

Theoretical Perspectives¹

Attempts to explain the content and sources of ethnic or racial group differences in attitudes, opinions, and behavior in the United States have long occupied the attention of students of American society. Although, as will become clear, there is considerable overlap, three relatively distinct lines of theory may be identified. Some theorists see ethnic or racial group differences in political attitudes and behavior as a function of differential group interests; others see the differences as rooted in or, more precisely, simply manifestations of different ethnic group heritages or cultures; a third school of thought views the differences as structural in origin, reflecting the differential location of groups in the class, authority, or, more broadly, "opportunity" structures of the society. Although there are important elements of congruence in the three theoretical approaches, we begin by laying out the essential distinguishing features of each and then move toward some kind of overarching theoretical perspective.

But before doing this, a note on our use of ethnicity and race. We recognize, with Jones (1972), McLemore (1972), Blauner (1969), and other students of black politics, that there may be semantic and substantive problems in using the terms *race* and *ethnic group* interchangeably, or in carrying over theories derived from studies of the experiences of European ethnic groups in the United States to study of persons of African origins. McLemore states the problem this way (1972:323-24):

By a racial group, we are referring to those minorities in a society which are set off from the majority not only by cultural differences, but in a more profound sense by

skin color (high visibility) and near total inability of that group to assimilate into the larger society.... An ethnic group by definition is a group of people who differ culturally from the dominant population, but share enough characteristics in common with the main population to be accepted after a certain period of time.... A reading of history clearly points out that Black people as a legal and theoretical component of the American system of government have been left out of its political life—not mistakenly, but on purpose. Therefore, any theory or frame of reference dealing with Black politics must take into account the heretofore systematic and studied exclusion of Blacks from the American political system.

McLemore thus grounds his approach quite correctly in the unique historical experience of Afro-Americans as compared to European groups. Historically, this makes sense, yet conceptually it tends to confuse and inhibit comparative studies in ethnicity. In addition, as Holden writes (1973:209–10), there is an element of Anglo-Saxon chauvinism in this usage:

...it is superficial and inaccurate to simultaneously define "Italo-Americans" as ethnics but Anglo-Protestants as nonethnics. Each is as "ethnic" as the other. Moreover, I maintain that there is an implicit snobbery in the ordinary use of the term "ethnic," for it somehow implies that "ethnics" are merely those white people who somehow deviate from the "normal" cultural-political standards of the Anglo-Protestant population. That implicit snobbery has made it possible for social scientists (and others) to suppose that "ethnicity" was essentially abnormal, undesirable, and would in due course "disappear." Such estimates are wrong. Ethnicity is one of the fundamental bases of social organization and social division and is at least as persistent—and often more divisive politically—than social class.

Thus, we prefer to treat race as a category of ethnic group. There are many definitions of ethnicity and ethnic group in the literature (Isajiw, 1974) but Schermerhorn's usage is both theoretically comprehensive and empirically relevant for our purposes:

a collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic ele-

ments defined as the epitome of their peoplehood. Examples of such symbolic elements are: kinship patterns, physical contiguity (as in localism or sectoralism), religious affiliation, languages or dialect forms, tribal affiliations, nationality, phenotypical features or any combination of these. A necessary accompaniment is some consciousness of kind among members of the group (1973:12).

This definition allows us in the United States context to subsume blacks in the ethnic category while taking account of their unique historical and structural location in the society. This also facilitates drawing on theories for comparative purposes drawn from any discrete ethnic group experience, without denigrating or ignoring the heritages or experiences of any group.

Interests, Class, and Culture

Prior to the 1960s, students of race and ethnicity in the United States generally did not employ interest group theory in their explanations of mass attitudes and behavior. Although as early as 1963, Glazer and Moynihan argued that, at least in New York City, the major ethnic groups were essentially giant interest groups (1963, 1970:17), most students have taken the position of Hawkins and Lorinkas (1970:18) that "Ethnic minorities rarely act as interest groups or parties." As a result, however, of the resurgence of ethnic activism in the 1960s and 1970s, *interest* as a theoretical perspective has gained increasing prominence in the literature.

The theoretical case for ethnic politics as interest politics is made by, among others, Bell (1975), Parsons (1975), Patterson (1977), and Cohen (1974). Bell argues that in modern society cultural differences between ethnic groups have withered away to become nothing more than "empty symbols," with little vitality or relevance to the group's political attitudes and behavior. However, these symbolic cultural patterns, while devoid of substantive content, can serve as a basis for political mobilization. This is so because, although ethnic groups in the United States may share the same culture or value system, they are differentially distributed in the social structure and as a result have or perceive themselves to have different interests that give rise to different political attitudes and modes of behavior. In Bell's lan-

guage, ethnicity becomes a matter of "strategic efficacy." Bell writes that ethnic politics is

one response in many instances of hitherto disadvantaged groups to the breakup of old and historically fused social and cultural, political and economic dominance structures and represents an effort by these groups to use a cultural mode for economic and political advancement.

