Chapter 1

Introduction: Racial Inequality Without Racism

> The . . . great wars of this country have been fought for the ideals of liberty and equality. . . . [Now] the protection of the two oceans is gone forever . . . there is no way back. America is irredeemably in world politics. . . . [But] the treatment of the Negro is America's greatest and most conspicuous scandal. . . . America feels itself to be humanity in miniature. When in this crucial time the international leadership passes to America, the great reason for hope is that this country has a national experience of uniting racial and cultural diversities and a national theory, if not a consistent practice, of freedom and equality. . . .
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> People want to be rational, and they want to feel that they are good and righteous. They want to have the society they live in, and their behavior in this society, explained and justified to their conscience.
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> —Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma* (1944, 997, 1018–19, 20, 21, 1003)

WHEN Gunnar Myrdal wrote those words in the early 1940s, the United States was in the midst of World War II and the outcome was not yet known.[1] One of the central themes of Myrdal's famous book *An American Dilemma* (1944) was that if the United States emerged successfully from the war, it would not be able to assume a credible leadership position in world politics if it did not resolve the problem posed by American racial inequality. Myrdal argued that racial inequality caused "trouble" for white Americans, because it was "something difficult to settle and equally difficult to leave alone," despite the efforts of most whites to remove themselves from it or to suppress attention to it (Myrdal 1944, lxxvii). In Myrdal's analysis, racial inequality caused a moral dilemma for white Americans because the American creed of "liberty, equality, justice, and fair opportunity" for all was incompatible with the reality of racial inequality (lxxx). As such, he ar-

gued, it was becoming increasingly difficult for whites to avoid the issue, both because the circumstances that were emerging during World War II (and would intensify in its aftermath) made it politically costly on the international stage for the United States to allow such stark racial oppression at home and because political activists were advocating for change and bringing the issue to the fore on the domestic front (1004–10, 15–21). Myrdal argued that whites were conflicted within themselves about racial inequality and that this internal conflict, combined with the broader social and political conflict wrought by national and international circumstances, would ultimately lead to dramatic social change as a result of "political decision and public regulation," which he called "social engineering" (1022–24). He did not, however, think this would occur automatically or easily.

Although *An American Dilemma* was published in 1944, the introduction and conclusion to Myrdal's book sound amazingly contemporary and prescient. Now, as was true then, few subjects generate as much conflict in the U.S. political environment as race relations. Despite all that has transpired since the book was published, we still do not have a good understanding of racial inequality in the United States. As Myrdal (1944, 27) said:

> Wandering around the stacks of a good American library, one is amazed at the huge amount of printed material on the Negro problem. A really complete bibliography would run up to several hundred thousand titles. Nobody has ever mastered this material exhaustively, and probably nobody ever will. The intellectual energy spent on the Negro problem in America should, if concentrated in a single direction, have moved mountains.[2]

Depending on how one looks at the civil rights movement, one might claim that mountains *have* been moved. Racial inequality still exists, however, and it remains a troubling issue in the American psyche and political landscape. I believe that to make progress in understanding the reasons why and explain why the American dilemma that Myrdal identified did not lead to the social change that he envisioned, one has to look in a new way at race relations and racial inequality. I hope to do that in this book by explaining what I call the "American non-dilemma": why do white Americans not seem to experience ongoing racial inequality as the kind of moral dilemma that Myrdal anticipated? Troubled though they may be by issues of race, most white Americans are not riven by moral guilt about racial inequality. As Jennifer Hochschild (1995, 55–71) notes, most whites do not "understand what the fuss is about." This book explains why white Americans do not view racial inequality as a moral dilemma—indeed, why whites never think much about race at all.

Racial issues come into play for many whites, however, when they try to protect themselves from the uncertainties of the job market. In their efforts to hoard opportunities and to draw on social resources to get an inside edge in obtaining good jobs, whites have often confronted the tension between labor rights (broadly defined) and civil rights. I am using the term "labor rights" here to refer to the efforts by whites to protect themselves from the competition of the labor market—for example, by taking wages out of competition and hoarding job opportunities through the exchange of social capital. Such labor rights often conflict with the goals of the civil rights agenda to open up to blacks and other minorities those jobs that had been previously available primarily to whites. As such, most whites do not see their interests as being aligned with those of blacks (or other minorities), and there is often conflict among groups of whites who are in different economic circumstances and on different sides of the political spectrum about policies intended to open up job opportunities to blacks and other minorities. By design, civil rights policies are intended to affect the distribution of opportunities available to whites and blacks. Thus, as the majority among voters, whites are primary players in the conflict over such civil rights policies.

Racial Inequality Without Racism

One of the main arguments of this book is that we have been framing racial issues in ways that keep us from understanding what creates and reproduces racial inequality. Specifically, racial inequality is most often assumed to be the result of racism or discrimination, and providing equal opportunity within a context of individual effort and achievement has been offered as the primary solution to racial problems. I argue, instead, that framing racial issues through a lens of racism, equal opportunity, and individualism contributes to the inability of most whites to see the nature of their own participation in the creation and reproduction of racial inequality. Whites assume that other people are racists, but not them. They assume that equal opportunity embodies fairness, but they live lives of advantage—that is, of unequal opportunity. And their commitment to individualist explanations for inequality ignores the group-based nature of their search for advantage and the extent of their efforts to use social resources, including economic, social, and cultural capital, to gain advantage. Table 1.1 summarizes the dynamics that enable racial inequality to be reproduced without racism.

Another main objective of the book is to go beyond the issue of white racial attitudes to address Myrdal's contention that white engagement in political action could ameliorate the condition of blacks and create greater racial equality. Because I argue that there is an American non-dilemma and that whites do not feel especially guilty about or responsi-

Table 1.1 The Three-Part Process by Which Racial Inequality Is Reproduced Without Racism

White Explanations for Racial Inequality	Whites' Views of Themselves	Hidden Dynamics Behind the Reproduction of Racial Inequality
Prejudiced (racist) people	Committed to color-blindness	Segregated neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces
Discrimination (by racist people)	Committed to equal opportunity	Lives of unequal opportunity or advantage
Lack of effort, responsibility, or hope among blacks	Belief in their own individual effort, hard work, and talent	Group basis of social, cultural, and financial resources that provide unearned advantages
Bottom line: The search for "racists" provides legitimacy or "cover" for the dynamics of power and makes possible the opportunity hoarding that enables whites to receive advantages or privileges without being racists.		

Source: Author's compilation.

ble for racial inequality, the nature of their political engagement is likely to be quite different from what Myrdal had hoped and anticipated. Racial issues have pervaded U.S. politics, even though, as Myrdal argued, many have tried to ignore them or suppress attention to them. Whites, however, were important participants in the civil rights movement, and they have continued to be important participants in post–civil rights politics. There is a gap, however, between principle and policy with regard to racial issues, and this gap contributes to an ongoing contest for white support in post–civil rights political campaigns. Each political party has endeavored to mobilize various groups of white voters, sometimes by using racially coded appeals in the guise of nonracial issues and sometimes by trying to change the subject so that the contest over race is not evident. Neither political party in the post–civil rights period has been successful in using explicitly racist appeals. Understanding these dynamics, and especially the interconnection between white racial attitudes and the role of various groups of whites in post–civil rights politics, should also help us understand the American non-dilemma.

The tension between what I am calling labor rights and civil rights can be seen in the well-documented gap between white acceptance of equal opportunity in principle but opposition to race-targeted policies, such as affirmative action, busing, and welfare, that are intended to enhance opportunities (Bobo et al. 2012). Although only a small percentage of whites now give prejudiced responses to survey questions, there continues to be a much larger percentage of whites who are opposed to the public policies that were enacted as part of the civil rights move-

ment to bring about greater equality between blacks and whites. Lawrence Bobo and his colleagues (2009) trace the profile of racial attitudes over time and find that, from the 1950s on, whites became more accepting of integration in principle and that, as early as 1972, support for integration on several dimensions was normative among whites. They also document, however, that there has never been strong white support for race-targeted policies such as affirmative action and there has been limited acceptance of government action to enact other policies on behalf of blacks. Howard Schuman and his colleagues (1997) call this the "principle-implementation gap," others the "principle-policy gap" (see, for example, Jackman and Muha 1984; Jackman 1994; Sears 1988b; Sears, Sidanius, and Bobo 2000).

Racism and Discrimination Versus Opportunity Hoarding and Social Capital

There are three widely discussed explanations for the principle-policy gap: (1) that whites are "really" racists, despite their nonprejudiced responses on surveys, but that racism has taken a new, more symbolic form; (2) that whites give lip service to equality but defend group dominance; or (3) that when whites reject policies such as affirmative action, they are simply reflecting the American political values of hard work and effort.[3] Theories of "symbolic racism" (also called "new racism," "modern racism," or "racial resentment") assume that whites' true attitudes are reflected in their opposition to actually doing something to end racial inequality rather than in their survey responses about prejudice. "Aversive racism," "everyday racism," "laissez-faire racism," and "color-blind racism" are similar concepts (Blumer 1958; Bobo 1999). All of these conceptions argue similarly that despite the attitudes that whites express on surveys about prejudice, they really hold racist views but either will not admit it, do not know it, or perhaps are fooling themselves.[4]

The social dominance explanation for white racial attitudes gives less attention to attitudinal or cognitive origins of antiblack views and instead argues that the structural relationships between whites and blacks (and other racial-ethnic minorities) are the source of racial inequality. Bobo, for example, argues that whites simply believe that they should hold positions of dominance in relationship to blacks (Blumer 1958; Bobo 1999). Sidanius and his colleagues argue that there is an attitudinal component, which they call a "social dominance orientation," associated with the structural relationships among groups (Pratto et al. 1994; Sidanius and Pratto 1999). In contrast to the new racism and social dominance explanations for the principle-policy gap, Paul Sniderman and his colleagues argue that it is not racism that is the source of opposition to race-targeted policies, but rather whites' belief that blacks violate key princi-

ples of American values about the appropriate role of government and the requirements for responsibility and effort on the part of individuals (Sniderman and Carmines 1996, 1997).

In contrast to each of these explanations for white racial attitudes, I argue that one of the most important privileges of being white in the United States is not having to be racist in order to enjoy racial advantage. Rather than racism or discrimination being the primary mechanisms by which racial inequality is reproduced, I argue that it is the acts of favoritism that whites show to each other (through opportunity hoarding and the exchange of social capital) that contribute most to continued racial inequality. Indeed, racial inequality in the post–civil rights period requires that whites not see themselves as racists. As Mary Jackman notes, long-term inequality between groups must be legitimated, and doing so requires that overt conflict be suppressed or hidden. In fact, Jackman argues, whites are able to gain privileges "without active participation" and "hidden from their view" (Jackman 1994, 137). In this conception, it is not in the interests of whites either cognitively or politically to call attention to the privileges they may receive. Whites therefore cannot be openly hostile toward blacks, nor call attention to the political, economic, or status privileges that whites enjoy, without raising questions that might undermine the legitimacy of the stratification system and, indeed, cause the type of moral dilemma that Myrdal assumed.

Thus, it is in the interests of whites not to have a clear picture of the degree of racial inequality and even to misunderstand or misrepresent the extent to which whites, as a group, are privileged. In other words, the basis of racial inequality is cognitively hidden even from whites themselves. Interestingly, Myrdal raised similar issues in the 1940s. He argued that the "remarkable lack of correct information about the Negroes and their living conditions" among whites allowed whites what he termed the "convenience of ignorance" (Myrdal 1944, 40). Charles Mills (1997) argues that the "racial contract" creates for whites an "epistemology of ignorance" that makes it difficult for them to understand their participation in the reproduction of racial inequality.

