, get to choose only from among the choices on offer. How they go about making choices on public policy hinges on how these choices are organized by political institutions and presented by public leaders (for a systematic presentation of this institution-centered view of public choice, see Sniderman in press).

On an institution-oriented account of choice, the framing of public choices, particularly by the party system, defines the relevance of citizens' attitudes and orientations. By contrast, according to actor-centered accounts, the attitudes and orientations of citizens define the significance of their political choices. The two leading examples of actor-centered accounts, in the area of racial politics, are explanations centered on prejudice and group interest. On the first view, the driving force behind the opinions of white Americans about issues of race remains racism. It is not, to be sure, the naked prejudice of a half century ago. But it is racism all the same—irrational, categorical, malevolent. And racism is not merely one factor among many at work.

On the contrary, its tenets command the support of a clear majority of white Americans (see Kinder and Sanders 1996, 107, tab. 5.1), and it is, even taking account of an array of other influences, far and away the dominant force molding the thinking of white Americans on issues of race (Kinder and Sanders, 1996, 123). On the second view, the fundamental fault line in racial politics is race itself. Blacks, by virtue of their position as blacks, and whites, by virtue of their position as whites, have conflicting interests, and it is the reluctance of whites to surrender the privileges they enjoy merely by virtue of being white that is the defining rhythm of racial politics.

It is important to avoid false alternatives.[2] It is not a matter of dispute that racism and selfishness are part of the politics of race. Who would deny that in the world as it actually is there is mean-spiritedness, deep-rooted bigotry, and indifference to the plight of others, not to mention complacency and self-satisfaction and a desire to retain or increase the advantages of one's social position? Certainly, we never have. The task is to understand what the contemporary argument over racial politics is about. What are the considerations that citizens take into account, and what importance do they give them, in making up their minds about governmental policies dealing with race? How large a role does prejudice play, and is it sometimes of more consequence and sometimes of less? What part is played by citizens' broader political values? When do whites mean what they say about racial policies, and when are they saying what they think they should say? Is the politics of race essentially autonomous, or does it tend to conform to the larger contours of American politics? And what does it mean to speak of the politics of race? Is there one fundamental pattern, with specific policies merely representing different ways of putting the same question—Should blacks be helped or not?—in the minds of ordinary citizens? Or is the pattern of choices more complex, and the ways that citizens respond accordingly more complex?

These are the questions we think deserve consideration, and in getting a grip on them, we believe it is helpful to recognize that when citizens are grappling with public policies on race, they are making distinctly political choices. Specifically, our bedrock premise is that how citizens choose depends on the terms of their choices. For the politics of race, we are persuaded that two features of the terms of choice are pivotal. On the one side, policy alternatives come into focus under the pressure of competitive elections and the dynamics of the party system (see especially Huckfeld and Kohfeldt 1989 and Carmines and Stimson 1989). It follows that, given the ideological com-

mitments of the two principal parties at the elite level, there is a natural tendency for policy alternatives to be posed within a liberal-conservative framework across issue domains, very much including racial policy. On the other side, there is not one problem of race, but a number—among them, the need to assure equal treatment under the law; to provide assistance to those who are poor; and to combat discrimination, which in itself can take different forms, as discrimination itself is differently defined. There is thus not one course of public action on race for citizens to accept or reject, but a number, and they differ in the goals that government is attempting to accomplish and the means by which it is attempting to accomplish them. It follows that, given the genuine variety of proposals falling under the overall tent of government actions dealing with race, citizens may, and likely will, take different positions as to what government should do regarding race, just so far as they are being asked to approve different courses of action.

We believe that these two features—ideological continuity and issue pluralism—define the terms of choice for issues of race and thus the process of choice. The first favors convergence across racial issues; the second, divergence. We obviously cannot give a complete account here of how each shapes the politics of race, but five points are worth mention.

• The fundamental lines of cleavage on issues of race, so far as they are defined by the party system, are not peculiar to issues of race. They belong, rather, to a larger pattern of division, defining the deeper-lying structure of American politics since the New Deal, centering on the clash of competing conceptions of the proper responsibilities of government and the appropriate obligations of citizens.[3]

• The lines of political cleavage, notwithstanding the sluggish attention the public characteristically pays to public affairs, differ according to the terms of choice of particular issues of race. Pursuing this notion of issue pluralism in the context of affirmative action politics, we shall suggest that a new fault line dividing liberalism is emerging not because of a resurgence of racism, but in response to competing conceptions of fairness.

• As against the common view that ideological orientations serve the interests of racial sentiment, we shall argue instead that citizens' political perspectives define the relevance of their racial prejudices in making choices about racial policy.

• We shall suggest that the gap between principle and implementation stressed in sociological accounts of racial politics is largely an illu-

sion and arises precisely from the inclination of sociological accounts to omit the politics of racial policies.

• We shall call attention to the political ecology of issue arguments. Part of what underlies the politics of racial issues, we want to suggest, is the differential accessibility of arguments on opposing sides of particular issues. We propose to illustrate this notion of an ecology of arguments by considering the light it may throw on the politics of open housing.

We propose to proceed in three steps. First, we want to show how the notion of symbolic racism, conceptualized and measured just as the symbolic racism researchers wish it to be, collapses upon empirical examination. Second, we want to illustrate what we mean when we speak in behalf of a politics-centered account of the politics of race, though naturally our account will be selective rather than exhaustive.[4] Finally, given the adversarial character of much research on racial politics, we want to call attention to a number of points of agreement emerging across competing perspectives.

METHODS AND DATA

A decade ago the issue of race began to receive a fuller measure of the scholarly attention it merits. The flagship survey enterprises—the National Election Studies (NES) in political science and the General Social Survey (GSS) in sociology—have provided a rich array of expressly racial attitudes. A number of notable analyses of these data, particularly in their over-time dimension, have appeared (see especially Schuman et al. 1997). Yet if there incontrovertibly has been a concerted effort made to track Americans' attitudes toward race, it is not obvious that a comparable measure of progress has been made in understanding the sources and dynamics of American attitudes toward public policies dealing with race.

Doubtless, there are a variety of reasons for the limited progress that has been made, but as our own work got under way, one problem in particular has seemed to us especially crucial. It is the inferential limits of the conventional public opinion survey. For all the increased sophistication in estimation techniques over the last several decades, the standard opinion interview generates a fog over questions of causality that is next to impossible to dispel. And if this fog obscures public opinion in general, it blankets assessment and inference about attitudes toward race in particular.

For a decade, we and our colleagues have been working to develop

a new approach to the study of public opinion. This approach capitalizes on the introduction of computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) to integrate the internal validity strengths of experimental design with the external validity advantages of representative samples. Experiments had previously been incorporated in public opinion surveys, but always of the split-ballot variety, radically reducing the number of facets of an item that could randomly be manipulated—usually to one—while restricting the number of variations that could be introduced—usually to two (see Sniderman and Grob 1996). With CATI as a platform, multiple facets of multiple items, each capable of taking on multiple values, can be experimentally manipulated in a way that is invisible to respondents and effortless for interviewers.

Every application of any method is imperfect, any conclusion of every study provisional. But in this chapter, we will illustrate how experiment-centered analyses can illuminate aspects of the thinking of Americans about matters of race that have previously been invisible. We shall introduce some new findings as well as review some earlier ones. We do so not out of a belief that our approach is the last word, but, on the contrary, from a conviction that by furnishing examples of experiments we have devised, others will be encouraged to devise still better procedures.

FINDINGS

A POLITICS- OR A RACISM-CENTERED EXPLANATION

Over a quarter of a century ago, David Sears and Donald Kinder declared that a new form of racism had emerged (the concept of symbolic racism was proposed by Sears and Kinder in 1971). Surely, they argued, there must be some powerful force responsible for the persistent opposition of many whites to black candidates and to government policies to assist blacks. It could not be the old racism. An overwhelming number of white Americans, they acknowledged, now rejected the principle of biological inferiority and, at least in their public professions, accepted the principle of racial equality. So a new racism, more subtle, less blatantly offensive, must have taken the place of the old.

This racism was new, Sears and Kinder declared, in character as well as form. Opposition to public efforts to help blacks was mobilized around the values of individual effort, self-reliance, and achievement. This was not just a matter of window dressing. These values, they insisted, were a wellspring, in their own right, of racial animosity—indeed, so much so that they defined the new racism as a conjunction
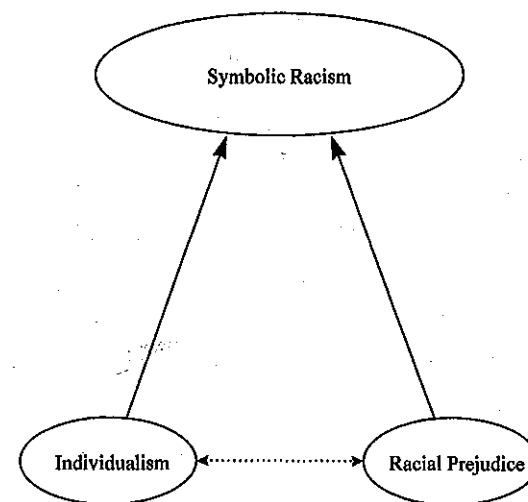
Figure 8.1. Model of Constituent Elements Defining the New Racism

or blending of antiblack affect and traditional American values, above all, individualism (e.g., Sears 1988; Kinder and Mendelberg this volume).

To make unmistakably clear Sears and Kinder's claim, figure 8.1 summarizes graphically their conceptual model. Two components—racial prejudice and individualism—constitute the new racism. They combine to produce "symbolic racism," "modern racism," "racial resentment"—the appellation has varied. They do so either working independently of one another or together—the formulation of a "conjunction" or "blend" is open to either additive or interactive interpretations—hence the dashed arrow between the two constituent elements in figure 8.1. But on either interpretation, Sears and Kinder have committed themselves to the view that the new racism is individualism plus antiblack affect.

If the new racism is a conjunction of antiblack affect and traditional American values, above all, individualism, then these two constituent elements should be powerful predictors of it. Indeed, they must be powerful predictors, since they literally constitute it. We have followed Sears and Kinder in the measurement of all the components—symbolic racism, individualism, and antiblack affect. Table 8.1 estimates their measurement model, taking advantage of the 1986 NES survey, the last of the NES surveys incorporating the particular measure they accept as a measure of individualism (the components of all

measures are detailed in the Appendix).[5] We have biased this test in *favor* of the Sears and Kinder claim. Since the only variables that are explicitly taken into account are the two that they claim constitute symbolic racism, then these two will receive credit not only for the variation in the Sears-Kinder measure for which they are uniquely responsible, but also for the variation attributable to every other variable with which they are correlated.