Ethnicity is best understood not as a primordial phenomenon in which deeply held values have to reemerge but as "a strategic choice by individuals who in other circumstances would choose other group membership as a means of gaining some power and privilege" (Bell, 1975:171). Similarly, Cohen (1974:xviii) writes, "The members of interest groups who cannot organize themselves formally will thus tend to make use, though largely unconsciously, of whatever cultural mechanisms are available in order to articulate the organization of their grouping. And it is here, in such situations that political ethnicity comes into being." While this theoretical perspective is relatively new in the United States, it is supported by a smattering of recent research (Goering, 1971; Howitt and Moniz, 1976; Schiller, 1977; Katznelson, 1981:108-89; Smith, 1988).

To sum up, the interest theorists argue that ethnic politics is not class or cultural conflict; rather, it is interest conflict that is often masked by cultural symbolism. This cultural symbolism facilitates the articulation of group interests in situations of political conflict and competition, giving rise to differential group attitude sets and behavior patterns. Such competition is often between different ethnic class groups, but it may be between ethnic groups of similar class backgrounds, as in the struggle over schools, housing, political office, and employment observed by Katznelson (1981) in New York's "City trenches."

In contrast, the cultural theorists argue that different ethnic groups exhibit different cultures—values, beliefs, attitudes, or lifestyles—and that observed differences in attitudes and behavior are not merely symbolic, but are authentic cultural differences. This perspective has been traced to the early work of M.G. Smith (Smith, 1965; Katznelson, 1972), but in recent years it has been most forcefully stated by advocates seeking to reassert and revitalize ethnic awareness among European ethnic groups in the United States, especially among southern and eastern European Catholics. Advocates of this position (Novak, 1971; Gambino, 1974; Greeley, 1974; Krickus, 1976; Weed, 1973)—and it is an

advocacy position as well as an academic one—contend that an ethnic group is best understood as a “self-perceived group of people who hold in common a set of traditions not shared by others with whom they are in contact” (De Vos and Romanucci-Ross, 1975:9). Such ethnic cultural traditions are said to include fundamental attitudes regarding sex, children, and family relations, as well as political attitudes and behavior (Novak, 1971:196–233; Gambino, 1974). The cultural theorists do not ignore structural, socioeconomic or interest-group factors rather, they argue that in ethnic studies “culture must be the key unit of analysis.” In this view ethnic politics is not symbolic, what you see is what you get: the expression of ethnic (cultural) distinctiveness in political attitudes and behavior.

Finally, probably the most influential theory of ethnic group differences in attitudes and behavior is the class theory. Two broad types of class based explanations of ethnic politics may be distinguished, class and “ethclass.” A number of scholars argue that what appears to be an ethnic phenomenon is really a class phenomenon based on a working class culture that is similar across different ethnic groups and that produces similar patterns of political behavior (Gans, 1962; Whyte, 1943; Milbrath, 1965:139; Verba and Nie, 1972:127; Dahl, 1961:11–86). Specifically, these writers suggest that there is no independent relationship between ethnicity and political opinion and behavior; rather, ethnic politics is an artifact of the lower middle class. The class theory, then, is that ethnic politics is not a function of differential ethnic cultures, values, or interests, but rather a function of the differential distribution of ethnic groups in a society’s occupational or, to use Hershberg’s (1979) term, “opportunity” structure. As Dahl (1961:54) nicely put it, “Ethnic politics is class politics in disguise.”

Related to the class theory but also to the argument of the cultural and interest theorists as well is Gordon’s ethclass concept. Gordon apparently developed the notion to call attention to the observed fact that in the United States ethnicity is generally related to social class, such that some ethnic groups are disproportionately middle and upper class, while others are disproportionately poor and working class. Consequently, the student of ethnicity must be careful to distinguish and specify attitudes and behavior that are class-based, ethnic-based, or based in some combination of the two. This is a potentially important contribution because heretofore, students of ethnic politics have tended to view attitudes and behavior dichotomously, as either

ethnic- or class-based, with the view that distinctive ethnic opinions and behavior should wither away as lower class ethnic groups achieve middle class status. Over time in the United States, then, one would only observe class based opinions as all ethnic groups come to resemble each other in terms of distribution in the class structure. In this interpretation ethnic opinion and behavior persist only as long as class differences between ethnic groups persist.