I argue in this book that it is the focus on racism itself that enables whites to remove themselves from the conversation about race. That is, the emphasis given to racism in popular culture, public policy, and the academic literature enables whites to believe that race is not about them. The nature of white privilege, however, is that most of the time whites do not have to succumb to personal prejudice or engage in negative actions toward racial minorities in order to enjoy the privileges of being white. Because whites have access to valuable community resources and get both preference and the benefit of the doubt in many areas of their lives, they can count on racial privilege without having to fight for it or even defend it much of the time. These privileges are partly built into social

institutions, but they also infuse whites' everyday interactions. These privileges not only constitute an invisible knapsack that whites carry around, filled with institutional social resources to use whenever necessary (McIntosh 1988), but also provide a cognitive experience of goodwill and affective preference that allows whites to feel confident, secure, and capable as they make decisions and encounter choices throughout their lives (Berger, Cohen, and Zelditch 1972; Brewer 1998; Hogg 2001; Jost and Elsbach 2001; Pettigrew 1979; Ridgeway 2001).

Whites thus attribute the problems of racial inequality to "those racists" (often defined in terms of prejudiced people who are still holding on to hostility toward blacks or other nonwhites). Most whites, however, believe themselves to be committed to color-blindness (that is, to the view that skin color does not or should not matter). They do not see themselves as racists or as prejudiced people. Thus, when problems of racial inequality are framed in terms of racism (whether new, old, or refashioned), whites can ignore the fact that most whites exchange favors with each other that provide an inside edge within the context of segregated communities, segregated schools and churches, and often segregated workplaces. Because racial inequality is defined in terms of racism (which most often is thought of in terms of intentional and personal prejudice), most whites can absolve themselves of any moral guilt about race.

Most whites conceive of racism as people who harbor ill will toward nonwhites doing bad things to them. As Linda Hamilton Krieger (1998) argues, this conception of discrimination is embedded in the way the civil rights laws have been written, and it is inherent in the meaning given to "racism" when we are told that whites at some fundamental level are "really" racist:

> The standard discrimination schema might be encapsulated as follows: discrimination occurs when a sexist, racist, or otherwise bigoted person makes decisions about members of a targeted group. Because of his negative feelings towards or beliefs about members of the disfavored group, the discriminator purposefully treats them unfairly. His negative feelings are likely to be expressed in racist or sexist comments. Even if the discriminator does not express these negative feelings, he knows of them and would admit them were he being honest. The kind of prejudice that leads to discrimination functions like a personality trait: it is something that exists inside the discriminator. It is relatively stable and expresses itself consistently over time and across different situations. (Krieger 1998, 1311)

To whites, "those racists" means others, not themselves. Using a framework of discrimination, most whites can examine their day-to-day experiences and feel confident that they have done nothing specifically harm-

ful to blacks (or other nonwhites). As long as whites can attribute the problems of race to "those racists" and exclude themselves from that category, then they can easily hold on to this conception of themselves and think of racial issues as something that is about others but not about them. Given this, there is no moral crisis that moves whites toward political action to change the status quo. Instead, whites in the United States in the post–civil rights period feel morally comfortable and justified with regard to racial issues. Myrdal (1944, 37) observed even in the 1940s that there was racial inequality without racism:

> When talking about the Negro problem, everybody—not only intellectual liberals—is thus anxious to locate race prejudice outside of himself. The impersonal "public opinion" or "community feelings" are held responsible. The whites practically never discuss the issue in terms of "I" or "we" but always in terms of "they."... One can go around for weeks talking to white people in all walks of life and constantly hear about [racism] ... yet seldom meeting a person who actually identifies himself with it.

Myrdal (1944, 1010) also believed that there was a principle-policy gap: "The social paradox in the North is exactly this, that almost everyone is against discrimination in general, but at the same time, almost everybody practices discrimination in his own personal affairs." Rather than framing this gap in terms of discrimination, however, I would rephrase Myrdal's statement in terms of the advantages that whites share with each other: "The social paradox in the United States is exactly this, that almost everyone says they support equal opportunity, but at the same time, almost everybody instead seeks unequal opportunity (that is, advantage) and relies on special favors for getting ahead—and almost everybody thinks they got ahead through individual effort." I argue that it is not discrimination that everyone practices in the post–civil rights period, but rather the hoarding of opportunities through the use of social capital and other social resources that whites share with each other (Tilly 1998). Whites seek out—and many of them find—ways to protect themselves from the increasing volatility of markets. They can do so, most of the time, without actively doing bad things to racial minorities. Instead, they do good things for each other, and the net result is the perpetuation of white privilege in an environment of racial liberalism. Because whites are better positioned as a group to avail themselves of social resources, they are able to benefit from racial inequality, even without racism. Further, because the processes by which whites help other whites are invisible or hidden from their view, whites feel no moral dilemma regarding their actions and fail to see how they might have contributed to the reproduction of racial inequality.

Equal Opportunity Versus Advantage

I also argue that the principle-policy gap is accompanied by a gap between a belief in equal opportunity as the primary solution to racial inequality and the lives of unequal opportunity enjoyed by most whites in the United States. That is, while most whites wholeheartedly affirm equal opportunity as a principle, they live lives of unequal opportunity—of advantage—to the extent that they can do so. Whites engage in both opportunity hoarding (passing along access to good jobs to their friends and family members) and the exchange of social, cultural, and financial capital among those in the family or community. Advantage might take the form of financial help from families and communities (for example, paying for college tuition or getting help with the purchase of a house), but it often takes the form of social capital such as help from networks of family, friends, and acquaintances in getting a job that pays a family wage (for example, vouching for someone, recommending a person for a job, providing valuable "inside" information about how to take tests or present oneself for the job, and, sometimes, actually hiring someone from one's network).

This does not, of course, mean that whites' actions and efforts are unnecessary because such privileges will always be available, no matter what. Indeed, for most people, including whites, there is a level of uncertainty about life outcomes that inherently requires them to strive to achieve and make their best effort. This is more the case for some than for others, and the gap between the lives of those with ready financial and social resources and those who live in resource-scarce environments is part of what makes some whites more determined than others to protect the boundaries of white privilege through conservative and increasingly hostile political behavior. But for most whites in the United States, there is usually a floor to their downward mobility and a number of paths they can take toward social stability and a "decent" life that will enable them to settle into a middle-class lifestyle by their midtwenties.

A paradox here—that nobody makes it on their own, but nobody makes it without their own effort either—provides a convenient explanation that makes it easy to forget the help one has received. As this paradox works itself out cognitively in the lives of people for whom social resources are available (for example, when they make the attribution error of attributing their success to their own efforts and talents rather than to the social context or circumstances in which they live), it results in self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-justification. What is surprising about this dynamic is not how many people rely on the use of social resources to "get ahead" in their lives, but how few of them recognize that social resources were their route to their success.

In my analysis, it is important to recognize that social resources are group-based, not individually based. There are ties that develop within communities, within residential neighborhoods, within school districts, through churches, among friends, and through other social connections, but because of the segregation of our communities and our places of employment, most social resources are passed from one person to another, within homogeneous groups, to people who are in a very real sense "like me." Importantly, advantage in this context is unearned. It does not accrue to those who demonstrate merit—many people gain access to advantages before they do so—but instead is the outcome of unequal opportunities that have been reserved for family members, friends, or acquaintances. These opportunities are passed along whether deserved or not and are often expropriated from companies that tout their commitment to being an "equal opportunity employer." This happens in all types of organizations, whether civil service, public-sector or private-sector, small or large. Opportunity hoarding and access to social capital provide their beneficiaries with an inside edge—the edge of whiteness.

Further, the social and financial resources upon which the whites in this study could draw came primarily from the accumulated resources of the generations before them. Because their parents, uncles or aunts, and friends and neighbors were able to protect themselves from the market through unionization, licensing, or tenure, these relatives and friends were able to accumulate wealth and pass it along to their children and friends (Conley 1999; Keister and Moller 2000; Oliver and Shapiro 1995). Most of the interviewees, however, thought of family resources as the result of their own hard work, effort, and motivation, not as the result of opportunity hoarding, insider access to jobs, and the consequent ability to accumulate family wealth. Previous generations of these interviewees' families had had access to jobs in unionized workplaces, in the public sector, or in small companies or large corporations that kept blacks out; to schools that excluded blacks; and to neighborhoods where blacks could not purchase homes. Nevertheless, whites in the study translated the privileges of exclusion manifested in the present as more a matter of personal character and morality than as the outcome of structural advantage.

It is certainly possible that whites would offer information, influence, or opportunity to blacks and other minorities, but most whites do not interact with minorities, attend school with them, work with them in similar kinds of jobs, or think of them when social exchanges take place. Nonwhites may endeavor to hoard opportunities or to exchange social capital among themselves, but their relatively less favorable structural positions in the economy make them less effective in doing so or make the effects of their efforts less stable. The social resources available to nonwhites are often less advantageous than those available to whites, the effects of using them are more likely to be interrupted or reversed,

and once interrupted these resources are harder to recapture (Falcon and Melendez 2001). Although ethnic enclaves may be thought to provide the same sorts of advantages for members of minority groups, it is illustrative of the larger point that these "enclaves" must be set apart in order for ethnic minorities to gain preference; moreover, many of the relationships within ethnic enclaves are more like exploitation than privilege (Portes 1998; Portes and Landolt 1996; Portes and Rumbaut 1996). These are often captured workforces with limited and far fewer options outside of such enclaves than the privileged workforces that gain benefits while keeping others out.

So, while everyone might do it if they could, whites in the United States have been able to maintain structural advantages and reproduce racial inequality in their favor by hoarding opportunities, exchanging social resources within their own communities and neighborhoods, and maintaining a legitimating myth of individualism and self-determination to describe these efforts that they themselves know to be at best only part of the story (Falcon and Melendez 2001; Kluegel and Smith 1986; Sidanius and Pratto 1999). Further, when whites provide social resources by helping people in their neighborhoods or their communities—that is, people who are like them—they do not think of these positive actions toward other whites as contributing to racial inequality. Instead, they simply think of themselves as good citizens. And they believe themselves to be committed to equal opportunity as the standard of fairness. Whites say that "everyone deserves a chance," that "no one should be discriminated against," and that "what's fair is that everyone has an equal opportunity to be hired," but that is not how they live their lives. Indeed, the majority of the respondents in this study had obtained the majority of the jobs they had held in their lives by having an inside edge. Whether it made a lot of difference or only a little, it is quite likely that they were given the benefit of the doubt or offered a chance to "get in the door" and then to prove themselves, or perhaps they were extended second or third chances despite errors or misdirection. These whites did not, however, recognize the extent to which they had sought unequal opportunity by hoarding opportunities and using advantages.

Individualism Versus Group-Based Advantage

Despite the networks of influence that provide whites with access to social resources, there is a strong emphasis on individualism in U.S. culture that is quite real among whites and nonwhites alike. Whites hold to an atomistic view of the world that sees outcomes as the result of the decisions of individual people. The ideology of individualism in U.S. culture hides from whites the group-based nature of their advantage or privilege. When recounting their life stories, the interviewees thought

about how hard they had worked, how uncertain had been the outcomes, and how necessary it had been to make a constant and persistent effort to stay "ahead." Almost all portrayed themselves as good workers, good neighbors, and responsible family members. Given the strong emphasis on individualism in U.S. culture, it is not surprising that many Americans are not especially egalitarian in their views. They believe that effort should be rewarded, even if that leads to substantial inequality. Indeed, a number of respondents in this study were quite suspicious of the idea of economic equality.