If individualism and antiblack affect do indeed make up the new racism, then we should see in table 8.1 that they account for the largest part of variations in scores on the Sears-Kinder measure. The first column reports the standardized coefficients for the two measures. As a moment's inspection of the figures will show, although the coefficients for both are statistically significant, neither is overwhelmingly large, and that of individualism is embarrassingly small. Even if the contribution of both is taken into account, so far from explaining the overwhelming portion of the variation in the Sears-Kinder measure—or indeed even the largest part of it—they are responsible only for a relatively trivial fraction of it ($r^2 = .14$). In an effort to salvage the Sears-Kinder claim, the second column of table 8.1 takes account of not only the independent contributions of the two, but also their potential interaction. The interaction of the two is statistically significant and seems visually large, albeit with the wrong sign. Once you go through the arithmetic of calculating the impact of the interaction term netting out the impact of the two main effects, it is obvious that the interaction term adds nothing of consequence to the understanding of the variance in the Sears-Kinder measure, which shows up in a failure to account for substantially more variance ($r^2 = .14$).[6]

We do not wish to argue about words. A concept like individualism has more than one aspect, and the standard measure of it in the NES surveys cannot capture all of them. For that matter, it is very far from obvious that the "feeling thermometer" technique is a defensible measure of racial prejudice, let alone the best possible measure of it. Accordingly, turning to the 1992 NES, the third and fourth columns report a second test, examining a different facet of individualism, support for limited government, and a more direct indicator of racial prejudice, endorsement of negative racial stereotypes. The results are just as unsympathetic to the Sears and Kinder claim (r^2 is now .15) except that this alternative conception of individualism is even more remote from the measure of the "new racism" than the previous one. Our analysis, we would again underline, has been done on terms most favorable to Sears and Kinder's claim. If you look at Sears's own analy-

TABLE 8.1   Individualism and Racial Prejudice as Constituting Symbolic Racism

	1986 NES		1992 NES	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Measures of individualism				
Individualism	0.21°°	0.38°°		
Limited government			0.05	0.03
Measures of prejudice				
Antiblack affect	0.30°°	0.64°°		
Negative racial stereotypes			0.39°°	0.37°°
Interaction terms				
Indiv. ° antiblack affect		−0.41°°		
Lim. govt. ° racial stereotypes				0.04
Constant	0.35°°	0.23°°	0.51°°	0.51°°
Adjusted R^2	0.14	0.15	0.14	0.14
N	787	787	478	478

Note: On all models, the dependent variable is symbolic racism. Standardized coefficients reported from OLS regressions.
°$p < .05$.   °°$p < .01$.

sis in this book (see table 3.2, p. 90), you will see that merely by including other relevant factors, the contribution of individualism drops substantially, and so far from heading the list of predictors, it falls near the rear of the pack. In short, the two components that supposedly constitute the very heart of the new racism are, at the very best, only moderately related to it.

Nor is this surprising if you look carefully at the actual content of the questions that make up the Sears-Kinder measure (shown in figure 8.2). One reason for agreeing with an item like "Most blacks who receive money from welfare programs could get along without it if they tried" obviously is dislike of blacks. Just as obviously, though, it cannot be the only one reason, nor—given the results in table 8.1—the most important one. What is striking, however, is that most of the items have nothing to do with individualism. Four manifestly are about other matters. What does a belief that government officials treat blacks and whites pretty much alike (item 6) have to do with an ethic of self-reliance? How can disagreeing with the view that blacks get "less than they deserve" (item 1) or believing that the legacy of slavery no longer shackles blacks (item 4) be taken as defining elements of individualism? How exactly does a loose suspicion that blacks are taking advantage of welfare qualify one as an Emersonian individualist? All of these are politically interesting sentiments, and no doubt have

(1) Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve.

(2) Irish, Italians, Jewish, and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors.

(3) It's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites.

(4) Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class.

(5) Most blacks who receive money from welfare programs could get along without it if they tried.°

(6) Government officials usually pay less attention to a request or complaint from a black person than from a white person.° ·

Figure 8.2. Components of the "New" Racism. *Sources:* 1986 and 1992 National Election Studies. *Note:* The 1986 and 1992 measures follow those used in Kinder and Sanders 1996, with the 1986 measure composed of variables 565–68, 579, and 580 and the 1992 measure composed of variables 6126–29. °Question not asked in 1992.

a bearing on the positions whites take on racial issues, but none of them constitutes a defining idea of American individualism.

The remaining two can be interpreted to measure support for individualism. Indeed, as Kinder and Tali Mendelberg (chap. 2) point out, in a previous work one of us did precisely that (see Sniderman and Hagen 1985), and they present some interesting results suggesting that our conception was flawed. We agree. Indeed, we think the error is far more serious than they suggest, and since Kinder and Sears make exactly the same fatal mistake, there's something to recommend making plain how all three of us got things wrong.

Consider the item "It's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites."[7] The prototype of individualism, in the American context, is the individualism of Ralph Waldo Emerson, and when he spoke of it as an American value, he had in mind the commitment of Americans to an ethic of self-reliance in *their own* lives. Sears and Kinder's position is that whites, if they say that blacks should be self-reliant, are committed in their own lives to individualism as a value.

But this entirely overlooks the possibility of hypocrisy. It is simply a fallacy to suppose that because I say that you should stand on your own two feet and take care of your problems without help from others, I myself am willing to stand on my own two feet and take care of my problems without help from others.

Once commitment to the idea of self-reliance as a principle by which your life as well as the lives of others should be governed is distinguished from invoking the principle of self-reliance as a way to criticize and pass judgment on others, it should be obvious that the tack that we took in gauging individualism is indefensible. And it is equally indefensible for Sears and Kinder. They used exactly the same items and made exactly the same mistake as we. It is obviously a mistake—it seems embarrassingly so in retrospect—simply to assume that when a white tells blacks that they have to work hard, the white is himself willing to work hard.

It is not surprising, then, that we observed in table 8.1 that individualism standardly measured is only modestly related to these items that Sears and Kinder claim are measuring individualism. Both recognize there is a problem here in their chapters in this book. Their responses, however, take quite different forms. Sears mounts two lines of defense. The first is to expand the category of traditional values. So in his analysis in this book, he also folds under the umbrella of traditional American values inegalitarianism and personal morality (e.g., the breakdown of sexual morality), while in other work (see Sears et al. 1997), he includes authoritarianism as well. It is in terms of this enlarged conception of traditional values, and not on the basis of individualism alone or even predominantly, that Sears proposes to validate his conception of a new racism.

As a moment's thought will make clear, this line of defense cannot hold. To begin with, the key component of Sears's analysis in this book turns out to be (a racialized form of) *in*egalitarianism. But this result is exactly the wrong way around. In his conceptualization, Sears claims that the new form of racism is now buttressed by "the finest and proudest of traditional American values" (Sears 1988, 54). But under no description, racial or otherwise, has anyone suggested that *in*egalitarianism is an American ideal. It is, rather, a commitment to equality that is a defining component of the American Creed. What Sears has found, it follows, is that the values in which Americans distinctively have taken pride, rather than working in favor of racism, work against it. He is, in our view, on solid ground in suggesting that a variety of

sentiments loosely labeled traditional values—authoritarianism and conventionality, among them—are somehow tied into racial prejudice. But since when is authoritarianism a traditional *American* value? At what point did opposition to sexual education or *intolerance* of diverse lifestyles become a defining American ideal? Surely, it makes no sense to declare that a commitment to inequality, to authoritarianism, to intolerance is among "the finest and proudest of traditional American values."

Sears offers a second line of defense, however. Acknowledging that his measure of racism is rooted primarily in (a racialized form of) inegalitarianism rather than individualism, he claims that inegalitarianism in turn is rooted in individualistic beliefs (see table 3.6). But it turns out, upon inspection, that the principal items establishing that inegalitarianism is rooted in individualistic beliefs come from the Sears-Kinder measure itself. How, then, do we know that their measure is a measure of individualism? Because it is correlated with inegalitarianism, which is said to be an expression of individualism. And how do we know that inegalitarianism is a form of individualism? Because it is correlated with components of the original Sears-Kinder measure. Notice the structure of the argument. X is a measure of individualism. How do we know this? Not because it is predicted by Y, which is a measure of individualism, but because it is predicted by Z. And how do we know that Z, which appears to be a measure of egalitarianism and not of individualism, is a measure of individualism? Because it is predicted by X, which is (again) said to be a measure of individualism. The regress is infinite because the reasoning is circular.

Kinder, by contrast, treats the problem as conceptual rather than empirical. His argument takes an unusual shape because he starts by decrying the lack of attention in studies of racial politics to individualism as Emerson and James Bryce conceived it, but then devotes his principal critical energies to taking exception to a study attempting precisely that. This unusual bent in his argument illuminates what is distinctive in his concerns. It is not individualism standing on its own that strikes him as pivotal, but individualism fired in the crucible of racial politics. The sentiments making up the measure that he and Sears developed, he declares, tap "individualism-in-racism," and because they tap individualism-*in*-racism, it is a mistake to suppose that they should be directly connected to individualism taken on its own.

We characterize this as a conceptual rather than an empirical argument because it turns the research question of what the Sears-Kinder

measure measures into a definitional exercise. It is not obvious to us what the concept of "individualism-in-racism" can mean, but if it means anything at all, it must mean that white Americans have a different response to the idea of individualism when it is invoked inside the context of race than outside it. To put the point as clearly as possible, if individualism takes on a distinct meaning in the context of race, and this surely must be what Kinder is contending, then it must be the case that whites are more likely to endorse it when it is applied to blacks having to deal with their problems on their own than to whites having to do the same.

The only way to tell whether this is so is to exploit the power of experimental randomization. We have accordingly focused on a core item that Kinder claims to be a measure of individualism-in-racism. We have chosen the "no special favors" item because it most clearly expresses on its face the obligation to get ahead on one's own, adopting exactly the wording that Sears and Kinder favor. One half of the time, it is asked just as Sears and Kinder ask it: "Irish, Italian, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors." The other half of the time, however, rather than asking whether blacks should have to make it on their own, we ask instead whether "new immigrants from Europe" should have to work their way up without any special favors. Respondents may agree strongly or somewhat, disagree strongly or somewhat. Their scores have been scaled to run from 0 to 1: the higher the score, the greater the agreement that a group should work its way up without special favors.