The foregoing discussion of the basis of the ethclass construct is extrapolated from Gordon (1964). He is not specific in his book about the origins, abstraction, specification, measurement, or the logical or empirical interrelations among the ethnic and class variables. Indeed, essentially all that Gordon tells us about the concept is "the portion of social space created by the intersection of the ethnic group with social class" (1964:51). This scanty definition, without elaboration, is surprising for a concept that has become so influential in theory and research on race and ethnic relations (on the use of the concept in ethnic and race studies in the United States, see Dillingham, 1981; Nelson, 1979; Smith, 1988; Gilliam and Whitby, 1989). It is unfortunate as well, because it allows students to operationalize, test, and interpret the concept in any way they wish, which has inhibited theory building and the cumulative character of research in the field. We noted earlier (see p. xiii) that Gordon's formulation is very close to the ethos concept developed at about the same time by Banfield and Wilson in their book *City Politics* (1963:38-44) and tested and interpreted in subsequent articles (1964; 1971). Neither in the book nor the articles is Gordon's work noted, although the convergence between the two is close. Banfield and Wilson claim that their ethos formulation facilitates tests of the hypothesis that "Both the tendency of the voter to take a public regarding view and the content of that view are largely functions of his participation in the subculture that is definable in ethnic and income terms" (1964:876). More specifically, they posit the existence of two cultures or ethos, the first of which is an Anglo-Saxon middle-class one that has been "acquired" by upper-status Jews (and paradoxically, by lower-status blacks) and that is "public regarding" in its attitudes and voting behavior; i.e., it seeks the public interest or the "good of the community as a whole" rather than particularistic individual or group interests. The other is a lower-class, immigrant, ethnic (Irish, Italian, Polish) ethos that is particularistic in attitudes and behavior, taking no "account of the public good" (1963:41). Thus, Banfield and Wilson posit an ethclass

phenomenon where ethnicity and social class intersect to produce distinctive subcultures, insofar as their conception of the public interest is concerned.

But, as Hennessy (1970) points out in a stunning critique, the ethos construct is so marred by problems in concept formation, logical structure, testing, and interpretation that it is nearly useless for scientific purposes; indeed, because of its enormous influence in the field it has operated to inhibit rather than facilitate progress and growth in the urban politics subfield. Hennessy's critique is too subtle and complex to do justice to it here, but for our purposes in drawing parallels with ethclass the following points are important. Hennessy writes:

It is unclear, for example, whether the difference in the two ethos is due to ethnicity, social class or some unspecified combination of the two. Moreover, it is not clear if a combination of ethnicity *and* working class status is the origin of the private-regarding ethos. If it is a combination of the two, why should upward mobility produce a change in ethos?... Finally, the "theory" does not specify the environments in which the "mapping" or socialization process takes place; that is, what is it about immigrant subcultures which makes them more "private regarding"? Were these cultural values imprinted in the "old country" or through interaction in subcultures in this country, or what? (1970:542-43).

Hennessy's queries point toward the usefulness of the ethclass construct because, properly specified, it should allow us to move toward a measure of analytic clarity. First, ethclass tells us explicitly that *some* ethnic differences in attitudes and behavior may be the effects of the joint interaction of ethnicity and class. Second, it suggests that upward mobility should result in a change in *some* attitudes and behavior as individuals are acculturated to a middle-class ethos. On Hennessy's third point two things are suggested: First, that we should look historically to ethnic group cultures for the sources of ethnic ethos or attitudes and behavior; and second, that structural considerations (the location of ethnic groups in the class structure) in combination with historically understood ethnic-based cultural socialization patterns (in home, neighborhood, church, and media) may predispose *some* middle-class ethnics to retain attitudes and behavior in common with their lower-class ethnic counterparts. With a variant on nonclass-, nonethnic-based "core American cul-

ture," this is essentially what we attempt in our use of the eth-class construct in this study.

Given this sketch of the three major theoretical perspectives, we can now turn to the specific theoretical problem of this study, which is, How does one account for observed differences in black-white attitudes and behavior? Are these race group differences a function of class position, cultural distinctiveness, or distinct racial group interests? While the alternative theories at first blush may appear to conflict, on close examination they are complementary. The interest theorists view racial differences in attitudes and behavior as a function of perceived racial group interests, a perception that may cut across class or cultural differences within a racial group. That is, blacks and whites in the United States may share a common class and culture but also hold different political attitudes and engage in different patterns of political behavior because they believe that such is strategically efficacious in advancement of race interests, and race interests are perceived as more important than class or cultural concerns.