There is another paradox embodied in the views held by whites, namely, that they have to both know and not know how privilege works. Although the group-based nature of whites' advantages is invisible to them and hidden from their view, whites have to know how to access and use advantages, and they have to teach those skills to their children. Hence, they have to be sufficiently aware of how advantage works to use it successfully in daily interactions, but they have to keep that knowledge below the surface of their active consciousness and leave it unacknowledged. Otherwise, whites would have to confront issues of conflict about race—that is, the moral dilemma for which Myrdal had hoped. This contradiction is evident when we teach our kids about the importance of knowing the right people, but then tell them that their efforts and talents are all that count. Career guidance manuals tout the importance of networking, and professional organizations and even school systems teach people how to develop, foster, use, and rely on social networks. But when we explain achievement to others, the role played by networking often fades into the background as we highlight effort, talent, and credentials instead. Thus, when whites in our study recounted their life histories, they emphasized their personal effort and talent (or sometimes their flexibility or persistence when talent was not so evident), but they did not emphasize and barely mentioned the structural advantages or the social resources that provided them with unearned privileges and the means for getting ahead—meaning, literally, doing better than others. Even the small proportion of interviewees who adopted a more structuralist interpretation of poverty and inequality drew on social capital to improve their job situations but also attributed their success, as others did, to their individual capabilities and motivation. All of the groups in this study, therefore, sought access to social capital and engaged in opportunity hoarding as the means to achieve their life goals.

Since whites apply individualist explanations to their own lives, it obviously makes sense that they would apply it to the lives of blacks as well; hence, whites explain racial inequality, not in terms of their own racism or privilege, but as the failure of blacks as individuals to try hard enough, to be persistent, and to have "hope." Whites believe that what blacks themselves do, not what whites do to them, is the main source of

racial inequality. And for many whites, this view of blacks itself takes on a moral dimension, because many whites feel that blacks either do not share the moral principles by which whites live their lives or that they violate those principles. In this regard, the explanation of white views outlined by Sniderman and his colleagues is consistent with how some whites view racial issues (Sniderman and Carmines 1997; Sniderman and Piazza 1993).

Thus, the search for racists, the reliance on equal opportunity as the standard of fairness, and the firm belief in the rewards of individual effort and talent all come together to assure whites that they deserve what they have achieved in their lives and that blacks could have the same outcomes if they would just "do it the way I did." From this view, there is no moral dilemma regarding egalitarian values and racial inequality because there is an assumption that people are responsible for their own life outcomes and can achieve anything they want if they just put their minds to it, make the necessary effort, and do not give up. That whites do not always do this themselves to get to where they are in their lives does not constitute hypocrisy as such, because the dynamics undergirding their own life outcomes are invisible to them. Most do not see the structures of segregation, the processes by which unequal opportunity is hoarded and passed along to friends and family, or the group-based nature of the advantages that whites pass along to other whites.

On the contrary, most whites in the post–civil rights United States see themselves as part of the solution rather than part of the problem. They believe themselves to be fair and decent people who reject prejudice and who do not discriminate. They are dismayed that some "stupid" people are still holding on to old prejudices. And they believe that opportunity exists for anyone who tries hard enough. They claim that the "best people" should get into schools, get jobs, and get rewarded, and often they are truly perplexed and confused that so many years after the active days of the civil rights movement there are still so many people who believe that race serves as a barrier in the United States. As Hochschild (1995) says, they do not understand the "fuss."

The Role of Whites in Racial Politics

Although the country as a whole moved toward consensus in support of civil rights in principle, it did not move toward consensus regarding the implementation of civil rights policies (Bobo et al. 2009). Perhaps it is precisely because support for civil rights in principle became normative in the country that civil rights policies, like the New Deal, have been a continual target of political movements to undermine or turn back the gains won by the civil rights movement. Civil rights policies, from school desegregation, busing, and welfare to affirmative action, have been con-

stant sources of political conflict and legal challenge. Understanding these dynamics is also central to my argument. Myrdal's analysis of the American dilemma was a political argument that admonished whites, especially in the North, to support political change. Thus, to understand why racial inequality in the United States does not create a moral dilemma for whites, we have to understand the political role of whites in the post–civil rights period, especially with regard to inequality, the role of government in providing resources and regulation to encourage racial equality, and the response to policies closely aligned with racial politics like affirmative action.

The conflict over such policies has contributed to a transformation of the political parties in the United States and to a continued unsettledness about what civil rights should mean, what policies should be provided, who should provide them, and to whom policies should be targeted. The competition for the white vote has been closely tied up with the struggle over civil rights, and the Democratic Party has increasingly become the party of civil rights and the Republican Party the party of anti–civil rights. Party differences have often been especially sharp with regard to civil rights and antipoverty policies. Although there clearly has been improvement on a number of fronts for blacks in the United States, there has also been ambiguity about the extent, shape, and implications of the changes that have occurred. For example, the civil rights movement contributed to a growing black middle class—there are now substantially more blacks in managerial and professional jobs than in the past—but blacks have continued to be underrepresented in almost all such jobs, especially in the private sector. Further, the growth of a black middle class has been coincident with a growing level of unemployment among blacks who have no more than a high school degree, the expansion of welfare, and the incarceration of young black men (Braddock and McPartland 1987; Collins 1989; Conley 1999; Cose 1993; Cotton 1988; DiTomaso and Smith 1996; Farley 1984, 1999; Hacker 1992; Hochschild 1995; Holzer 1994; Jaynes and Williams 1989; Jencks 1992; Kirschenman and Neckerman 1991a; Kluegel 1985; Kozol 1991; Steinberg 1995; Thernstrom and Thernstrom 1997; Waldinger 1996; Wilson 1996). The gains that blacks made as a result of the civil rights movement have been counterbalanced by resistance from various groups to government implementation of civil rights legislation. In this context, the two major political parties have competed for the support of various groups of white voters in their efforts to form a winning coalition and, even more importantly, to gain a permanent majority.

Race, however, usually plays in the background, often implicitly framing political issues but rarely being used explicitly and openly, even in the 2008 election when Barack Obama was running for president. Tali Mendelberg (2001), for example, argues that political campaigns have

frequently used race to frame differences between the parties and to prime racial resentment in white voters, but she finds that such race-baiting has been successful only as long as the racial dimension of the framing remains implicit rather than explicit. In other words, as long as white voters do not recognize the racial component of the message, racially coded appeals can have a powerful effect on eliciting voter support (Gaertner and Dovidio 1986), but once the racial dimension is made explicit, then whites are more likely to conform to the norm of racial equality and resist responding on the basis of the racial coding. Thus, in a sense there is a "new race relations" in the United States, if not a "new racism," and this new race relations has reshaped politics, but in a way that is hidden from view and often masked by the more explicit framing given to political issues.

Racial issues underlie much of the political dynamics in the United States even though racial issues are not especially salient for whites, even though support for civil rights in principle has become normative among whites, and even though explicit racial appeals in U.S. politics are increasingly unacceptable. Whites' continued opposition to government action to implement civil rights policies allows such policies to serve as wedge issues in the competition between the political parties for white votes. Although often masked in the guise of other issues, racial politics still drives white political attitudes and behavior, especially if whites believe that civil rights policies will affect their ability to hoard opportunities or to exchange the social capital that helps them protect themselves from market competition.

The two major political parties have competed especially for four groups of white voters: religious conservatives, who have become the base of the Republican Party; the white working class, especially that segment of the class who angrily believe that liberal social policies have undermined their access to good jobs; professionals, who by class should be aligned with the Republican Party but who have reacted negatively to the prominence of religious conservatives in the party and so have moved to the Democratic Party; and "independents," who are often thought of as swing voters because of their weaker attachment to either party. These groups are all represented in various ways by the interviewees in this study. Thus, in my analysis I explore the political views of the various groups of interviewees with regard to inequality, the role of government, and policies associated with racial politics, including taxes, welfare, and affirmative action.

Myrdal believed that the American dilemma would lead whites to support political change; I show why the American non-dilemma makes whites uncertain allies in the fight against racial inequality. Indeed, in many cases, white voters are mobilized against government policies that would affect the opportunities available to whites and blacks. I argue

that the structural position of the interviewees with regard to how the civil rights movement affected their ability to hoard opportunities and draw on social capital influences their political views and their racial attitudes, both implicitly and explicitly.

To put my analysis in context, I discuss two major changes that have occurred in U.S. politics in the post–civil rights period: the transformation of racial politics into religious politics, and the transformation of the Democratic South to the Republican South. These two changes are interrelated, but each is significant in its own way. As early as the 1950s, the growing and widespread acceptance of civil rights normatively made it difficult for politicians even in the South to win elections with explicitly antiblack or prosegregation policies (Black 1971; Mendelberg 2001). Once it was no longer legitimate to use explicitly racist appeals, Republican political activists began to use an alternative framing of moral decline on the part of blacks (evoking, for example, irresponsibility, lack of discipline, laziness, wastefulness) that defined the basis for opposition to government policies to help blacks in particular and the poor more generally. As such, images of the inner city and black lifestyles became heated political issues (Katz 1989; Murray 1984). Further, blacks and the poor were conflated, even though the original formulation of the "war on poverty" under the Johnson administration included whites in Appalachia and those in rural areas as well as blacks in the inner city.

From Racial Politics to Religious Politics

Because of the need to make racial appeals implicit rather than explicit in the post–civil rights period, I argue that racial politics was transformed into religious politics, but that in both origin and background religious politics is still substantially about racial issues. This transformation began with the efforts to desegregate schools in the South. Resistance to school desegregation led to the creation of private "Christian" academies, in lieu of public schools, and over time resources, both public and private, have gradually been transferred to these schools. In developing the rationale for creating "Christian" academies, proponents argued that increasingly public schools lacked discipline and had become unsafe (Andrews 2002). Of course, these were coded ways to indicate that schools were desegregated. Although schools in the South were prominent in this transformation, moral rhetoric was used more generally to cast public institutions in a negative light and to promote privatization of public services and galvanize opposition to government spending for public services. Schools were attacked for lacking discipline, for teaching promiscuity and encouraging homosexuality, for promoting disrespect for traditional values, and for banning school prayer (Wilson 2003). Welfare was attacked for creating dependency and irresponsibil-

ity (Mead 1992). And the government was charged with being profligate with taxpayers' money, with funding immoral behaviors (like abortions and sex education), and with funding programs that undermined the moral fabric of the country and contributed to the deterioration and decline of life in the inner cities of large urban areas (D'Souza 1995; Murray 1984). These messages began to take hold in the common wisdom propagated through the new conservative media and became more frequently heard views expressed in the mainstream media as well. Efforts of the newly energized conservative movement began to pay off as more and more people began to see government not only as wasteful and inefficient but as immoral.

By appealing to voters on the basis of religious values, Republicans created a difficult situation for the Democratic Party. The ostensibly religious dimension of these changes has allowed the Republican Party to claim that it is the party that best represents traditional American values. Because the Democratic Party has tried, of necessity, to be more inclusive of different constituents, it has had more difficulty appealing to voters on the basis of values, leaving Democratic candidates open to attack on issues of morality and culture. Indeed, John Green (2000) finds that, among whites, those with traditional religious beliefs are more likely to identify with the Republican Party.