If individualism takes a distinctive form in the context of race, as Kinder claims, then it necessarily follows that the ethic of self-reliance will enjoy a greater appeal when it is imposed on blacks. Table 8.2 shows the level of agreement with the proposition that a group should make its own way without special favors as a function of whether it is a group of blacks or a group of whites who must do so. As you can see, it is *not* the case that whites are distinctively, or especially, or even slightly more likely to approve of individualism when it is applied to blacks. On the contrary, they are just as likely to endorse standing on your own two feet when it comes to whites as when it comes to blacks. There is no evidence at all of a racial double standard.

It may, however, be objected that even if whites on average impose the obligation of self-reliance evenhandedly on blacks and fellow whites, a significant subset of whites conceives of individualism in dis-

TABLE 8.2   Racial Double Standards Hypothesis, by Ideology

Ideological Orientation	TARGET POPULATION		
	Blacks	New Immigrants from Europe	N
Liberal	58	65	273
Moderate	66	70	439
Conservative	75	79	448
All respondents	71	73	1,160

Source: 1991 Race and Politics Study.
Note: Values are calculated by taking the difference in the mean responses in the test and control conditions and multiplying by 100.

tinctively racial terms. Certainly, it is the case that the more conservative whites are, the more likely they are to believe that blacks should work their own way up without special favors. Accordingly, the body of table 8.2 presents, separately for conservatives, moderates, and liberals, the degree of agreement with the idea of having to make your own way without special favors as a function of whether it is blacks or fellow whites that must do so. Plainly, no one—neither conservatives nor liberals nor those in between—is more likely to impose an obligation of self-reliance on blacks than on whites. In short, quite contrary to Kinder's claim that his measure measures "individualism-*in*-racism," it instead embodies a proposition that commands wide agreement in the public as a whole quite independent of race.

We, therefore, conclude that neither Sears nor Kinder has as yet met his burden of proof. The absolute core of their argument is that a new racism has emerged made up of individualism and aversion to blacks. But there is still no compelling evidence that individualism is an integral component of racism *even if racism is measured exactly as they wish it to be measured.*

CLEAVAGES WITHIN LIBERALISM

In our previous work, one theme we have concentrated on is the ideological aspects of racial politics. As Edward Carmines and James Stimson (1989) demonstrated in their seminal work, the policy alternatives that citizens get to choose between are broadly shaped by the competing ideological trajectories of the two principal political parties. It no longer is a matter of serious dispute, certainly among political scientists, that the policy choices of the more articulate and politically aware citizens reflect currents of liberalism and conservatism that run

through the larger domain of redistributive politics. Given this consensus, we now want to consider how taking account of the terms of choice for particular policies may expose not only the divide between liberalism and conservatism, but also cleavages within liberalism itself.

The standard account of the politics of race runs, briefly, like this. For a generation, the issue of race has served as a fulcrum of the American party system. In 1964, the Republican Party, which had been the champion of racial liberalism under Abraham Lincoln, became the advocate of racial conservatism under Barry Goldwater, while the Democratic Party, which had been the party of southern segregationists, became under Lyndon Johnson the party of racial liberalism. The consequence, according to the standard account, has been a steady defection of whites, particularly working-class whites and those who are less attached to the party's central principles, from the Democratic side of the political ledger to the Republican side in response to a series of racially divisive issues—above all, affirmative action.

And there is substantial backing for the standard account. Whether you draw on our own surveys or consult the usual series—the NES for political science and the GSS for sociology—there is a readily discernible ideological division over affirmative action. Conservatives are markedly more likely to oppose it, liberals comparatively more likely to support it.

Yet the standard account of the politics of race relies on measurement procedures that make it unmistakably clear what is being measured. It is a matter of asking straight out whether people support or oppose affirmative action. But surely it is reasonable to wonder whether, when it comes to matters of race, whites will say what they really think. Is it not more than possible that they instead will say what they think they should say?

There is no perfect measure of truth, in survey research or anywhere else. But we think that it is possible to come closer to the way things are, to reflect more accurately how people think about a controversial issue like affirmative action, by developing new methods of assessment. For our part, we have taken advantage of CATI to develop an array of methods centered on experimentation in order to determine more faithfully what people think about controversial and emotionally charged public issues. One of these is the "list" experiment.

Since the technique is elsewhere described in detail (see, e.g., Kuklinski et al. 1997; Sniderman and Carmines 1997a; Gilens, Sniderman, and Kuklinski 1998), we shall here say only a word about its

underlying logic. Imagine that in the course of an extended public opinion interview, one-half of the time the interviewer presents respondents with the following task:

> Now I'm going to read you three things that sometimes make people angry or upset. After I read all three, just tell me HOW MANY of them upset you. I don't want to know which ones, just how many.

Then, the task having been defined, the interviewer goes on to read a list of three items:

1. "the federal government increasing the tax on gasoline";
2. "professional athletes getting million-dollar-plus salaries";
3. "large corporations polluting the environment."

and, having read the list, asks:

> How many, if any, of these things upset you?

Call this the baseline condition. In the test condition, except in one slight respect, everything is exactly the same. The question begins exactly as before. The request is exactly the same: "just tell me HOW MANY of them upset you. I don't want to know which ones, just how many." The only difference is that the list now has four items—the first three, plus

4. "black leaders asking for affirmative action."

Suppose, for the sake of illustrating the technique, that the person being interviewed randomly is assigned to the test condition and suppose further, for the sake of definiteness, that there are two things on the list that she cannot abide—all the money that baseball players make and affirmative action. Asked how many items make her angry, her response then is two. Notice that there is no way that the interviewer can tell that one of them is affirmative action, since the list is four items long, and, no less important, that the respondent knows that there is no way that the interviewer can tell that one of the items that upsets her is affirmative action. But although the interviewer cannot possibly tell the proportion of those who get angry at the mention of affirmative action, an analyst easily can simply subtract the mean number of angry responses in the baseline condition from the mean number of angry responses in the test condition and multiply by 100.

In table 8.3, we present an illustrative set of findings from one application of the list experiment. The logic of the hypothetical experiment we sketched and of the actual experiment we administered is

TABLE 8.3   The List Experiment: Overt and Covert Anger among Whites over Affirmative Action

BY IDEOLOGY	LIBERALS (%)	CONSERVATIVES (%)	DIFFERENCE (%)
A Overt measure of affirmative action attitudes	32.7	50.9	18.2*
B Covert measure of affirmative action attitudes	55.8	59.1	3.3
C Difference (B − A)	23.1*	8.2	
D Unacknowledged anger (C/B)	41.4	13.9	

BY PARTISANSHIP	DEMOCRATS (%)	REPUBLICANS (%)	DIFFERENCE (%)
A Overt measure of affirmative action attitudes	36.6	48.1	11.5**
B Covert measure of affirmative action attitudes	52.0	43.5	−8.5
C Difference (B − A)	15.4*	n.s.	
D Unacknowledged anger (C/B)	29.6	n.s.	

Source: 1995 Multi-Investigator Study.
Note: Covert measure is the difference between the number of items that make respondents angry when affirmative action is on the list and when it is not, combining "black leaders" and "college scholarships" versions of the question.
Number of respondents: for liberals, 46 and 70 for the overt and covert measures, respectively; for conservatives, 101 and 76; for Democrats, 187 and 296; and for Republicans, 214 and 312.
*p < .05.   **p < .01.

the same. The design of the actual experiment, however, is more complex in several ways. One of the ways that it is more complex is that in the course of the interview exactly the same test stimulus on affirmative action is presented—for one subset covertly, for another overtly—allowing us to compare and contrast reactions to race-conscious programs depending on whether respondents believe they can express how they feel without the interviewer being able to tell how they feel. Since our interest is in the politics of affirmative action, we compare and contrast the responses to affirmative action of liberals and conservatives and of Democrats and Republicans, depending on whether the measurement of their views on race-conscious programs is overt or covert. As a final word of introduction, notice that what is being assessed is not merely whether a person is opposed to affirmative action, but rather whether the mere mention of it *upsets* or *angers* him or her.

Consider first the responses of conservatives. A large proportion of them, about six in every ten, are angry at affirmative action, but what is interesting, comparing rows A and B, is that far and away most of them are willing to say so overtly. Consider, by contrast, the responses of liberals. When their attitudes toward affirmative action are assessed overtly, only about one-third of them express anger. When their attitudes are assessed covertly, however, more than one-half of them acknowledge they are angry at affirmative action—a number indistinguishable from that of conservatives.

The upper panel of table 8.3 thus reports two quite different pictures of the politics of affirmative action. When someone is listening, liberals and conservatives diverge; when they think they can say what they feel without anybody being able to tell, they converge. The lower panel of table 8.3, comparing and contrasting the overt and covert responses of Democrats and Republicans, corroborates the results of the upper panel in every crucial point. These findings, and they are only a selection from the series of national surveys we have conducted, suggest that the standard view of the ideological division over race misses precisely what is distinctive about the politics of affirmative action—namely, that the cleavage over race-conscious policies, rather than dividing liberals and conservatives, now is dividing liberals themselves.

It may be objected that although liberals and conservatives are equally likely to get angry over affirmative action, they do not get angry for the same reasons. Perhaps conservatives get angry because they believe that affirmative action is doing too much for blacks, but liberals get angry for just the opposite reason: because they believe too little is being done and the little that is being done now is in danger of being undone.

It cannot be said that this objection is compelling on its face, given the one-sided opposition to affirmative action evident in the NES time series. But it is at least logically possible, and so we have conducted a series of tests to assess its validity. First, if the greater anger expressed by liberals when their feelings toward affirmative action are expressed covertly is a function of *commitment* (rather than opposition) to affirmative action, then the difference should be especially large for liberals who support strong forms of affirmative action. In fact, the truth of the matter is just the other way around: the proportion of liberals who support strong forms of affirmative action who suppress their anger over it in the list experiment is indistinguishable from zero. Second, we put together an index measuring the degree to which respon-

dents get angry about "Giving blacks and other minorities special advantages in jobs and schools" and "Spokesmen for minorities who are always complaining that blacks are being discriminated against." If the liberal anger over affirmative action picked up by the covert measurement method of the list experiment represents anger at the frustration of the goals of affirmative action, then the likelihood of expressing anger in the test condition should, for liberals, be negatively correlated with the index of anger at blacks. In fact, instead of the correlation being negative, it is positive.

The suggestion that anger over affirmative action is driven, on the left, by a frustration that too little is being done in behalf of blacks thus fails. Liberals and Democrats, when free to express how they really feel, are just as likely to be angry and upset over affirmative action as conservatives and Republicans.

PREJUDICE AND POLITICAL IDEOLOGY

In proposing that political considerations are integral to the positions that white Americans take on racial policies, we have never suggested that considerations of race in general, and racial prejudice in particular, do not matter. But from the start of our research program, we could not escape observing the modesty of the correlation between racial prejudice and racial policy preferences among white Americans, whatever survey we analyzed and whatever measure of express prejudice we employed.[8] Prejudice certainly was one of the factors at work, and for some areas of policy, such as welfare, its impact was substantial (Sniderman and Piazza 1993). But rather than imprinting itself on the positions that white Americans take on public policies dealing with black Americans, correlation coefficients summarizing the covariation between racial prejudice and racial policy preference typically were squeezed around .1 and .2.

This result we cross-validated for surveys other than our own (see Sniderman and Carmines 1997a, 72, tab. 4), but the findings, their consistency notwithstanding, left us unsatisfied. The modesty of the correlations between prejudice and racial policy preference, taken as a whole, suggested that racial prejudice was largely a spent force. This did not square with our own sense of the world. How could the empirical results and our own intuition both be right? The way out, it struck us, was to take politics seriously. People, if they are politically engaged, do not view public policies from nowhere. Just so far as they have formed a coherent orientation, they have a point of view, and it is their political point of view that determines which considerations are rele-

vant for them, and which not, in making a choice about an issue of public policy.

Consider a pair of citizens. Both are thorough-going conservatives in their political outlook, but one has distinctly negative feelings toward blacks; the other, distinctly positive ones. Suppose we ask each whether he or she supports or opposes a proposal to increase government expenditures on job-training programs for blacks. The answer of the first, the one who dislikes blacks, is obvious. But so, too, is the answer of the second. To support a policy because you like blacks, you must believe that it will help them. Naturally, if you are a liberal, you will think bigger government programs are going to help blacks. But just as naturally, if you are a conservative, you will think these programs will not in fact help blacks who need help; all they will do is waste money setting up a new government bureaucracy. In short, just so far as the second person genuinely is a conservative, she, too, will answer "opposed." Notice, less obviously, that in answering "opposed," it is not as though she is pulled in one direction, by her conservative views, to oppose the policy and in the opposite direction, by her feelings of regard for blacks, to support it. The policy choice presents no conflict, since the conclusion to draw, just so far as one is a conservative, is that another job-training program will not in fact help blacks.

Now imagine another pair of citizens. Both are thorough-going liberals in their political outlook, but one has distinctly negative feelings toward blacks; the other, distinctly positive ones. How should they go about deciding whether or not to support a job-training program for blacks or not? The answer for the second liberal is obvious. He has two reasons to support the program: his desire, as a person with a positive regard for blacks, to see them better off and his belief, as a liberal, that more government effort in the form of job-training programs will help blacks become better off. But what position will the first liberal take?

It is our hypothesis that his racial prejudice will trump his political principles. More exactly, we want to bet on a systematic interaction: the more liberal whites are, the more important racial prejudice should be in shaping their political thinking about race; conversely, the more conservative whites are, the less important racial prejudice should be in shaping their positions on issues of race. Prejudice, it should be underlined, is not less important for the political thinking of conservatives because conservatives are less prejudiced—on the contrary, they are more likely to be racially prejudiced than liberals.
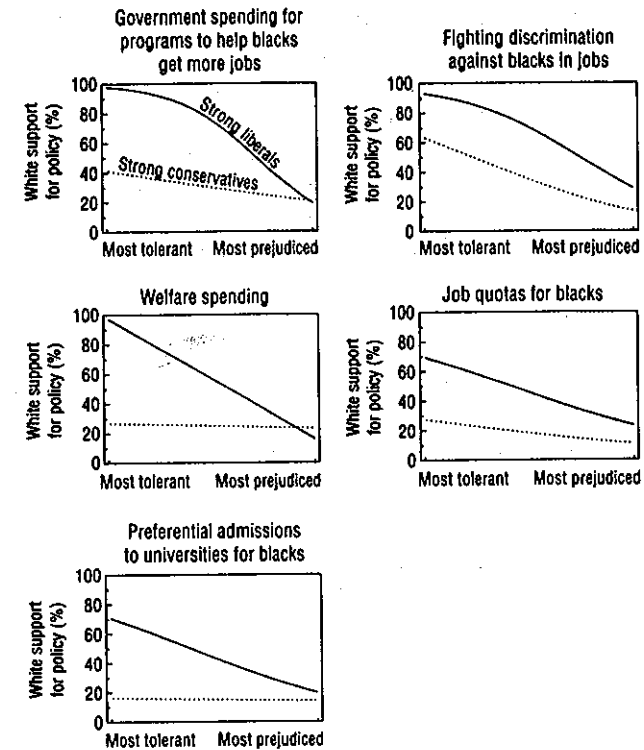
Figure 8.3. Support for Government Programs to Assist Blacks, by Ideology and Level of Prejudice. *Source:* 1991 Race and Politics Study. *Note:* Prejudice ranges from the most tolerant 1 percent to the most prejudiced 1 percent of whites.

But how conservatives feel toward blacks is a relatively unimportant factor in shaping their political thinking about issues of race because, just so far as they are conservative, they have a relevant and sufficient reason to oppose government programs to assist blacks. By contrast, the more liberal whites are, the more important racial prejudice should be as a factor shaping the positions they take on issues of race. And it should be more important because, just so far as they are prejudiced, they have a relevant and sufficient reason to oppose government-sponsored programs for blacks even though they are liberal. Measures of prejudice are described in detail in Sniderman and Carmines (1997a).

Drawing on the National Race and Politics Study, figure 8.3 reports a series of logistic regressions testing the hypothesis of an interaction

of political ideology and racial prejudice. The solid lines summarize the impact of differences in feelings toward blacks on issue positions for liberals; the dotted lines, for conservatives.

As is readily apparent, on each of the issues shown from government job-training programs through preferential admissions, the influence of racial prejudice among liberals is striking. By contrast, though the impact of prejudice is not completely absent in every instance for conservatives—note particularly their responses to government-led efforts to fight racial discrimination in hiring—its impact characteristically is slight and often insignificant.

This is a finding worth close consideration, we think.[9] Here we want only to emphasize how this result fills out our larger argument on the centrality of politics. It is always a temptation, and usually a mistake, to ask whether the politics of race depends more heavily on racial or political factors. One reason that it is a mistake is because, as our findings illustrate, the former hinges on the latter. Hence the paradox of the interaction of racial prejudice and political ideology is this: where prejudice is more common—namely, on the political right—it is less important; where it is less common—namely, on the political left—it is more important.

THE "PRINCIPLE-POLICY" PUZZLE

In gauging one perspective, it is useful to lay it alongside another to see what distinctively recommends each. We, therefore, want to contrast the political perspective we are advocating with a sociological one that Howard Schuman and his colleagues have advanced.[10]

Racial norms are the fundamental factor in their account—so much so that they suggest that their book would better have been titled *Racial Norms*, not *Racial Attitudes* (Schuman et al. 1997, 3). Norms, they declare, reflect a social (or cultural) agreement on what is appropriate; racial norms accordingly define the appropriate relationship between black and white Americans in the larger society (p. 311). Beginning around World War II, they go on to argue, the racial norms in America began to change, and from the mid-1960s on, they have unambiguously called for equal treatment of blacks and whites. Norms are not the same as personal preferences: a person may recognize that he ought to be in favor of equal treatment for blacks—indeed may even publicly favor it—even though he privately opposes it (p. 3). But a fundamental reason why people think what they think and do what they do is societal norms. Just because they represent societal agreement on what is appropriate, they tend to be internalized or, at

any rate, complied with (p. 5). So viewed, the politics of race represents centrally a process of normative conformity. American society now has committed itself to the norm of racial equality. A number of public policies have been developed to work toward racial equality. It follows that just so far as white Americans are genuinely committed to the norm of racial equality, they should be motivated to implement it by supporting policies to achieve it.

Schuman and his colleagues, of course, recognize that large numbers of Americans in fact oppose an array of public policies advanced to achieve racial equality. Hence the principle-policy gap: why do so many white Americans accept the value of racial equality at the level of principle, but not at the level of policy? The gap between principle and implementation arises from a variety of reasons—they point to, among other factors, differing degrees of commitment to the norm of equality in the first place, the intrusion of individual and group interests, competing values, and, naturally, racial prejudice—but the bedrock premise of their argument is that so far as white Americans support the norm of racial equality, then they—logically and causally—should support governmental policies to achieve it.

We believe that this is a point of view that offers an important insight into some aspects of the politics of race and, more particularly, issues on the equal treatment agenda.[11] Indeed, that is why we ourselves introduced the hypothesis of multiple agendas in racial politics, distinguishing the equal treatment agenda from the social welfare and the race-conscious agendas, respectively (Sniderman and Piazza 1993). But having underlined this point of agreement, we want also to suggest that their posing the problem of explanation in terms of conformity to a societal norm of equal treatment has led Schuman and his colleagues to mistake the principal thrust of the contemporary politics of race.

Think of the policy issues that have been at the center of debate over racial policy over the last thirty years. Selecting from their own list, there is, for example, the issue of whether the liberal government has a special obligation to help improve the living standards of African Americans, of whether it is important to correct the problems of poverty and unemployment, of whether federal spending on programs that assist blacks should be increased.[12] On the normative conformity interpretation, just so far as one supports the norm of equal treatment, one should support these policy efforts to implement it.[13] But as a moment's thought will make plain, this mistakes the fact that what we are attempting to understand is a process not of societal conformity,

but of political choice. Viewed from a liberal perspective, it follows that if you support the norm of equal treatment, you should support more federal spending to assist blacks. But to view it only from a liberal perspective begs the question. It misses what is crucial—that there is a political debate as to whether bigger government is a good idea even for promoting the welfare of blacks. On the contrary, governmental activism of a liberal stripe on behalf of the disadvantaged, so far from being part of a solution to the problem of racial equality, is part of the problem from a conservative perspective. Schuman's conception of normative conformity presupposes that conservatives, to be consistent, must support liberal policies.