The "culture war" that emerged from these various social movement efforts has been fostered from the top down with the support of a group of wealthy men and women originally on the far right wing of the Republican Party who set out to create an institutional framework for turning the country back from the liberalism that emerged during the social movements of the 1960s (Weyrich 2003; Massey 2005). This group, which came to be known as the New Right, sponsored the emergence of the Religious Right. After initially trying to mobilize support for a third party, this right-wing movement actively sought to take over control of the Republican Party—and generally succeeded in doing so—with the goal of stoking the fires of a new conservatism in the country (Jorstad 1981; Viguerie 1979). Given the shift in both party identification and voting behavior, their efforts were largely successful through the second term of George W. Bush, but they failed to create a majority party. Instead, the Republican Party has reached approximate parity with the Democratic Party in terms of electoral votes for the presidential election, contributing to the very animated conflict between the two parties and the intense competition especially for the white vote. Despite these changes, the coalitions for both parties are unstable, and the competition between the Republicans and the Democrats to create an electoral majority continues unabated.

Competition for the white vote is highly contested, in part, because minority voters are assumed to have a strong preference for the Demo-

cratic Party. Both parties face dilemmas in their electoral efforts, however, as I discuss later in the book. The more the Republican Party has been associated with religious conservatives and the more the party has appealed to working-class whites using anti-intellectual themes, the more it has lost the support of more-educated voters, especially among professionals. Some evidence suggests that the growing political influence of religious conservatives in the Republican Party has led professionals to shift to the Democratic Party and contributed as well to the growth of independents, many of whom are former Republicans (Bolce and De Maio 1999a, 1999b; Hout and Fischer 2002). At the same time, the Democratic Party faces a long-standing tension in its electoral strategy: the more attention it gives to civil rights and especially black issues, the more likely it is to lose white votes (Frymer 1999). This tension has played out especially in the transformation of the white vote in the South.

The Transformation of the Democratic South into the Republican South

As racial issues began to drive a wedge between constituents of the Democratic coalition, the Republican Party opportunistically began to appeal to disaffected whites in the South (known as the "Southern strategy") and to working-class voters in the North. Goldwater's decision to oppose civil rights legislation as part of his 1964 campaign (although he had previously voted for civil rights legislation) was just one step in the gradual transformation of the Republican Party into the anti–civil rights party. Although Goldwater's efforts were disastrous in the 1964 election results, the path on which he embarked was in fact increasingly successful over time for the Republican Party, which has now almost fully captured white voters in the previously Democratic South. It is this shift or realignment that has enabled the Republican Party to gain parity with the Democratic Party in presidential elections. The Republican Party has been able to maintain its competitiveness, however, only by appealing consistently to white working-class voters who had been reliable constituents of the Democratic Party. According to Larry Bartels (2008b), its success with white working-class voters has been primarily in the South. At the same time, white working-class voters have become less reliable members of the Democratic coalition, and many of them have either not voted or have crossed over to third parties or to the Republicans.

Because the white working class was such an essential component of the New Deal coalition and has been necessary for the Democratic Party to win elections, a number of people have criticized the party for "forgetting" the white working class or for offending them (Teixeira and Rogers 2000). Thomas Frank (2004) lays the blame on liberalism for becoming irrelevant to the lives of middle-class (that is, white working-class)

Americans by embracing out-of-the-mainstream culture and putting class issues in the background in order to gain the support of corporations and workers in the new economy. Ruy Teixeira and Joel Rogers (2000) argue that the Democratic Party's failure to provide solutions to the economic decline faced by "America's forgotten majority" led to a distrust of government and resistance to the kind of governmental activism that was the hallmark of the 1960s and before that of the New Deal. Although these authors recognize that racial issues could be a factor in the disaffection of the white working class from the Democratic Party, they argue that it is not the main factor.

Thomas Edsall and Mary Edsall (1992), in contrast, argue that conflict over race and class undermined the support of the white working class for the Democratic Party. They describe the impact of antiwar and civil rights groups taking over the Democratic Party by pushing aside the party regulars who had encompassed and represented the white working class. In a statement during the Republican ascendancy of the 1980s, Gordon MacInnes (1996, 104–5) was even more emphatic in his charge that liberals in the Democratic Party drove the white working class away on the basis of race, and with them any chance for electoral success:

> Since the late 1960s, liberal Democrats have been hurt in presidential politics by their silence in the face of radically alien ideas on racial issues. Afraid to argue with either the Left or blacks, liberals ended up supporting or, at least, abetting crazy ideas. The collapse of the liberal discourse on issues of family stability, welfare dependency, and illegitimacy, and the abandonment of the concept of personal responsibility for crime and riots, left no position for liberals other than as apologists for extreme black views. . . .
>
> Thus the public agendas of the black and white elites were conveniently joined in the Democratic party. . . . The result was an electoral slaughter of historic proportions in 1972, the alienation of working-class Democrats, and the takeover of the national party machinery by ideologues and zealots determined to shut out the party's elected leaders in Congress and state capitals.

These issues have not been resolved within the Democratic Party and are likely to continue to be problematic for Democrats into the future. The party is criticized for not giving enough attention to racial inequality or for giving too much. It is criticized for ignoring the white working class or for allowing them to move the party back to an outmoded appeal to class warfare. It is criticized for giving too much attention to liberal social issues or for selling out to the forces of conservatism. The Democratic Party has not received a majority of white votes since 1964 (including in 2008, when Obama received only 43 percent of the white

vote). Thus, the Democratic Party still needs to mobilize enough support among whites to win elections, and to do so requires gaining the support of both the white working class and white middle-class professionals—such as the members of both groups among our interviewees, who, as we will see, often saw each other as the main source of the misdirection with regard to government policies. At the same time, the Republican Party can mobilize a majority, especially at the presidential level, only with the support of religious conservatives and through a right-wing populism intended to appeal to the white working class, but both strategies cause negative reactions from white professionals. Thus, among white voters, there is instability of political support, and much of that instability turns on race and civil rights, albeit often in other guises.

Civil Rights Policies: Race, Rights, and Taxes[5]

Although I did not predefine the groups of interviewees in this study, as the interviews progressed it became clear that the interviewees fell into several distinct groups that mapped to the groups of white voters over which the two major political parties are in competition, as I later realized. In reporting the interview responses for these various groups, I endeavor to get at the substance of the principle-policy gap among white voters and thus to understand why whites do or do not support policies that address racial inequality. In addition to asking about inequality and equal opportunity in general, I specifically describe the responses to questions about welfare, taxes, affirmative action, and immigration. Here I provide only a brief overview.

What was immediately evident in the interviews was that the respondents knew very little about the contours of government programs. Without being cued with specific program names, respondents often could not fill in the details regarding major government policies. They had opinions about the role of government, but they did not know what government policies actually exist, what they entail, or how they function. Interviewees made many claims about who gets what from government programs that were sometimes far off the mark, and in doing so they often attributed a largesse to government programs or made claims about benefits to various groups that had no basis in fact.

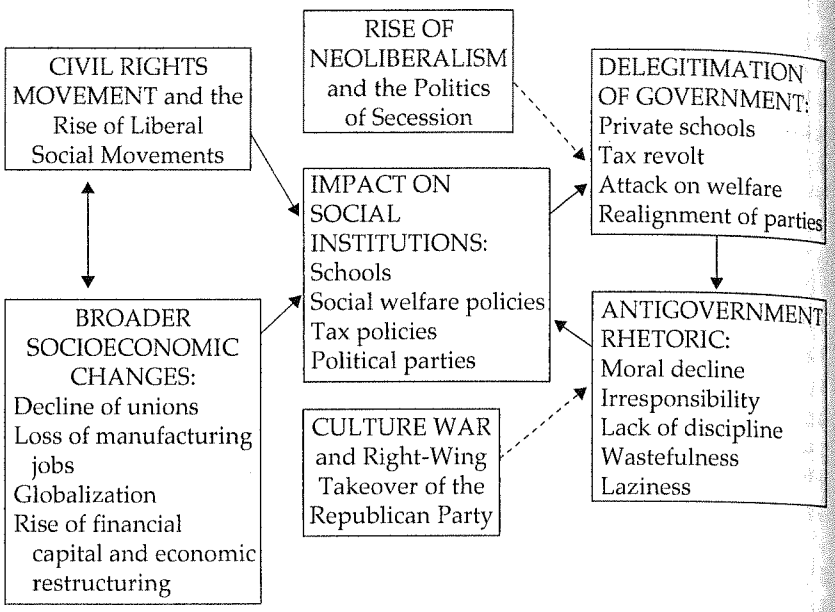
In general, people in the United States do not live in a world of politics (Alvarez and Brehm 2002; Zaller 1992). Instead, they go about their everyday lives and worry most about getting through their day, paying their bills, and attending to the needs of family and friends. When posed with questions about political issues, the respondents could formulate and express an opinion, but their views did not necessarily reflect either long-standing or well-considered views. Even questions as seemingly straightforward as a request for their view of government received am-

biguous answers. For example, most of the interviewees thought of government services as only for people who could not support themselves, and many of them said, when asked, that they neither got nor wanted anything from the government. In other words, very few of the respondents thought about the school systems where they or their children were educated, the roads they traveled, the safe water they drank, or the police and fire protection they enjoyed when asked what the government did for them. Instead, they thought automatically about welfare and other transfer payments. In that regard, most of the interviewees had a very limited view of what government should do, and many had images of government as wasteful, inefficient, and ineffective, if not corrupt.

Thus, the views expressed by the interviewees underlined a lack of trust in government, reinforcing other studies that have found a precipitous decline since the 1960s in overall trust in government and in the belief that government will generally do the right thing (Teixeira and Rogers 2000). Teixeira and Rogers (2000), for example, found that whereas in 1964, 80 percent of the population believed that "the government in Washington" would do the right thing most of the time, by the 1994 to 1996 period, only 20 to 30 percent of the population trusted the government in this way. Recent data suggest a moderation of this mistrust, but a majority still believe that government-run programs are likely to be inefficient and wasteful. In general, Democrats are less cynical about government than Republicans and independents (Kohut 2009). Yet mistrust or suspicion of government were evident in the responses of my interviewees; only a small proportion of interviewees identified themselves as politically liberal (23 percent of the total sample) and expressed more positive views of government. The liberal interviewees were more likely than the others to express support for government efforts to help the poor and to address issues of racial inequality, but the majority of the interviewees were either skeptical of government competence or indifferent to the issue.

Clearly something happened politically in the country in the post–civil rights period that has contributed to the remarkable shift in attitudes toward the government. Undoubtedly the disillusionment with government that arose with the opposition to the Vietnam War, the scandal of Watergate and consequent resignation of Richard Nixon, and other such events had an effect on views of government during the volatile politics of the post–civil rights period. But surely the government's actions and the public's reactions to public policies regarding civil rights also played a part in the decline of trust in government. After the violence against civil rights activists in the South was televised across the country in the 1960s, support for the civil rights movement grew, but there was an equally strong reaction against the racial riots that subsequently spread across the country. Perhaps sentiments with regard to

Figure 1.1 The Emergence of a Culture War As an Effort to Resist Civil Rights and Withdraw from Public Institutions



Source: Author's compilation.

civil rights policy also changed when civil rights activism moved beyond the South to the North. As blacks began to claim the citizenship rights that they had been denied prior to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and similar legislation, a backlash emerged that was clearly linked to the efforts to implement the principles of civil rights in specific programs and policies (Edsall and Edsall 1992). And the funds that have poured into the effort to create a new conservatism have had remarkable effects as well. Figure 1.1 provides a framework for understanding these dynamics.