Our own views of these policies, let us emphasize, are quite beside the point. The point is instead that it is necessary to acknowledge the differing points of view of citizens in deciding whether to support or oppose, say, more government job-training programs for blacks—because if one wants to take the argument of norms seriously, what distinguishes politics as a domain of choice is that it is socially legitimate to disagree about policies like this. Not to put too fine a point on it, but it is, we think, impossible to understand the character of American politics over this century without understanding that it has been definitively shaped by a continuing debate between liberal and conservative conceptions of the obligations of government and the responsibilities of citizens.

Schuman and his colleagues, concentrating on processes of societal conformity, overlook the clash of competing political orientations. Remarkably, there is no attention in the whole of their empirical analysis given to the role of liberalism and conservatism as political perspectives that inform the positions that Americans take on racial policies. Indeed, their conception of ideology in American politics is a perplexing one. They characterize our argument on the centrality of the clash between liberal and conservative outlooks, for example, as an attempt "to explain differences between principle and implementation items by identifying a general rejection by many whites of government intervention, quite apart from racial issues" (Schuman et al. 1997, 308), equating this rejection with a reluctance "to accept constraints of *any* kind on behavior" (p. 309, emphasis in original). They then go on to show that opposition to government intrusion or coercion is, at most, of marginal importance in accounting for the positions white Americans take on racial issues by demonstrating, for example, that opposition to open housing laws is only slightly related to opposition to mandatory seat belts. But this misses what it means to say that

politics matters. We certainly have never invoked the idea that whites who oppose more government support for job-training programs for blacks do so out of aversion to government coercion. We have instead argued that a large part of the clash, particularly over policies on the social welfare agenda, is driven by colliding views of the responsibilities of government and the obligations of citizens. Purely as a matter of fact we do not know the empirical relationship between liberalism-conservatism, on the one side, and support or opposition to mandatory seat belts, on the other. But people's views on seat belts are no indicator of their overall ideological orientations. Slighting politics, Schuman and his colleagues have mistaken libertarianism for conservatism.

The framework in which issues of race are fought out, if we are right, is defined by the American party system and the clash of competing ideological commitments embodied in the two principal parties. By way of offering a concrete example of what we have in mind, we shall draw on the Equal Opportunity Experiment, which was carried out in our first study of the politics of race.[14] We want to revisit this experiment not only because it illustrates, dramatically we believe, the imprint of ideology on the politics of race, but also because it drives home the mistake of false antitheses. As we have maintained from the start, the clash over a racial policy can have a quite different character for different strata of the public at large.

The Equal Opportunity Experiment is designed to examine the extent to which the willingness among white Americans to support a claim to government assistance is conditioned on whether the beneficiaries of the assistance are black or not. Accordingly, in carrying out the Equal Opportunity Experiment, every respondent was asked whether government should guarantee people an equal opportunity to succeed, but one-half of the time the people to benefit were blacks; the other half of the time, women. It can be argued that women, just as much as blacks, are entitled to government assurances of an equal opportunity to succeed—not equal outcomes, notice, but equal opportunities. It cannot be argued—at any rate, we know of no one who does argue—that women are entitled to such assurances, but blacks are not. It follows that to favor assurances of equal opportunity for women, but not for blacks, is evidence of a discriminatory double standard.

Our interest in the experiment is thus twofold. We mean to show, first, that racial discrimination still persists and, second, that to act as though one side to a political argument must accept the policies of the other—or expose itself as hypocritical—is to miss what political
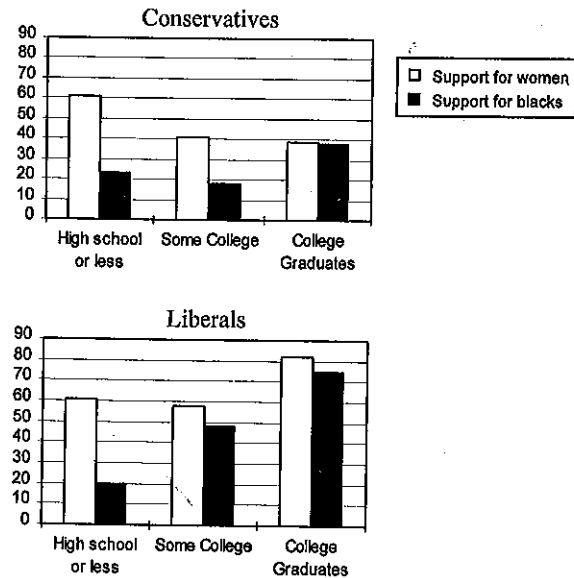
Conservatives

Liberals

Figure 8.4. The Equal Opportunity Experiment: Support for Governmental Assurance of Equal Opportunity, by Ideology and Education. $N = 456$, minimum base $N = 20$. *Source:* Bay Area Regional Race and Politics Study.

argument is about. Figure 8.4 accordingly summarizes levels of support for government assurance of equal opportunity to succeed for a group as a function of three factors—the group to benefit, blacks or women; the respondents' political point of view, liberal or conservative; and the likelihood of their understanding the position appropriate to their political point of view, as indexed by formal education.

Focusing on those with the least education, one sees clear evidence of discriminatory double standards. Whites with a high school diploma or less are markedly less likely to support a claim to government assurance of equal opportunity to succeed when made in behalf of blacks than they are to support exactly the same claim when made in behalf of women. What is more, this discriminatory double standard holds as strongly for self-identified liberals as conservatives.

Now consider liberals and conservatives in a position to understand what their political philosophies require of them. Well-educated liberals, in the largest number, support government assurances of equal opportunity to succeed, and it makes no difference to them who benefits—women or blacks. Well-educated conservatives, in the largest number, oppose government assurances of an equal opportunity to

succeed, and it makes no difference to them who is to benefit— women or blacks.

Both liberals and conservatives thus make their choice on the basis of their principles. Both liberals and conservatives thus are impartial in applying their principles. But contrary to the suggestion of the principle-policy puzzle, just insofar as their choice is principled, they diverge, not converge, on public policies proposed to assist minorities.

In this volume, Jim Sidanius and his colleagues report quite different results from a "replication" of the Equal Opportunity Experiment. But their suggestion that they have replicated our experiment is perplexing. Replication involves repeating the same procedures in an effort to see if one obtains the same results. But they have done something quite different from what we had done. We analyzed attitudes toward equal opportunity; they examine attitudes toward affirmative action; and there is a library chock-full of studies showing that the two are quite different. Just as puzzling, we analyzed a sample of white Americans; they analyze a sample half of whom are Hispanics.

Ordinarily, it would suffice to observe that if different investigators do different things, it should not be surprising that they observe different results. The Sidanius results, though, deserve consideration in their own right. Looking at their figure 7.4, we were taken aback, first, by the overall level of support that they observe for affirmative action. In their study, affirmative action is a relatively popular policy, with a clear majority opposed to it only among well-educated conservatives, and then only when blacks are its beneficiaries.[15] The finer grain of their findings is still more perplexing. It does not, for example, fit anyone's expectations on any side of the debate over racial politics to observe, as they do, that those who are better able to understand what liberalism asks of them are *more* likely to oppose affirmative action than are those who are less able to do so. Yet, according to Sidanius's results, well-educated liberals are *more* likely to oppose affirmative action than are less-educated liberals. And it seems positively perverse to take seriously a suggestion that conservatism has now thrown its weight behind affirmative action. Yet, again according to Sidanius's results, a majority of conservatives—including well-educated conservatives—are in favor of affirmative action for the poor.

We are not sufficiently familiar with the politics of Los Angeles County, where their sample was drawn, to judge whether these results ring true there. But the larger cautionary conclusion to draw is straightforward. Sidanius and his colleagues suggest that the problem is that our results do not match theirs. The problem is instead that

their results do not match anyone else's, including ours. And turning from cautionary to substantive conclusions, we think the Equal Opportunity Experiment captures instructively the cross-currents of racial politics—the persistence of racial double standards, particularly among the less-educated strata of the public, and the clash of competing ideas of fairness, particularly among the more-educated strata.

THE ECOLOGY OF ISSUE ARGUMENTS: DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN THE ATTRIBUTES OF CITIZENS AND THE CHARACTERISTICS OF POLITICAL ENVIRONMENTS

Politics is not about choosing positions in a world where no pressure is brought to bear on citizens to favor one or the other side of a public issue. It is about the choice of positions that citizens make in the face of arguments crafted to win their support for one side of an issue—or at the least to qualify their allegiance to the other.

The standard public opinion interview is too tightly corsetted, we want to suggest, to accommodate the dynamics of political argumentation. The interview situation is deliberately designed to put respondents at their ease; to persuade them that there is no right or wrong answer to the questions asked of them; to minimize pressures on them, whether by virtue of the wording of a question or the reading of it by a questioner, to favor one rather than another side of an issue. By contrast, the politics of race, just so far as it really is politics, aims to persuade citizens, to call on their loyalties, to disarm their suspicions—in short, to win their support.

A principal aim of our effort to integrate experimental designs and public opinion interviews has been to explore the rhythms of political argument—to understand the reactions of citizens to issues of public policy as they confront the play of argument and counterargument as it occurs in the world of politics. One experiment designed to accomplish this is the Competing Values Experiment. But, and this is worth underlining, what we anticipated the experiment would teach us and what it did were two different things.

The Competing Values Experiment focuses on the issue of open housing—whether it should be against the law to refuse to sell a house to a buyer on the grounds of race. In the "neutral" condition, the GSS question is administered. In the second condition, respondents' attention is called to the value of "property rights" and, in the third, to the role of government in helping those in need. The experiment was thus designed to compare and contrast whites' reactions to the issue of open housing when it is isolated from other considerations and when

it is put into play politically, once with an appeal to a value favoring the political right and once with an appeal to a value favoring the left.

In the first condition, the issue is framed as follows:

> Suppose there were a community-wide vote on a general housing issue and that there were two possible laws to vote on. One law says that homeowners can decide for themselves who to sell their houses to, even if they prefer NOT to sell to blacks. The other law says that homeowners cannot refuse to sell to someone because of their race or color.