I argue that the combination of the civil rights movement (and other liberal social movements) and the socioeconomic changes in the country (including the decline of manufacturing jobs and unionization, the advent of globalization, and the financialization of the economy) at the time led to the creation of programs and policies that affected the social institutions of which whites were a part, including schools, political parties, and government programs at the local and state levels. As whites' ability to hoard opportunities and freely use social resources to get ahead were impeded by the implementation of civil rights policies, whites began to

undertake what Robert Reich (1991) called the "politics of secession." Their efforts in this regard were part of a newly emerging right-wing effort to promote neoliberalism in contradistinction to the politics of social welfare. As such, whites began to withdraw from or deny resources to the public institutions that were likely to benefit blacks. Of course, the withdrawal from public schools in the South was notable in this regard. Similarly, as the Democratic Party became the party of civil rights, whites began leaving the party, especially across the South, and their exodus led eventually to a realignment of party identification and voting behavior. Further, as welfare became increasingly associated with "giveaways" to blacks, whites intensified their opposition to welfare policies (Gilens 1999). The growing disaffection with and rejection of government programs to help the poor, and especially poor blacks, contributed as well to tax revolts and to support for starving the government and reducing taxes, even at the expense of public services (Ladd and Bowman 1998; Teixeira and Rogers 2000). Because acceptance of civil rights became normative across the country as part of the liberal social movement, it was no longer possible to organize on racist appeals. Instead, a new religious politics supplanted racial politics, but with the same goal of maintaining white control of social institutions and privileges.

White voters became the primary target of the Republican Party in the wake of fears after 1964 that the Democratic Party could create a permanent majority, perhaps without needing a coalition with the South. Indeed, conservative fears were well founded, because the reconfiguration of the two parties made it increasingly possible (even if not probable) for the Democratic Party to win presidential elections without the South. Following Lyndon Johnson's election and the social movements surrounding his administration, well-connected political staff members of conservative Southern politicians embarked on plans to create a conservative movement to challenge the country's enthusiasm for liberalism (Weyrich 2003). Thus, unlike Teixeira and Rogers (2000), who argue that the success of the conservative movement reflected the response of working-class voters to the failure of the federal government to address the economic problems that emerged after 1973, I believe that the politics of secession and what turned into the "culture war" were largely about the responses to the movement for civil rights and what the civil rights revolution portended for the ascendancy of liberal politics in the United States. The civil rights movement also sparked the antiwar movement and the women's movement and contributed to an emerging politics of liberalism. The fear that these movements would permanently change the politics of the country was central to the rise of the New Right, then the Christian Right, and the subsequent revival of the various branches of the conservative movement (Diamond 1995, 1998). The emergence of neoliberalism was part of the same revival.

The respondents' views on these various policies were a mix of politics, social psychology, and the structural position of people like themselves in the stratification order (Kluegel and Smith 1986). Which of these influences was most powerful in the development of their views depended on whether they perceived themselves to be affected by the policy or by what the policy symbolized for people like themselves. For example, there were few respondents among my interviewees who claimed that they themselves had been harmed by affirmative action policies, but there were many interviewees who objected to affirmative action as unfair or harmful to whites (Bergmann 1996; Reskin 1998). In their discussion of these issues, it was clear that they had set up guidelines or rules for what was fair in employment practices that they did not apply to themselves. That is, their politics, social position (or position in the social structure), and social psychology all came together in their responses regarding various government policies.

Thus, when asked what they thought about changes in access to education and jobs for women, minorities, or immigrants, many argued that the person with the highest test score should be admitted to colleges and universities or that the "best person" should get the job. Yet none of the interviewees described themselves as having had the highest test score or having obtained their own job by these criteria. Instead, they talked about having capabilities even if they were not good students or good test-takers, or about proving themselves after they got the job, not before. Further, even though the interviewees espoused a commitment to equal opportunity and civil rights, they balked at the idea of affirmative action because, they said, there "must be another way." Yet few could offer any alternatives that would have the same result of providing access to jobs and education for minorities and women, and many retreated when asked about these issues with the declaration, "Life's not fair."

The interviewees in this study had mixed views about immigration. Given the efforts by some politicians to limit immigrants' access to public services, I had expected to hear more anti-immigrant rhetoric than I did. Instead, the comments about immigrants were surprisingly soft, with many of the interviewees saying things like, "We were all immigrants." Although often noting the hard work of immigrants, a number of interviewees also believed that immigrants needed to adapt to U.S. culture rather than expecting U.S. culture to adapt to them. They felt that immigrants should learn English and speak it while in the United States, and they strongly opposed immigrants being able to enter the country illegally or to receive public services without paying taxes. There was also some resentment expressed about immigrants who came to the United States and somehow expected to bring the culture of their home countries with them, as well as about immigrants earning money in the United States and then sending it or taking it home with them. The ma-

jority of the interviewees were not favorable about immigration, but few expressed strong views, and surprisingly, at least some interviewees welcomed immigrants and their contributions to the country.

A mix of politics, structure, and social psychology was also evident in attitudes toward welfare policies. Most of the interviewees argued that people should be self-sufficient, take responsibility for their own lives, work hard no matter how difficult or unpleasant it might be to do so, be persistent and flexible, and never give up hope. Yet many of the interviewees themselves relied on help from family and friends or neighbors, including getting special favors, receiving low- or no-cost loans, and having doors opened for them that were not open to others. Further, a few of the interviewees had themselves been on welfare or had received unemployment insurance, student loans, or some other kind of public benefit. They insisted, however, that they had taken such help only on a temporary basis; they felt that they had deserved that help because they had paid into the system or that, for them, it was only a "hand-up," not a "hand-out." Even as some interviewees described having passed up jobs themselves that they considered too degrading or dangerous, they insisted that welfare recipients, or the "lazy people" who "sit on their butts," should take whatever jobs are available and not depend on the government. That is, when they thought about welfare recipients, they did not think of people like themselves who might occasionally need support from government programs and who had access to advantages from family and friends; instead, they created the image of a moral "other"—someone who did not share their values of hard work, responsibility, and humility.

On the issue of taxes, however, I did not find strong support for the conservative rhetoric that I had expected, given that the theme of tax cuts has been so prevalent in many political campaigns during the last several years. Few of the interviewees in New Jersey or Ohio indicated much concern about the taxes they paid, and they often said that it would not affect them much if people made fewer demands on the government. Although some interviewees indicated that they would prefer to pay less, there was little talk about the government spending "their" money and little concern about second-guessing the government—except in the area of civil rights and welfare. The views expressed by these interviewees were consistent with research by Martin Gilens (1995): a majority of his respondents said that the government spends either too little money or about the right amount of money in a range of policy areas (see also Teixeira and Rogers 2000). Only on issues such as welfare, aid to inner cities, and foreign aid did Gilens find that a majority said the government spends too much—that is, too much on those policies that are thought to benefit blacks and other nonwhites.

The interviewees in my study from Tennessee, however, did express

opposition to the amount of taxes they were paying, and many complained about the government spending "their" money. These concerns were presumably contextual, however, because a major political fight about increasing state taxes had just occurred at the time I did the interviews. Of course, the views of the Tennessee interviewees may also reflect a special sensitivity of people in the South to the role of government in funding the welfare state. Many of the Tennessee interviewees' comments about taxes included images of lazy and shiftless people who did not deserve the resources they were receiving, and for the most part it was clear that the interviewees had blacks in mind.

Neoliberalism, Good Jobs, and Racial Politics

Although this book focuses on racial inequality and the impact of the politics of race on the competition for the white vote, I want to acknowledge that racial politics has often been a vehicle for, rather than a driver of, the larger political narrative. The political project of wealthy elites to prevent the United States from becoming a liberal or social democratic nation has been driven by a corporate-led, anti-state, anti-union, anti-regulation agenda that uses racial politics to accomplish their goals. Well-funded political strategists have used race, albeit often implicitly, to motivate the white working and middle classes to embrace the neoliberal revolution, that is, the belief that markets and the private sector should dominate and government should "stay out of the way." Adopting neoliberalism, however, has worked against the interests of the white working and middle classes in the United States. Rather than seeing an overemphasis on markets as the source of their problems, the white working class has more often blamed either government support for blacks or the liberal "elites" who support government policies that the working class thinks go against their interests. Previously the white working class tried to gain access to good jobs by protecting themselves from market competition and trying to hoard good jobs for their family and friends, but their support for neoliberal politics has now opened them up to greater market competition in the labor market. Ironically, at the individual level whites tried to protect themselves from market competition via strategies of social closure and politically through opposition to the implementation of civil rights policies, but their support for such politics has led to increased precariousness in the labor market and worse opportunities for themselves over time (Kalleberg 2011). The white working class and even the middle class have ended up losers as government regulation has been eroded, union strength undermined, and capitalism left unconstrained. In other words, increasing numbers of white workers

have been left to operate in the kind of labor market conditions that blacks were confined to in the pre–civil rights era.

A new conservative movement has emerged not only in reaction to the civil rights and other social movements of the 1960s but also from the consequences of globalization, changes in technology, and changes in geopolitics (such as the Arab oil embargo of 1973) that led to economic booms and busts in the United States, the end of wage improvements for those without college degrees, and a decline in good jobs and an increase in bad ones. The shift, for example, from manufacturing to financial services has dramatically improved wages for the few, but for many others wages have stagnated, working conditions have worsened, protections have been weakened, and job security has been eroded. These deteriorating economic conditions have undoubtedly influenced the political responses of people like my interviewees.

An important insight from the interviews in this study is that even "good jobs" are constantly under assault by employers trying to increase market competition by undermining the income and benefits received by workers. Through mergers and acquisitions, plant closings, offshoring, and outsourcing, many good jobs in the United States have disappeared over the last several decades, and along with these jobs the ability of workers to protect themselves from market competition. The primary mechanisms for providing job security and limiting market competition in the past were seniority, state licensing, unionization, and tenure (DiTomaso 2001; Weeden 2000). Workers have used each of these mechanisms to protect themselves from competition and from downward wage pressure, while employers and their political allies have adopted policies that try to force workers back into market competition. Seniority has been undermined by efforts to hire younger (and cheaper) workers, or it becomes a moot protection when jobs undermine health as workers age. State licensing often gets captured by the licensees, but there are always efforts by new groups to gain state recognition for skills that overlap the domain of the work being done by those already licensed. Unions have been undermined or threatened and membership in unions has declined dramatically in recent years, especially in the private sector. More recently, concerted efforts have been mounted by the right to break or shrink public-sector unions as well. Finally, tenure has been constantly under assault, and it has been undermined in principle by universities that hire the majority of faculty on non-tenure-track lines.

Because the civil rights movement endeavored to open up access to the "good jobs" that had been hoarded in the past by whites, it represented a threat to whites' primary mechanisms for protecting themselves from market competition. But support for neoliberal, antigovernment policies hardly provides a solution for white workers. Neoliberal policies

make it more difficult for any workers—white or black—to protect themselves from the market. When workers compete with each other, wages are bid down. To prevent this outcome, workers have tried to take wages out of competition and capture higher wages. They have done so by trying to keep the supply of available workers artificially low, by drawing boundaries around who is allowed to do the work or to get trained for it, and by trying to prevent substitutes for their labor being made available.

The "rent" gained by workers who are able to protect themselves from market competition comes, theoretically, from employers, who then have to pay higher wages in order to hire sufficient workers. In such circumstances, the competition over rent becomes the major dynamic within the labor force, with workers attempting to limit competition for their labor in order to increase their wages and employers attempting to increase competition among workers in order to decrease wages. Employers do so by trying to find new sources of labor, using technological substitutes for labor, or finding ways to destroy the rent claims of workers by undermining seniority, breaking unions, weakening the protections of licensing or tenure, and otherwise endeavoring to break the hold of some labor groups on the availability of workers in a given occupation or industry. In general, a "competitive wage" is a low wage, and a job that is subject to market competition generally is not a "good" job. It is important to note the context when considering the efforts of white workers to hoard opportunities and protect themselves from market competition. There was growing inequality in household income in the United States from 1979 to 2007, with those in the lower part of the income distribution in 1975 seeing very little growth in income over this period, those in the middle seeing modest gains, and those at the very top of the income distribution seeing substantial increases (Congressional Budget Office 2011). Rent can increase from opportunity hoarding and from being protected from market competition, but neither mechanism protects workers in a period of declining opportunity overall and the kind of stagnation in wages that resulted from the neoliberal assault on the post–World War II labor-capital accord.

One of the primary ways in which workers have been able to limit competition and protect their access to good jobs has been by trying to enforce boundaries that define who is or is not considered an acceptable worker in a given occupation. Race, gender, citizenship, and other categorizations have been ways for white workers to try to keep good jobs for people like themselves and to limit the access of "outsiders" to "their" jobs, thus limiting the market competition (Glenn 2002; Tilly 1998). Such categorization provides easy markers for who is or is not part of the protected group, and by identifying some groups as "other," it contributes to the development of legitimating myths about competency and merit that support the institutionalization of opportunity hoarding by some

groups seeking to limit the access of those other groups (Ridgeway 1986; Sidanius and Pratto 1999; Tilly 1998). Thus, capturing rents in labor markets is categorical. The type of inside edge that provides access to good jobs is limited to those with whom one identifies, to insiders in social networks, and to those who are believed to be trustworthy enough to return favors within the community without violating group norms.

One purpose of the civil rights movement, of course, was to open up labor markets that had previously been reserved for whites. Thus, the civil rights movement was about gaining for African Americans access to jobs that whites had passed among themselves, on the assumption that once blacks were given access to those jobs, they would retain the characteristics of the good jobs that had been available only to whites—high wages, good benefits, and protection from exploitation. Expanding the supply of labor for jobs that paid well but did not require much education, however, contributed to the erosion of the quality of those jobs, and ultimately to their disappearance. Whether intended or not, civil rights became a direct challenge to labor rights, such that the jobs that had been protected from the market for whites became less protected from market competition for everyone. Following the civil rights movement, and contrary to what was intended, many African Americans, rather than gaining access to the good jobs that had been the purview of whites only, could find only jobs paying "market wages"; unwilling to accept such wages, they were subsequently excluded from the labor market (frequently because employers preferred immigrants, who would work for much lower wages).

Thus, an important tension that has existed since the advent of the civil rights movement has been an ongoing effort to keep some jobs protected from the market in the context of a larger labor pool and new sources of labor continually available as immigration, globalization, changes in gender roles, and civil rights enforcement for racial and ethnic minorities open up these new sources. The response to the civil rights movement is therefore more complicated than being simply for it or against it. In the post–civil rights period, almost everyone endorses the concept of civil rights, but those who depend on access to jobs that are protected from labor market competition in order to have the possibility of a middle-class lifestyle are much less sanguine about the implementation of civil rights policies if doing so loosens their hold on good jobs or on their ability to pass along good jobs to their children, family, or friends. And the response has been especially hostile from those who do not have marketable skills to compete for jobs that pay middle-class wages if they are unable to gain access to jobs that are protected from the market. In other words, those who have few options to obtain other "good" jobs if their hold on unionized blue-collar jobs declines or their protection from seniority or tenure (and sometimes state licensing) erodes are much more

ambivalent about the civil rights movement than those who have skills that might serve them well if they are forced into competing in the market for a decent job that will support themselves and their families.

In summary, a decent life depends on being protected from the market. Those jobs with the characteristics that make a middle-class life—that is, a decent life—possible, especially for those without a college education or valuable skills, are constantly expropriated from employers by current employees to pass along to family, friends, and acquaintances who share networks and social identity. Workers use social closure, opportunity hoarding, and social capital in what is otherwise thought of as a labor "market." In this context, employers used the opportunity of the civil rights movement to expand the labor supply and access to training, to undermine protections such as seniority, to break work rules, and ultimately to substitute technology for labor or to move jobs abroad. Thus, the civil rights movement did not just provide more opportunity to blacks while leaving everything else constant. The civil rights movement contributed to a multitude of changes that have made the labor market more competitive and left many white workers less protected and more vulnerable than before. As Sørensen (2000, 1553) argued, "Nothing guarantees that a competitive wage moves a worker above the poverty line . . . nothing guarantees that efficient labor markets create good lives." Thus, white workers' support for neoliberalism in its opposition to government civil rights policies has backfired by making them more, rather than less, vulnerable.

The Study Design

The data for this study consist of 246 semistructured interviews with randomly selected, white, non-Hispanic respondents between the ages of twenty-five and fifty-five, from three areas of the country: New Jersey, Ohio, and Tennessee.[6] These areas were chosen for both theoretical and practical reasons. I wanted one area that was diverse by race and ethnicity and one that was less diverse. New Jersey has one of the most diverse populations in the country. Ohio is a midwestern state with a less diverse population, especially in the areas where I did interviews. Then it also seemed prudent to include a southern state, because of the importance of the South to racial politics in the United States. These areas both fit my criteria and were areas to which I had access. Doing such a large number of interviews in each location required that I stay in the area for extended periods of time, so it helped to have family and friends with whom I could stay. Tables 1.2 and 1.3 provide the demographic breakdown of the interview sample and information on the locations where the interviews were done.

I adapted my methodology from that used by Michele Lamont (1992,

Table 1.2 Demographic Characteristics of the Interview Sample

Region	Women	Men	Total
New Jersey			
Working-class	16	20	36
Middle-class	28	29	57
Ohio			
Working-class[a]	25	27	52
Middle-class	19	20	39
Tennessee			
Working-class[a]	12	15	27
Middle-class	18	17	35
Total	118	128	246

Source: Author's compilation.

[a]Canton, Ohio, and the surrounding area have always been a predominantly working-class, manufacturing economy, with relatively well-paid blue-collar and unionized workers. Perhaps for this reason, there is a higher proportion of working-class interviewees in the Ohio sample. In contrast, Nashville, Tennessee, is a college and government town, as well as the "country music capital." Perhaps for this reason, and also perhaps because of the greater difficulty in Nashville of getting potential interviewees to agree to be interviewed, the proportion of working-class respondents in the Tennessee sample is smaller.

2000). I chose the twenty-five- to fifty-five-year-old age range because I wanted to talk with people who had come of age during or after the civil rights movement and were still of working age, although I did not restrict the sample to those still in the labor force.[7] Using demographic information on the proportion of white residents, income levels, education levels, and occupations, I identified zip code areas in each geographical area as predominantly middle-class or working-class. I then sent letters to potential respondents explaining that I was writing a book about how people develop their goals in life and how they go about trying to achieve them. I also told potential respondents that they would be asked about their views on public policy issues in order to understand how Americans think about their current economic situation. I followed up the letters with phone calls to determine the eligibility of the potential respondents.

Initially I defined "class" by whether or not the respondent had a four-year college degree (McCall 2001).This criterion seemed insufficient in some cases, however, because class is a family characteristic, not an individual one. Further, because most of the interviews were done in the respondents' homes, it was possible to supplement the educational information about the respondent with information on the respondent's apparent lifestyle.[8] The interview included detailed questions about the interviewee's educational and life history, starting with high school and

Table 1.3 Demographic Characteristics of Interview Areas, 2000

	New Jersey	Ohio[a]	Tennessee
Median family income			
Middle-class area 1	$105,056	$56,677	$69,446
Middle-class area 2	93,785	50,316	70,861
Working-class area 1	59,482	33,384	43,222
Working-class area 2	52,571	40,283	63,789
White non-Hispanic			
Middle-class area 1	87%	94%	95%
Middle-class area 2	81	96	96
Working-class area 1	85	94	85
Working-class area 2	93	93	93
Nonmanagerial jobs			
Middle-class area 1	44%	51%	36%
Middle-class area 2	41	57	38
Working-class area 1	69	81	64
Working-class area 2	62	82	58
Bachelor's degree or higher			
Middle-class area 1	52%	40%	70%
Middle-class area 2	62	34	58
Working-class area 1	16	6	28
Working-class area 2	28	8	36

Source: Data included here are illustrative of the zip codes from which respondents were drawn in each state. The data come from American FactFinder using Zip Code Tabulation Areas, U.S. Census Bureau: Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000, Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF 1) 100-Percent Data; Profile of Selected Social Characteristics: 2000, Census 2000 Summary File 3 (SF 3)—Sample Data; and Profile of Selected Economic Characteristics: 2000, Census 2000 Summary File 3 (SF 3)—Sample Data.

[a]The demographics of the areas of Ohio where the interviews were conducted document the working-class and manufacturing nature of this economy. Although the income and educational levels are higher in what I designated as middle-class areas, the overall level of education is much lower in this part of Ohio than in the other two interview areas, and the proportion of nonmanagerial jobs is higher in both the middle-class and the working-class areas in Ohio compared to New Jersey and Tennessee. These demographics also suggest that there is more mixture in the neighborhoods in this region of the country, with working-class and middle-class people more likely to live in the same neighborhoods in Ohio than is true in the areas in either New Jersey or Tennessee.

going through the date of the interview; socioeconomic information on their parents, siblings, children, and spouses; their conceptions of the factors that had most contributed to their current life circumstances; how they viewed themselves and others; and their views of various public policies. In addition to conducting qualitative interviews, I also asked respondents to fill out a short survey with questions taken from the American National Election Studies (ANES) so that I could compare this sample with a national sample.

I was especially interested in understanding the pathways or trajecto-

Table 1.4 Comparison of DiTomaso Study Interview Sample and American National Election Studies Sample

	DiTomaso	ANES	Statistically Significant
Education (3 = more than high school; 4 = some college; 5 = college degree)[a]	4.27	3.75	Yes
Income (2 = $31,000 to $50,000; 3 = $51,000 to $75,000)	2.85	2.41	Yes
Working-class	47%	43%	No
South	25%	37%	Yes
Egalitarianism (six items, three-point scale)[b]	2.20	2.18	No
Individualism (three items, three-point scale)[b]	2.28	2.22	No
Racial resentment (three items, three-point scale)[b]	1.95	2.32	Yes

Source: Author's compilation based on ANES surveys from 1986, 1994, 1996, 1998, and 2000.

[a]Because I wanted a sufficient number of middle-class and working-class interviewees in my sample, I did not endeavor to have a sample that was representative of the educational distribution in the U.S. white population. Thus, there is a larger proportion of college graduates in my sample, and also a higher average level of income.

[b]For each scale, the higher the number, the more the respondent holds these views; for example, a 3 represents the most egalitarian, the most individualist, and the most racially resentful.

ries by which the respondents moved through their careers and the circumstances surrounding each transition from one job to another. To have greater access to the data, I created a quantitative database to summarize some of the qualitative information provided in the interviews, including information about each job held; the kind of help or assistance, if any, used in obtaining the job; and other support provided to the interviewees at different stages of their lives. I also added information on religious and political identity to the survey data provided by the respondents, making it possible to compare the groups to each other both quantitatively and qualitatively. Using responses from the American National Election Studies, I was able to create measures of frequently used scales, including individualism, racial resentment, and egalitarianism, divided into two scales based on the work of David Sears, P. J. Henry, and Rick Kosterman (2000).[9] The survey also includes demographic information on respondents' age, education, income, family background, and employment status.