> Which law would you vote for?

This first condition we characterize as a "neutral" treatment. Following the GSS model, respondents are offered a choice between a pair of alternatives that stand on the same footing: one is a "law" that says "homeowners can decide for themselves"; the other, a "law" that "homeowners cannot refuse to sell to some because of their race or color."

So far as citizens choose on the basis of their political outlook, we should naturally expect an ideological division over the issue. And so there is. As table 8.4 shows, liberals are significantly more likely to support open housing than conservatives.

Liberals are significantly more likely than conservatives to support open housing, so formulated. But, of course, part of the point of public argument is precisely to move people from one side of an issue to the other by invoking competing values. What we should aim to understand is the politics of issues when they are put into play. Accordingly, in the second experimental condition, the competing consideration of property values was invoked.

> Some people believe that homeowners should be free to decide for themselves who to sell their house to, even if they prefer not to sell it to blacks. For example, some people might say it isn't that they don't want to sell to blacks; it's just that they don't want to be told what to do with their own property. In other words, they feel that because it's their property, they should have the right to sell to anyone they want to.

> How do you feel about this? Do you think homeowners should be able to decide for themselves who to sell their houses to, even if they prefer not to sell to blacks, or do you think homeowners should not be allowed to refuse to sell to someone because of their race or color?

Notice the contrast between the middle panel of table 8.4, which shows the politics of open housing when the issue is put into play by

TABLE 8.4   The Competing Values Experiment, by Education and Ideology

(A) OPEN HOUSING CONDITION

	Ideological Orientation		
	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
High school	67%	45%	45%
Some college	61%	51%	39%
College plus	67%	60%	57%
N	91	175	154

(B) PROPERTY VALUES CONDITION

	Ideological Orientation		
	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
High school	26%	17%	15%
Some college	48%	49%	31%
College plus	62%	31%	30%
N	102	156	141

(C) EQUAL TREATMENT CONDITION

	Ideological Orientation		
	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
High school	48%	37%	27%
Some college	32%	26%	30%
College plus	74%	31%	16%
N	79	108	150

Source: 1991 Race and Politics Study.

raising the competing value of property rights, and the top panel, which shows division over the issue in an artificially neutral condition. Support plummets. When open housing is considered in isolation from other considerations, a slight majority favors it; when the competing value of property rights is invoked, less than one-third do. As instructively, though support for open housing falls precipitously when the value of property rights is invoked, it does not fall equally everywhere. Liberalism as a political outlook helps immunize citizens against the appeal of competing values—provided, that is, that they have the awareness and intellectual training to appreciate what liberalism requires of them. And if they do, they are as likely to support open housing when the issue is brought into play as when they confront it on its own.

In the third experimental condition, we called attention to the role that government should play in assuring equal treatment.

> Some people believe that the government should make an active effort to see that blacks can live anywhere they choose, including white neighborhoods. Others believe that this is not the government's business and it should stay out of this.

> How do you feel? Is this an area the government should stay out of or should the government make an active effort to see that blacks can live anywhere they can afford to—including white neighborhoods?

We did this deliberately in order to provide a condition in which liberals would have an opportunity to respond to an appeal from their side of the aisle. The results, set out in the bottom panel of table 8.4, could not have been farther from our expectations. The idea that blacks should be able to live where they wished was no more popular in the third condition than in the second. Moreover, essentially the same pattern of defection (contrasted with the neutral condition) is evident, with only liberals, provided they are well enough educated to appreciate what liberalism requires of them, maintaining support for equal opportunity for blacks to live where they wish.

It is precisely in the upsetting of our expectations that a lesson deeper than the one we had anticipated is to be drawn. In designing the Competing Values Experiment, we had supposed the second and third conditions were collectively symmetrical—one intended to appeal to the right, the other to the left. But the politics of the issue turns out the same regardless of which is put into play: one-sided in opposition to equal opportunity in housing. There is, this suggests, something to be said for mapping the ecology of issue arguments.

An issue like open housing, as it seems to us in retrospect, may be distinguished by the asymmetry of accessible arguments. It is not that the positions taken in a neutral condition are a sham. They reflect, within the usual margin of error, the response that people believe correct to the problem posed to them. In the hurly-burly of real politics, however, their attention is called to a welter of competing arguments and counterarguments. But just because arguments may be found on both sides of an issue, it does not follow that they are equally distributed on both sides. On the contrary, open housing seems to be a specimen example of an issue of race for which the distribution of arguments is skewed.

We invoke the notion of an ecology of issue arguments in order to

underline the need to take account of the rhetorical environments of issues. They, quite as much as the preferences of individuals, are an integral part of the politics of race. Some issues of race may have a distribution of arguments favoring proponents of government assistance, or at any rate not handicapping them. The issue of open housing, however, is not one of these. Opponents have more, or at any rate more readily accessible, arguments to invoke than proponents. And the one-sided politics of the issue—when it actually comes into play—is a consequence.

DISSENSUS AND CONSENSUS

Research on racial politics has been, to an unusual and a regrettable degree, adversarial. The issues, to be sure, are complex and emotionally charged, but the rhetoric has been extreme even so. Recognizing that offense has been given on all sides, it sometimes seems as if people are turning somersaults in order to disagree. Lawrence Bobo, for example, claims that our view is without evidentiary support and should be laid "to rest with finality" (this volume, p. 163). This seems a little extreme, not least because Bobo himself has offered support for our views at many points[16] and even those who disagree with some of our views acknowledge they have received enough support to be part of the mainstream view (Kinder and Sanders 1996, 269 ff). We have a sense of Bobo straining after a conclusion.[17] Then again, Sidanius and his colleagues charge us with not only "fundamentally misunderstanding the dynamics of race relations in America, but also . . . helping to actually *mask* these dynamics" (Sidanius et al. this volume, p. 232, emphasis in original). Race as a subject of research is obviously a thorny thicket, but although some of the thorns are genuine, others seem synthetic, fabricated for the purpose of turning differences of opinion over evidence into differences of opinion over politics.

For our part, we propose to review the competing perspectives in an effort to point to emerging areas of agreement. Agreement on each point, needless to say, is far from complete, and the parties in agreement shift from point to point. Our list, moreover, is illustrative, not exhaustive, and we apologize in advance if, in order to locate some points of consensus, we have read the views of others expansively rather than narrowly. We have striven, when criticizing other perspectives—and our own—to do so with an eye to pinpointing questions future research should address. No doubt we have not gotten the balance of things altogether right, but we do want to emphasize that our

review of what is being done and how it is being done has left us with a conviction that progress is being made, the gnashing of teeth and the rending of veils notwithstanding.

Proceeding from the more specific to the more abstract, we start with the role of values.

THE ROLE OF VALUES IN SHAPING PUBLIC OPINION ON ISSUES OF RACE

There seems to be convergence on two points in particular. The first has to do with agreement on the relevance of values bearing on the broadly political issue of what government ought to do in behalf of those who are poor, particularly those who are economically disadvantaged or who historically have been disadvantaged by discrimination. We read Sears, Sidanius, and Kinder as concurring in this, as obviously, given our politics-oriented perspective, do we.

This agreement admittedly carries us only a modest distance. The value of equality surely is bound up with this complex of beliefs as to what government should and should not do in behalf of the disadvantaged. But it is not the whole of it, and as Sears's and Bobo's chapters in this volume make plain, the meaning of equality and its measurement are far from agreed. In this respect, Sidanius's chapter conveys an unfortunately close-cropped conception of equality, presupposing that it presents itself under only one description. It would seem preferable to be guided by Douglas Rae's (1981) classic analysis, which drove home the fundamental truth that not only does equality inevitably clash with competing values, such as liberty, but also competing conceptions of equality itself inescapably come into conflict with one another.[18]

Acknowledging these issues, there nonetheless seems to be broad agreement on an important point. Simply put, a significant part of the explanation over why Americans disagree about the politics of race is that they disagree about the politics of equality. And without wishing to nag a theme, once one acknowledges the central role of equality in the politics of race, one acknowledges in the bargain the continuity between racial politics and the larger politics of social welfare, which has been a defining feature of the American party system certainly since the New Deal. In saying this, we are far from denying that racial politics has a distinctive component. But we are contending that some of its deepest and most enduring cleavages are defined by the clash between competing conceptions of the obligations of government and the responsibilities of citizens.

The second point of agreement is that whatever values are centrally involved, individualism as standardly conceived is not one of them. We read Sidanius, Bobo, and even (on occasion) Sears (see, e.g., Sears 1988) as agreeing on this,[19] and we obviously concur. We should like, however, to make this point in a nonpartisan way. Kinder and Sears obviously continue to believe that individualism is integrally implicated in the politics of race. All that we should like to remark is that what they mean by and take to be a sign of individualism is equally obviously not what others mean by it, and the burden is, therefore, on them to establish by evidence that their usage is warranted. It does seem to us that any fair reading of Sears's and Kinder's chapters will conclude that they have not yet met this burden.

The liberal understanding of race, first formulated by Gunnar Myrdal (1944), stood on the premise that the strongest weapon against racial discrimination and inequality was the American Creed. Sears and Kinder have aimed to stand the liberal understanding on its head. It is their claim that, so far from racism being at odds with American ideals, it is inspired by "the finest and proudest of traditional American values" (Sears 1988, 54). If they are right, rather than looking to the American Creed for support in the effort to overcome racial inequality, it is the very values at the heart of the American experience that must be either transformed or transcended. In order for their revisionist claim to be right, it must be the case that these values actually are a wellspring for racism, new or old. But there is now agreement, by them as well as by everyone else, on the pillars of the American Creed. On the one side, individualism as it has customarily been understood and assessed is not integrally related to racism, while, on the other, inegalitarianism is deeply implicated. Since it is equality, not elitism, that is a defining element of the American Creed and since political toleration is a source of racial tolerance (for supporting evidence, see Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock 1991, chap. 7), we think the liberal understanding of race better grounded than the revisionist.