Table 1.4 provides information comparing my sample with that from the ANES. As can be seen from the table, the interviewees in my sample were less likely than those in a national sample to be from the South, and they had higher average levels of education and income. Because I

wanted to have both middle- and working-class interviewees from each region, my sample included a higher proportion of those with a college education than would be likely in a strictly representative sample. The interviewees in my sample were also apparently less racially resentful than those in the national sample.[10] As part of the data collection, I gave the interviewees lists, taken from the work of Kluegel and Smith (1986), of the reasons why people might be rich or poor and why there is racial inequality. They were asked to choose two from each list and to explain why these were the reasons that made the most sense to them.

All of the interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. They were then coded using software to analyze qualitative data.[11] Each interview took an average of two hours (with the shortest taking about an hour and a half and the longest four and a half hours). The interview transcripts varied from twenty-five to sixty-five single-spaced pages. In addition to coding the responses for each interview question, I also developed a set of topics or themes that emerged from the interview responses and coded these as well.

Sociopolitical Groups Among the Interviewees

As the interviews progressed, it became apparent that there were distinct groups of interviewees with similar opinions within the larger group. These groups turned out to parallel the groups among white voters who have been the target of the Democratic and Republican Parties: religious conservatives, working-class whites (especially those who are most animated about racial issues), professionals, and independents. Although there were also a few smaller groups that did not fit easily into these four categories, I give the most attention in my discussion to these four groups. Understanding the political views of each of these groups should help us understand how the American non-dilemma affects white support and opposition to policies that might ameliorate racial inequality.

Sorting the interviewees into these distinct groups required some decision rules. I defined the groups by the way they talked about the issues I asked them to address, not strictly by their demographics. Thus, I defined the groups, not by variables as such, but as they represented the intersection of relevant life events and personal attributes that made sense within respondents' lives. I would argue that these groups sounded different when they talked about the issues addressed in this study because their life experiences had created different, but coherent, social locations and identities, as evidenced by the fact that the groups tend to represent the most politically salient groups of whites who are of interest to the two major political parties. The groups I have created therefore reflect the differences among the interviewees in how they represented

their views especially on public policy issues. The groups are mutually exclusive, and I categorized each interviewee into one group according to the following procedure:

Protestant evangelicals clearly seemed to be a distinctive group, so I started with them. I included within this category all respondents who talked in the interview about the importance of their faith, their belief in God or Jesus, being born again, or their active involvement in church or who made other such statements suggesting that religious identity was especially salient to them. I excluded from this group anyone who indicated that he or she was Catholic, Jewish, or secular and anyone who did not speak about religion at all. Based on these criteria, fifty-seven people were included in the Protestant evangelical category (23 percent of the sample). Table 1.5 confirms that the interviewees I identified as Protestant evangelicals were much more likely than any other category of interviewee to talk about religion. The Protestant evangelical group includes both middle- and working-class interviewees, but it is disproportionately middle-class (70 percent in my sample). The vast majority of the Protestant evangelicals—81 percent—identified themselves as politically conservative, and another 18 percent said they were moderate; only one person in this category indicated having liberal politics. Throughout the book, I distinguish those I define as "religious conservatives" (Protestant evangelicals who identified their politics as conservative) from those I define as "religious nonconservatives" (Protestant evangelicals who identified their politics as moderate or liberal). There were forty-six religious conservatives (19 percent of the sample) and eleven religious nonconservatives (4.5 percent of the sample).

I labeled another group of interviewees "working-class 'racists'." I identified these interviewees both by their class position and by their explicitly antiblack statements. I put thirty people (12 percent of the sample) in this category. For example, an insurance adjuster in New Jersey (D011 NJ M WC),[12] when asked about the changes that have occurred for African Americans with regard to jobs and education, said, "You walk into any government agency, it's 90 percent African Americans. . . . It means that America's lowering their standards and giving these people jobs and stuff." Similarly, a surveyor from Ohio (B008 OH M WC) said: "A lot of people I don't want to be around. I'm not going to sit here and say I want a whole bunch of black people coming to my house, because I don't. I don't want Asians coming here either."

There were eleven interviewees (4.5 percent of the sample) with four-year college degrees whose views were similar to those of the working-class "racists," although they did not necessarily use explicitly antiblack statements to the same degree. These interviewees I called "middle-class conservatives." For example, a small-business owner in New Jersey (D030 NJ M MC), when asked about the changes for African Americans,

Table 1.5 Average Number of Comments About Religion During Interview and Typical Religious Comment

Religious Category	Average Number of Comments	Typical Comment
Religious conservative	4.88	(B001 OH M MC) "I think religion has a lot to do with it. Church is probably the center of our social life. . . . My faith has also been probably more important in all."
Religious noncon-servative	2.64	(C014 NJ F UMC) "I identify more as being a family that likes to be with other families, who have similar family values. We are Methodist, but we are very open. We're going to a Catholic church now."
Other religious	1.97	(B022 OH M WC) "I'm not that religious. I believe in God. I go to church. I don't go around preaching."
Catholics	1.76	(E315 OH M UC) "White, middle-class Catholics. We go to church, I guess."
Jews	1.75	(D051 NJ M MC) "I started as a Roosevelt Democrat. The Jewish population tends to be Democrat. I am a social liberal and a financial conservative."
Nonreligious or secular (among those who made some comment)	1.45	(D009 NJ M WC) "I'm Methodist, Protestant, and never really, after confirmation, I can't say I've been back more than five times."

Source: Author's compilation.

replied: "A lot of times they are not qualified. . . . I think it causes more friction . . . because sometimes you know this person got in because he may not have been qualified, but he was black or African American and he's there and somebody else was better qualified and didn't get in."

In contrast to these politically more conservative groups, those in the "rich white liberal" category were distinctive because of both their liberal politics and their relative affluence compared to the other interviewees. A total of forty-two interviewees (17 percent) were included in this category. These interviewees generally made statements supportive of welfare state–type programs for both racial minorities and the poor. These interviewees were also more likely than the others to use structural explanations for inequality rather than individualistic explanations. Thus, they were likely to talk about poverty and unemployment and about the need for the government to support better schools or job

training. They expressed concern about inequality and a desire that something be done about it. And they implied that they were willing to be taxed more to support such programs. For example, a New Jersey man (D038 NJ M MC) who was unemployed at the time of the interview but who had worked as a salesman said with regard to whether it is right for some people to expect help from the government: "Because if somebody needs, if somebody is starting out at a lower station, I think it is only fair that the more well-to-do does reach down and help the less well-to-do. I think just because you're born to a certain situation doesn't mean that that is how you have to live the rest of your life."

I drew the label of "rich white liberal" from an upper-middle-class insurance executive from New Jersey (D047 NJ M MC) who defined himself as a "rich, white liberal, the easy kind." In making this statement, he was in fact revealing something very profound. For the most part, those for whom it was easy to be politically supportive of the civil rights movement and the expansion of the welfare state were those whose lives were least affected by such policies. In this regard, they were like my graduate school colleagues whose liberalism seemed to reflect the privileges of class and who often seemed far removed from the social issues that most concerned them.

There were another fourteen working-class interviewees (6 percent) who espoused similarly liberal views. These I called "working-class liberals." For example, an Ohio construction contractor (E368 OH M WC), when asked whether it was fair for those who have less to expect the government to help them, said:

> I don't think it's fair for people to expect anything. . . . You're entitled to what you work for, and I do believe that, but that being said, I think we as a society and we as a group of people have an absolute . . . that we have to also push a little over in the direction to help the people who don't . . . aren't quite as fortunate, or didn't have the advantages we have.

Finally, there were ninety-two interviewees (37 percent) whom I defined as the "apolitical majority." They were distinctive, in part, because they did not fit into any of the other categories. Most important, however, was that they did not have specific or consistent views on any of the political issues addressed, and by their own admission, they had never given much thought to such issues. For example, a New Jersey accountant (D028 NJ F MC) described her politics as "oh, nonexistent. . . . I don't even remember if I voted last time." Like the religious conservative group, the apolitical majority includes both working-class and middle-class people. The majority of the apolitical majority interviewees defined their politics as moderate, while 17 percent of this group said that they were liberal and 22 percent said that they were conservative.

Table 1.6 Sample Comments from Interviewees in Different Political Categories

Political Category	Sample Comment
Religious conservative (N = 46; 19 percent of sample)	(B002 OH M MC) "Well, we're taxed too high. I mean, you know our government . . . if you become successful . . . by your own means . . . they'll find a way to try to take some of that from you and redistribute it to people who maybe got involved . . . made poor life decisions, got involved in drugs, fried half their brain, now they're too stupid to make a decent living . . . I don't know, I think as far as the Christian community, I think they're pretty maligned a lot . . . and I think more the Christian community . . . they realize the moral decay in our country . . . and how it's not getting any better and by getting worse it only leads to worse things. It's not going to make things any better."
Working-class "racist" (N = 30; 12 percent of sample)	(E360 OH M WC) "I don't agree with the 'African American.' . . . They're not from Africa . . . but now we're treating them differently than the Irish American, the Italian American. . . . Why should they have special treatment? I had nothing to do with the selling of their people as slaves. . . . Everybody, even employers are afraid to fire them because they're black. . . . You can't reprimand them. . . . And I think today there's a huge reverse discrimination going on, and we haven't seen the tip of the iceberg with it yet."
Middle-class conservative (N = 11; 4.5 percent of sample)	(B013 OH F MC) "The whole issue of welfare and all that, I have a problem with . . . I don't want to label it as a black community kind of thing, but I think some of the leadership in the black community isn't doing them any justice at all either. I think their leadership, the people that are speaking for them, sometimes are just way off base. . . . I just hate the scare tactics they use with the older people and with the black community and the Hispanic community and whatever, all the minorities."
Apolitical majority (N = 92; 37 percent of sample)	(C011 NJ F WC) "Do I vote? No. I should because it's a right that I have and you know . . . I don't know. I can't sit in front of the TV and listen and watch the news . . . you know what I'm saying. Right now that doesn't interest me at all."
Religious nonconservative (N = 11; 4.5 percent of sample)	(F007 TN F MC) "Most people, I guess . . . I think there are people that grow up in horrible, horrible situations, and to think that they can sort through all of that themselves, I'm not so sure. . . . I think it's hard for some people, much harder than it is for others."
Working-class liberal (N = 14; 6 percent of sample)	(B005) OH F WC) "Well, sure, I believe everybody deserves help. I mean everybody, at some point in life, I don't think there's one person on the face of this earth that can say at some point in their life they hadn't wished there was someone there to give them something."
Rich white liberal (N = 42; 17 percent of sample)	(C009 NJ M MC) "Yes, I'm not sure that's the solution, but I think it's fair to ask . . . the kind of help that it's just unconscionable not to supply, like a safety net for the truly needy . . . definitely that kind of help has to exist, and I'm always afraid that it's being eroded by insensitivity."

Source: Author's compilation.

Hence, there was some variation within this group, but the main marker of the apolitical majority was their lack of political engagement. Table 1.6 provides examples of comments made by each type of interviewee.

Understanding the differences among these groups of interviewees and placing them within the context of post–civil rights politics should provide insight into the principle-policy gap. Although each group was distinctive in terms of its politics, I show in my analysis that they were similar to each other in terms of hoarding opportunities and drawing on social resources. The apparent political differences among these groups seemed to depend on how the civil rights movement had affected their ability to use opportunity hoarding and to access social resources to claim the privileges of whiteness. Those whose opportunity hoarding had become impeded because of civil rights legislation were more likely to express antigovernment and anti–welfare state views. Those who had felt less of a personal impact from the civil rights movement were more supportive of government efforts to ameliorate inequality.