THE AUTONOMOUS ROLE OF RACIAL PREJUDICE IN SHAPING PUBLIC OPINION ON ISSUES OF RACE

On every account, racial prejudice still colors the thinking of many white Americans about the responsibility of government to assist black Americans. But, considered as a factor operating in its own right, there is a sharp difference of opinion over the extent of its continuing power. We read all participants to the debate, with one very important exception, as agreeing that racial prejudice is no longer the paramount fac-

tor dominating the positions that white Americans take on issues of race. Sidanius and his colleagues make this point here as elsewhere (see Sidanius et al. this volume, p. 227). Bobo does the same, also here as elsewhere (see Bobo this volume, tab. 5.2, model 4). And we have done the same (Sniderman and Piazza 1993; Sniderman and Carmines 1997a). It is perhaps worth noting that this conclusion follows from analyses using a number of measures of prejudice—including feeling thermometers and negative stereotype indices calculated both absolutely and relatively—and drawing on a large variety of survey sources—including the NES surveys, the GSS, and the National Race and Politics Survey.

The one exception, of course, is the symbolic racism researchers. It is the distinctive contention of the new racism researchers that racism is the paramount factor defining the choices that white Americans make about matters of race. They have nailed their flag to this mast, asserting that racism is "the primary ingredient in white opinion on racial affairs" (Kinder and Sanders 1996, 301) and charging that those who suggest otherwise "participate in the demotion of prejudice as an explanation for political conflict" (p. 271) and are guilty of "whitewashing racism" (p. 269). Obviously, we do not agree, but our aim here is not to register our disagreement, but to highlight its basis. Everything hinges on the symbolic racism researchers' unique measure of racism. No other measure of racism—whether it makes use of indirect forms of assessment stereotypes or feeling thermometers (scored relatively or absolutely) or is conceived as affective, aversive, ambivalent, or stereotypical or in any other way—has even a remotely comparable power to predict the racial policy preferences of white Americans. The question, then, is why the connection between their unique measure of racism and measures of racial policy preferences is uniquely close. They would maintain that the closeness of the connection demonstrates the continuing power of racism. We strongly believe that it is instead a warning flag. We cannot see that it carries understanding very far to explain opposition to welfare for blacks in terms of a belief that those on welfare "can get along without it if they tried" (Kinder and Sanders 1996, 107, tab. 5.1). An analogy we think is apt is purporting to explain the vote for a presidential candidate on the basis of a belief that he is the better person for the job. What is supposed to be doing the job of explanation seems, to our eyes, to be difficult to distinguish from what it is supposed to be explaining. We leave this question to future research.

THE ROLE OF GROUP INTERESTS

Two of the contributors to this volume, Sidanius and Bobo, have argued that the positions of white Americans reflect in part group interests. We should like to explain, first, why the argument of Sidanius, because it is operationally more developed, is empirically vulnerable, while that of Bobo, precisely because it is underidentified, is protected against empirical assessment. Then, since group interests seem to us part of a rounded account of racial politics, we want to say a word about the logical shape these interests must take.

To begin with the first point, Sidanius does what Bobo fails to do—advance a direct indicator of whether, when a difference between the issue positions of two groups is observed, the reason for the difference is group interest. That, after all, is the job of the social dominance measure—to assess the strength of the desire of some to enjoy the benefits of dominance over others. Bobo, by contrast, takes the fact that a difference remains in the positions of the two groups after a number of plausibly relevant factors are taken into account to be his measure of the impact of group interest. Sidanius's procedure, of course, is superior because it allows his claims to be falsifiable. By way of supporting his conception that his measure of social dominance measures what it is supposed to measure, Sidanius presents evidence showing roughly that the more dominant the social position of a group, the higher its score on the social dominance measure.[20] This carries his argument forward, but not, however, very far. On exactly the same logic, it should be the case that the more dominant the social position of individuals within the socially dominant group is, the higher their scores on the social dominance measure should be. For if it is true that whites on average are better off than blacks, it also is true that there is a great range of variation in dominance among whites. This is true both when comparing individuals with one another and when comparing one class with another. It follows, if Sidanius's account is correct, that (taken as individuals or as groups) the better off and better educated whites are, the higher their scores on the social dominance measure will be. We lack the data to decide ourselves the validity of this prediction, but it will take braver people than we to bet, as Sidanius must, that the middle class (or the well-educated) will score higher on his measure of social dominance than the underclass (or the poorly educated). It is harder, just because Bobo lacks a direct indicator, to test the strength of his particular conception of a group interest hypothesis. A more rigorous treatment seems preferable, not least be-

cause this way of proceeding is particularly vulnerable to oscillations of semantic characterization, with Bobo referring at one point to "the powerfully robust racial difference in opinion that separates the views of blacks and of Latinos from those of whites" and yet at another remarking on "quite real, but muted racial differences" (see Bobo, pp. 160 and 149, respectively).

Taking the two together, the way in which both Bobo and Sidanius conceive of a group interest analysis has an odd logical shape and seems frankly preliminary. Consider their odd logical shape first. How do differences in group position play into the politics of affirmative action? According to Bobo, "[M]uch of the white opposition to affirmative action springs from a desire to maintain a privileged position in the American racial hierarchy" (p. 145), or as he also puts it, whites oppose affirmative action "because they perceive blacks as competitive threats for valued social resources, status, and privileges" (pp. 142–43). Sidanius sees the matter the same way, asserting that "one's commitment to equality is likely to be related to the social status of one's group, with members of [higher status] groups being more resistant to the redistribution of resources and less likely to endorse principles of equality" (Sidanius, p. 196). Both their formulations are, it would appear as a matter of principle, asymmetrical. It is whites who do the resisting, in an effort to hold onto what they have, not blacks or Hispanics who do the striving, in an effort to see that they are more fairly treated and better off, though the one matches the facts as well as the other. It has puzzled us why both Bobo and Sidanius have favored an asymmetrical formulation, accenting only the resisting of whites and passing over the striving of minorities. Treating minorities as passive must lead analytically to an overestimate of the opposition of whites and normatively to a slighting of the agency of the minorities.[21] Searching for an answer, we have found a clue in the (to us, odd) way that they characterize our approach. We are, Bobo declares, proponents of the principled objection hypothesis. This is an eccentrically truncated characterization. In our view, one of the principal factors shaping Americans' positions on issues of race is their political values and ideology, and this, consistent with ordinary usage, is a way of claiming *both* that those who are broadly conservative will favor a narrower view of the obligations of government to the less-well-off *and* that those who are broadly liberal will favor a more expansive one (for the record, we should also note that the reasoning behind the use of the term "principled" altogether eludes us). We think it essential to recognize also the role of liberalism, and the only reason for their restricting

attention to conservativism, as best we can see, is an unacknowledged assumption in their argument: namely, that all that needs to be explained is opposition to affirmative action because in the absence of ill-will or self-interest people would naturally support it. Perhaps we may say that a justification for treating support for affirmative action as the default condition is not obvious.

The presentations of both Bobo and Sidanius also strike us as frankly preliminary and, by comparison with earlier work, curiously hollowed out.[22] Speaking in the spirit of people who believe that this line of work is promising, we want to say that it probably is time to go beyond observing that the political orientations of groups differ even after taking account of plausibly relevant factors. It would certainly be helpful to develop direct indicators of the clash of group interests, to examine some of the diverse forms (e.g., economic versus cultural) that these clashes may take, and to specify some of the conditions under which group interests play a more important, or a less important, role as an explanatory factor.

There is a final point about the limits of group interests as a basis for understanding the dynamics of racial politics. Recognizing that groups may have different interests, concentrating on the cleavage between blacks and whites misses the heart of the politics of race. There is a political contest over racial policy because white Americans themselves differ as to what should be done. If the cleavage over racial politics were fundamentally racial, it would not be possible to assemble a winning majority in behalf of policies to assist blacks. On the contrary, just so far as a coalition is formed across racial lines, racial policies are effectively contestable. The nub of the analytic problem, it follows, is to understand why some whites favor and others oppose an array of different policies to assist blacks, and if we read rightly the evidence, particularly that of Sears and Kinder (see, e.g., Kinder and Sears 1981), the role of interests in accounting for differences among whites is a comparatively minor one.

ISSUE PLURALISM

In his seminal work on mass belief systems, Philip Converse (1964) crystallized the hypothesis of issue commonality. On their face, he acknowledged, racial policies appeared diverse, some dealing with matters of education, others with the assurance of equal treatment under the law, and still others with employment or subsidies for housing and food. But this appearance of diversity, he suggested, was misleading. In the minds of white Americans, these different issues boiled down

to different ways of asking the same question—how do you feel about black Americans? Just so far as white Americans disliked them, they would oppose policies designed to assist blacks across the board. There are common elements to government policies to assist blacks and accordingly an element of commonality in the responses of citizens to them. In order to capture the lines of political division, however, and no less important, the sources underlying them, there is increasing evidence of the need to attend to the diversity of racial politics.

To call attention to the variety of racial politics, we introduced the concept of issue pluralism (see Sniderman et al. 1993). It has seemed to us for a while that the Conversian perspective yields a misleadingly homogenized impression of the variety of clashes over racial policy, as though the profound differences in what the government actually proposes to do across the range of racial policies really are of no account to citizens. By contrast, we think that the actual terms of policy choice may matter in at least three distinct ways: (1) in the political balance of support and opposition for government programs, (2) in the comparative balance of underlying factors encouraging support or opposition, and (3) in the relative pliability or fixity of the positions that citizens take (for supporting evidence on all three aspects, see Sniderman and Piazza 1993).

The concept of issue pluralism is intended to underline the hypothesis that the actual terms of the choices that citizens are asked to make have something to do with the process by which they make these choices. The hypothesis, if not the term, has gained general acceptance.

To point to the most striking example, the issue of affirmative action has itself become nearly a poster issue for the notion of issue pluralism. In one of our studies, we carried out the Two Meaning Experiment, demonstrating the profoundly different reactions of white Americans depending on whether the issue of affirmative action is cast in terms of giving preferential treatment or of making an extra effort to assure equal treatment (Sniderman and Carmines 1997a, 23–27), Schuman et al. report similar results from a similar experiment (1997, 297–98), and the findings from the NES surveys solidly support the results of both experiments.

To say that a point is widely agreed on is not to say it is entirely uncontested. The whole premise of Bobo's chapter in this very volume is that it is sensible to speak of affirmative action without qualification. This difference in approach is less troubling than it may at first seem

because Bobo's position is self-contradictory. Here he writes as though it is appropriate to treat affirmative action without distinguishing kinds of affirmative action; but elsewhere he and Schuman et al. (1997, 298) declare that "[w]hen speaking of support for 'affirmative action,' it is always important to specify exactly what kind of affirmative action policy is intended." More broadly, a belief—sometimes justified, sometimes not—that preferential treatment or racial quotas are in play transforms the clash over affirmative action—the evidence for this now is indisputable. And it equally is indisputable that there is a world of difference politically between an issue in which more than eight in every ten whites line up on the side of assistance for blacks and one in which one out of every two—or more—favor help for blacks. What conceivably is to be gained analytically by pretending that affirmative action is a foam rubber notion, embracing virtually any and all policies—from job-training programs to explicit quota systems for admission to law schools—intended to assist blacks (in addition to Bobo this volume, see Steeh and Krysan 1996)? Without meaning to be unkind, to overlook the rancor and turmoil that distinctively surround the politics of affirmative action—understood to involve preferential treatment or racial quotas—is to be politically tone-deaf.

In trying to account for why citizens may or may not support a proposal for government action, it is, we think, necessary to take account of what they actually are being asked to support. Whatever your personal view of the merits of different racial policies, in a democratic society it should be heartening that it makes a difference to citizens what they are specifically asked to approve in the way of government action. On the evidence at hand, it seems to us undeniable that the actual nature of the policy dealing with race—and not merely the fact that it deals with race—can affect the level of support for it, the sources of support, and, finally, the relative fixity (or pliability) of the positions that citizens take. Unchecked, however, the concept of issue pluralism turns into an argument that the politics of every issue is distinctive, idiosyncratic. But there is a structure to the politics of race, and to pick out its pattern of organization there is increasing agreement that a theory of the politics of race requires a hypothesis of multiple agendas.

THE POLICY AGENDA HYPOTHESIS

What is a useful way to think about linkages across racial policy issues? Just so far as the process of citizen choice is a function of the actual terms of choice, it is natural to think in terms of issue agendas. Issues

so conceived fall on a common agenda just so far as the alternatives they pose—what government proposes to do and how it proposes to go about doing it—are similar.

More specifically, we proposed that three distinguishable agendas comprise the contemporary politics of race—the social welfare agenda, the race-conscious agenda, and the equal treatment agenda (see Sniderman and Piazza 1993). There is nothing magic about the number three, and the structure of racial politics is not fixed forever. On the contrary, so far as it is defined by the actual substance of public policy, it surely will change over time. But given the will to disagree about racial politics, the agreement achieved on the agenda structure of the politics of race, across data analysts and data sets, is impressive. Drawing on the NES surveys, Kinder and Sanders present a three-factor description of racial issues, corroborating not merely the general shape, but also the specific details of our triple agenda hypothesis. And drawing on the GSS in addition to the NES surveys, Schuman and his colleagues, in the revised version of their work, now agree with our suggestion of a triple agenda.[23]

We do not wish to suggest that the consensus is complete. Sidanius and his colleagues, for example, strongly dissent (see pp. 228–29), and there certainly are versions of the symbolic racism argument that can be read as being at odds with the idea of multiple agendas. But there seems to our eyes to be an encouraging measure of agreement not only that it is useful, in order to take cognizance of the diversity of racial politics, to recognize that there are multiple agendas, but also that it is helpful, in order to identify the distinctive dynamics of contemporary racial politics, to think in terms of three distinguishable agendas.

In speaking of the triple-agenda hypothesis as analytically useful, we do not mean merely that it is taxonomically tidy. The right test of classification schemes is whether, if they are imposed, the causes of the behavior under examination or its consequences are illuminated. Our core proposition is that the process of choice is a function in part of the terms of choice. We want to illustrate accordingly how the idea of multiple agendas helps expose the play of causal factors.

We take as our first example the contingency of the role of racial prejudice. If it is true that the structure of choice defines the relevance of explanatory factors for the process of choice, then the all-too-familiar debate over whether the impact of prejudice in shaping the political thinking of white Americans continues to be large is sterile. On the one side, racial prejudice—assessed by any conventional

method—is a minor factor driving opposition to affirmative action—understood to entail either preferential treatment or racial quotas—while there is an accumulation of evidence that it is a more powerful force in fueling opposition to welfare.[24] The argument here is general, by no means peculiar to prejudice. An instructively parallel example, highlighting the interplay of policy agendas and values as explanatory factors, has been offered by Kinder and Sanders. Focusing on egalitarianism, they underline the contingency of its impact. On the one side, equality looms large for issues on the equal treatment agenda, while it "simply disappears from public opinion" for issues on the race-conscious agenda (Kinder and Sanders 1996, 159).

The contingency of causal factors conditional on the terms of choice seems to us an analytic theme emerging with increasing clarity and potentially of uncommon importance in developing a genuinely insightful account of political reasoning, and not only about issues of race.

DYNAMICS OF REASONING ABOUT RACIAL POLICY

In suggesting that the contemporary argument over race is, at its core, a political argument, we are advancing three ideas for consideration. The first is that the contours of the argument over racial policies are given their fundamental shape by the institutions of the party system and the ideological contours of the larger American political landscape. The second is that, so far as the actual terms of choice shape the process of political choice for citizens, there is not simply one issue of race appearing in different guises. There are different issues, and it is a fundamental mistake to suppose that the politics of affirmative action, for example, and the politics of social welfare are interchangeable. The third is that the contemporary debate over race is very much a matter of political argument. It is this third idea that we wish to consider.

Even a few years ago the nearly exclusive concern in the politics of race was with standing decisions on racial policy. These standing decisions may be a product of early socialization, as Sears and Kinder and their colleagues claimed, or of the positions of groups in society, as Bobo and Sidanius and their colleagues claimed, or of the political orientations of citizens, as we and our colleagues claimed. The point that we wish to underline is that all of these accounts, ours as much as anyone's, so far as they gave an account of the positions that citizens took on matters of race, concentrated on the fixed, the long-term, the

seemingly immutable. By contrast, in calling attention to the role of political argumentation, we mean to focus attention on the fact that there is an inherent contingency to the politics of race.

To insist on the inherent contingency of the politics of race is not to deny that long-term factors are at work. On the contrary, one of the aims of our analysis of political arguments has been to show that citizens respond to them in the light of their deeper-lying political orientations. What we do believe our experiments on political argument have helped to expose is the sense in which slack is a constitutive feature of the politics of race. Citizens can take quite different positions on issues of race depending on which arguments are made to them—and how ably; indeed, this is so much so that the political balance can be swung from one side of the issue to another by argument and leadership (see Sniderman and Carmines 1997a, chap. 4).

A FINAL COMMENT ON FATALISM

It is a reproach, from time to time, that in arriving at a conclusion that racism no longer plays a paramount role in molding the political thinking of white Americans about issues of race we are undercutting the campaign to achieve, finally and meaningfully, racial equality. For our part, we have always replied that our aim has been to understand things as they are, however they in fact are. But insofar as there is a connection between scholarship and politics, we would like to close with one observation.

The other approaches, by neglecting politics, wind up as arguments for fatalism. This is easiest to see in the social dominance perspective. It consists in a claim that in every society subordinate groups are oppressed by superordinate ones. The argument, so far as we can make out, is unclear on whether the bases for inequality—apart from gender (Sidanius and Pratto refer to "the iron law of andrancy" [1993a, 174])—are the same in every society or not; on whether there is one or more superordinate groups; on the conditions under which inequality tends to be maximized or minimized. Instead, the social dominance theory consists in the assertion that some groups are subordinate to others in every society, modern, medieval, or ancient, capitalist or communist, democratic or dictatorial. It is not obvious what to do with a social science cast in such unconditional terms—putatively true always and everywhere—except to observe that, if it is true, it implies that the effort to combat inequality is futile. We accept that Sidanius

and his colleagues wish inequality to be reduced. Our point is that they cannot get out of their theory an account of the conditions or mechanisms of change.

Traveling on a different track, the symbolic racism argument arrives at a similar destination. Sears and Kinder claim that racism regained its dominance after the mid-1960s. Consider the implications of this claim. After World War II, America underwent a series of profound transformations. The economic boom brought unprecedented prosperity. The expansion of the school system at all levels carried with it an unparalleled revolution of educational opportunity, and all that follows in its train for the value of tolerance, political, religious, and racial; the ascension of the new mass media; the urbanization of America; the mobility, geographical and social, of the postwar years; and, of course, the extraordinary drama of the civil rights movement. If all of these together produced only a temporary loosening of the hold of racism, then the conclusion that follows is that no degree of change conceivable in a democratic society can break its hold. By contrast, in our studies (see Sniderman and Carmines 1997a, chap. 4), we see evidence that a winning coalition can be assembled in behalf of policies to assist those who are poor, very much including blacks, by taking advantage of arguments that appeal to liberal political values that reach beyond race. It is not the least irony of the symbolic racism approach that, by insisting on the seemingly ineradicable domination of racism, it may squelch the very possibility of combating racial inequality and intolerance.

The fatalism bred into the bones of the social dominance and the symbolic racism arguments follows from a limit common to both. Neither has a way, drawing on its own resources, to give an account of the dynamics of racial politics. This, we would suggest, is a contribution that a political theory of the politics of race is best positioned to make.

APPENDIX: TABLE 8.1 COMPONENTS

DEPENDENT VARIABLE

The *symbolic racism* measure was constructed following Kinder and Sanders (1996). This index consists of six NES variables in 1986 (V565–V568, V579, V580) and four NES variables in 1992 (V6126–V6129). See figure 8.1 for the question wording. The index was rescaled 0–1, with 1 indicating high symbolic racism.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Antiblack affect (1986 NES only) refers to the respondent's rating of blacks on a feeling thermometer (V149), rescaled 0–1, with 1 as least favorable feelings. The *GSS measure of prejudice* (1992 NES only) is an index of three questions ("Would you rate blacks as hard working or lazy?" "As unintelligent or intelligent?" "As violent or peaceful?"). These were rescaled 0–1, with 1 as most prejudiced.

Individualism (1986 NES only) is the standard six-variable Feldman index (V508–V513). Respondents were asked to agree or disagree on a five-point scale with the following statements: "People who don't get ahead have only themselves to blame"; "Hard work offers little guarantee of success"; "If people work hard they usually get what they want"; "Most people who don't get ahead probably work as hard as those who do"; "Anyone willing to work hard has good chance of succeeding"; "Even if people try hard they often cannot reach their goals." The index was rescaled 0–1, with 1 indicating most individualistic.