Among the interviewees, the religious conservatives, the working-class "racists," and the middle-class conservatives expressed opposition to government policies, and many of them had developed antigovernment views, although they differed in the types of issues that seemed of most concern to them. In contrast, the rich white liberals, the working-class liberals, and sometimes the religious nonconservatives were less likely to express antigovernment views, but these groups also differed in their views on civil rights, as I discuss at various points in the analysis. As reflected in the label, the apolitical majority did not have clear political views about either the civil rights movement or post–civil rights politics. My discussion gives greater attention to religious conservatives, working-class "racists," rich white liberals, and the apolitical majority not only because these are the larger groups but also because these are the groups over which there is the most competition between the two political parties.

The political identifications among my interviewees were similar to those in the country as a whole. For example, in exit polls for the 2008 election, 34 percent of voters indicated that they were conservative, 44 percent that they were moderate, and only 22 percent that they were liberal.[13] My sample includes 36 percent who described their politics as conservative (with the religious conservatives representing 60 percent of that total and working-class "racists" another one-third), 40 percent who either called themselves moderate or did not have clear political views, and 23 percent who described their politics as liberal (the rich white liberals representing 75 percent of that total and the working-class liberals only 25 percent).

Ideological perspectives in the country have not changed much from the time I did the interviews for this study. A 2009 report by the Pew Re-

search Center concluded, "The political values and core attitudes that the Pew Research Center has monitored since 1987 show little overall ideological movement" (Kohut 2009, 1). The views expressed by the apolitical majority, although often inconsistent or unclear, were closer in content and tone to the conservative interviewees than they were to the liberal interviewees. Thus, liberal political views were distinctive among these white interviewees, whereas moderate and conservative views were more blurred and harder to distinguish from each other.

Myrdal believed that whites would face a moral dilemma and thus would be motivated to act politically to support change when confronted with the incompatibility between racial inequality and the tenets of the American creed. I provide an explanation for why most white Americans do not face the kind of moral dilemma that Myrdal anticipated and instead feel removed from racial issues. Even so, the two major political parties compete to gain white support for policies that either reinforce or undermine the substance of the civil rights movement. Post–civil rights politics has been especially hotly contested, and therefore understanding the political landscape of the interviewees is an important part of our story. I endeavor in my analysis to explain the interviewees' views about inequality, civil rights, and government.

The Plan of the Book

The data from this study are brought to bear to address specific issues in each chapter. Chapter 2 explores what is at stake for those looking for jobs—in other words, the context of opportunity hoarding and the use of social capital. A key point of this chapter is that even "good jobs" are under constant threat from the actions of employers intended to erode the protections that workers create for themselves. Finding jobs that are removed from market competition and protecting these jobs from employers' continual efforts to force them back into market competition create tensions when programs such as those associated with the civil rights movement try to open up access to the jobs that whites have tried to keep for themselves. In this chapter, I first explore the images that the interviewees use to describe what is fair for people to expect out of life, because this defines for them the outcomes they want to achieve. I then explain how opportunity hoarding addresses the problem of vulnerability in the labor market and why opportunity hoarding is about privilege rather than merit. I also discuss the interface between opportunity hoarding and racial politics.

In chapter 3, I look at one of the primary means of opportunity hoarding, namely, the use of social resources—social, financial, and cultural capital—drawn from family and friends. In this chapter, I provide ex-

amples of white job-seekers' extensive use of social resources. The chapter also examines the conditions under which social capital is exchanged among family and friends and the limits of using social capital. Importantly, in this chapter I look at the paradox introduced by the effort required to make use of social capital—namely, that nobody makes it on their own, but nobody makes it without their own effort. I show how effort is then translated cognitively into merit, even though access to social capital is not earned. I also explore in this chapter the inconsistencies in the thinking of interviewees who claim that everyone deserves a chance but who see no relationship between inequality and their own use of social capital and hoarding of opportunities among their family members and friends.

In chapter 4, I examine the legitimating myth of individualism that has so strong a grip on Americans' images of their own lives. I describe the central importance that most Americans place on hard work, effort, motivation, and merit as bases for getting ahead. In this regard, I describe the responses of the interviewees to questions about what most contributed to their life outcomes or to obstacles they may have faced along the way, and I discuss their explanations for inequality, including what makes people rich or poor and what accounts for racial inequality. In this chapter, I also explore the relationship between racial resentment and traditional values, including egalitarianism and individualism. I consider the differences between respondents who use structural explanations for inequality and those who use individualist explanations, and I highlight the importance of personal responsibility in the views held by white Americans with regard to what people must do to make it in the world.

In chapter 5, I turn to the politics of race and to the role of whites in post–civil rights politics. As noted, Myrdal was interested not only in white attitudes toward racial inequality but also in whether whites would respond to the increasing prominence of racial inequality following World War II by actually doing something about it. In this chapter, I discuss the complicated historical context that shaped contemporary racial politics in the post–civil rights period. One of the themes I address in this chapter is the risk that U.S. political parties will lose more white votes than they gain when they compete for the black vote. I examine the role of civil rights in party competition before, during, and after the civil rights movement; the controversy about whether it was racial politics or economics that led to the transformation of the Southern vote; the emergence of religious politics to replace racial politics (and with it the close association that developed between religious conservatives and the Republican Party); the competition for the white working-class vote; the efforts of the Democratic Party to find a third way that would enable

them to avoid the costs of their commitment to civil rights; the controversies about the bases of voting behavior; and the competition for various segments of the white vote as it relates to the interviewees in this study.

Beginning with chapter 6, I provide a more in-depth profile of each of the sociopolitical groups among the interviewees and discuss their place within post–civil rights politics. Given that Myrdal assumed that at least some white Americans would be troubled by racial inequality and moved to do something about it, I take a look in this chapter at the interviewees' views about economic inequality and what they think the role of government should be with regard to helping those who have less economically. In my analysis, I argue that concern for obtaining and keeping good jobs drives much of the interviewee outlook about government policy. The interviewees who expressed concern about inequality and who favored government helping the poor were those with liberal politics and those with a favorable outlook in their own economic situation. They also constituted a minority of the sample. In contrast, interviewees who expressed less concern about economic inequality and who were less favorable about government actions to help the poor included both working-class respondents who had themselves been struggling economically and middle-class respondents who were relatively worse off than they might have expected to be given their education. Religiously identified interviewees with conservative politics were also less concerned about inequality and were more equivocal about government's role in helping the poor. The views of these interviewees, however, were less tied to their own economic situation than to an ideology that linked their moral outlook to self-reliance and antigovernment sentiment. Interviewees without firm political views expressed more conservative than moderate or liberal views about inequality and about government help for the poor. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of how these political views are linked to the current competition between the political parties for various segments of the white vote and to the critical concern among whites about maintaining access to good jobs (jobs protected from the market and with wages taken out of competition).

Chapter 7 takes the analysis of interviewee views about inequality and social change a step further by providing information on the interviewee response to questions about taxes and welfare. To get at these issues, I asked the interviewees if they felt that "people like them" got what they deserved from the government and whether they thought they would be "better off" if some people made fewer demands on the government. In analyzing the responses to these questions, I discovered that most interviewees have a very restrictive view of what constitutes the "government," often reducing government to transfer payments like welfare or unemployment benefits. Many interviewees said that they got

"nothing" from the government and that they wanted "nothing." Interestingly, the majority of the interviewees claimed that having fewer demands made on the government would not affect them very much. The most conservative groups expressed more concern about demands on the government, while most of the other groups said that it was not a major concern.

Chapter 8 explores the attitudes of the interviewees toward affirmative action, the issue that probably best exemplifies the views about racial inequality. Because those who are opposed to affirmative action policies often claim that it constitutes a form of discrimination against whites, I start the chapter with a summary of interviewee responses to a question about whether they had ever experienced discrimination. I found that the interviewee conceptions of discrimination are very diffuse and are not informed by legal definitions of discrimination. Very few interviewees reported incidents of discrimination that might be covered by the law. To address attitudes about affirmative action, I asked the interviewees about "changes that have occurred in access to education and jobs" for women, African Americans, and immigrants. There were wide variations in the interview responses on this topic, but the general pattern of responses showed more favorable views of changes in access to education and jobs for women, much less favorable views for African Americans, and even less favorable views for immigrants. The responses reported in this chapter show the clearest differences in how the policy views of the interviewees relate to their political identifications.

Chapter 9 revisits the issues that Myrdal raised about why racial inequality would present whites with a moral dilemma that would move them to political action and to support social change. Although I argue that Myrdal was far more prescient in his analysis than some of his critics have acknowledged, I outline in this chapter three major issues that Myrdal could not foresee and that, I argue, have contributed to the American non-dilemma we have observed. Myrdal framed his analysis in terms of the discrimination of whites toward blacks (and other minorities) rather than in terms of the favoritism or advantage that whites provide to each other. Myrdal also had strong faith in the institutional foundations of progressive social change and expected both New Deal politics and unions to have more impact on the transformation of civil rights than has turned out to be the case. And finally, Myrdal underestimated the sustained political influence of the U.S. South in its resistance to civil rights and its ability to continue to shape the political environment of U.S. politics. In my conclusion, I discuss the implications of these issues.

Each section of the book is intended to support the main point, namely, that racial inequality is reproduced in the post–civil rights period, not primarily through racism (of its various types), but rather through the

processes by which whites help each other obtain unearned advantages. I further argue that whites' advantage, preference, privilege, or favoritism enables them to support their families and enjoy the kind of life that they think of as reasonable or "fair." Because whites' advantages involve doing good things for other people like themselves and not necessarily (in their consciousness) doing bad things to black people, the whites in this study (and presumably most in the country) do not think of themselves as contributing to adverse outcomes for blacks. They do not perceive any interdependence between their own outcomes and those of blacks, and they do not feel that they have done anything about which they should feel guilty. Thus, when whites in the United States think about the issue of racial inequality, they are puzzled, occasionally concerned, and sometimes angry, but they do not feel the pressures of a moral dilemma that would lead them to support social change. Instead, they feel that, if there is a problem, it is incumbent on blacks to address it themselves, to take responsibility, to work harder, to be persistent, and to have hope. While some may feel that the government should do more, most feel that the government has either done what is necessary or sometimes has done too much.

Given the sense among whites in the United States that racial problems are embedded in the black community and have very little to do with them (that is, with whites), there is a strong consensus among most whites that blacks need to help themselves if they are to achieve the promise of the civil rights movement. When whites think about blacks helping themselves rather than relying on government, however, whites do not have in mind their own use of social and cultural capital that has allowed them to gain advantage and unearned privilege. Instead, they think about a job "market" in which everyone who tries hard enough can participate and in which the "best" person should win out. As will be seen in this book, however, most whites try to find ways to protect themselves from the market, and they try to take their wages out of competition; thus, when they affirm that "equal opportunity" should be extended to blacks and that blacks should be responsible themselves for their own economic outcomes, the meaning and implications of that commitment to the principles of civil rights are not at all clear.

Until the current political context, many had taken for granted that the civil rights legislation already passed, the court cases already won, and the attitudes about civil rights expressed in national surveys by whites were settled issues. In recent years, however, many have been surprised at the fragility of these past successes. The institutional foundations of the civil rights movement have been attacked, resisted, and eroded through a long political struggle that has been orchestrated from above but responded to from below. Competition for segments of the white vote has been a key part of this political struggle. In this book, I try

to show why there is no moral dilemma among whites because of racial inequality and therefore how and why whites' political commitments are tenuous and unsettled on the issue of civil rights. To create the kind of moral dilemma that Myrdal anticipated and thus gain the political support of whites for policy as well as principle requires a different understanding of how racial inequality is reproduced. It also requires a resolution of the conflict between labor rights and civil rights, a resolution that will protect both white and nonwhite workers rather than placing both in increasing jeopardy. I hope that this book provides some insight into these important issues.