This approach is congruent with much of the recent research on the political attitudes and behavior of middle-class blacks in the post civil rights era. Aberbach and Walker (1970:380), using data from the Detroit Area Survey, report that upper-status blacks have become part of a "black political community" that includes persons from all social classes, and their attitudes are "more strongly affected by their sense of empathy and identification with their racial community than by their feelings of achievement or even their personal expectations about the future." In a longitudinal study using national survey data, Hagner and Pierce (1984) show a steady rise in black political conceptualization in terms of "group benefit," defined as the extent to which an individual evaluates political objects in terms of their negative or positive impact on group interests. From 1960 to 1980 Hagner and Pierce show that among blacks group interest increased from 26 percent to 54 percent, while among whites the comparable figures were 42 percent in 1960 and 28 percent in 1980. The Hagner and Pierce data show also that this rise in racial group interest among blacks was not an effect or function of class (measured by education), generation, age cohort, political involvement, or partisan affiliation. More recently, in an exhaustive inquiry into the intersection of race and class in the United States, Jackman and Jackman (1983:48-49) report that middle-class whites tend to exhibit stronger class bonds, while the black middle class exhibits a "radically different pattern" of

race identification and preference that is approximately twice as high as their own class identification and preference. What these findings seem to suggest is that members of groups that are historically subordinate on the basis of an aspect of their ethnicity tend to identify with the interests of the ethnic collectivity rather than with their class or cultural groupings, especially when such ethnic interests are given salience, as in the recent case of black Americans, through movements of mass mobilization (Peterson, 1979; Smith, 1981).

Class and cultural theorists of ethnic attitudes and behavior agree that culture is an important unit of analysis, but the class theorists suggest that distinctive ethnic group attitudes and behavior will wither away as persons from various ethnic collectivities move from the working to the middle class. Gordon (1964, 1975), for example, contends that historically, massive (although not complete or uniform) acculturation to Anglo-Saxon norms and patterns has taken place in the United States as a result of the transformation in the social class locations of European ethnic groups. Whether one wishes to describe the norms and patterns as Anglo-Saxon is a matter of debate, the point is, however, that it is assumed by proponents of the class approach that the process of ethnic acculturation occurs with upward mobility, such that middle-class Americans of whatever ethnic origin come to share common attitudes and behavior patterns. Thus, class theory would suggest that middle-class blacks would exhibit attitudes and behavior akin to their white counterparts, while lower-class persons, white or black, would have more in common with their class than with their ethnic communities.

The cultural perspective either questions the efficacy of the historical acculturation process (Glazer and Moynihan, 1963; Parenti, 1967; Wolfinger, 1965) and/or suggests that in the late 1960s there was a rediscovery and revitalization of ethnic cultural heritages in the United States (Novak, 1971; Krickus, 1976; Weed, 1973). As a consequence, even middle-class ethnics display attitudes and behavior patterns in common with co-ethnics rather than with their class. Thus, one would expect middle-class blacks to have more in common culturally with lower-class blacks than with middle-class whites.

This would be the case especially since blacks constitute one of the more salient ethnclasses in the United States. A disproportionately large part of the group today is not middle class, and a large part of the group that is middle class is of rather recent vintage (post-civil rights era; see Landry, 1987). Thus, one

would anticipate that there might be, as the interest theorists suggest, a greater degree of identification with the ideological or policy preferences of this large lower-class segment of the group. One would also expect that among the new, upwardly mobile black middle class one would find more similarities with the lower class culturally, given that acculturation to middle-class attitudes and behavior might not yet be complete.

Thus, for purposes of a study of racial group differences in mass culture in the United States one may derive useful propositions from each of the alternative theories. From the interest approach one may propose the hypothesis that middle-class blacks will adopt policy preferences congruent with their racial rather than class group; from the class perspective we may propose that on nonideological or policy concerns middle-class blacks may exhibit attitudes and behavior similar to their white counterparts; the cultural perspective suggests that because of residual cultural attributes and/or the 1960s movement of black cultural identification and revitalization, there may be some attitudinal and behavioral patterns that cut across class lines in the black community. Finally, the ethclass variant alerts us to the possibility that given the intersection of race and class in the United States today and the relatively smaller size of the black middle class (and its recent emergence in many cases) that one should anticipate cultural as well as interest compatibility among class groupings in the black community. Thus, each of the three theories tends to converge toward a structural explanation: ethnic groups in modern society differ in attitudes and behavior, to the extent that they do, because of their differential location in the social structure, historically, at present, or both, which in turn gives rise to different interests and/or cultures. It is on the basis of this theoretical eclecticism that we proceed.²

The Structural Basis of Racial Differences in Mass Opinion in the United States

Ira Katznelson (1972:137) has forcefully argued that in ethnic research and analysis one should not put "the behavioral cart before the structural horse." That is, without an a priori analysis of structure it is difficult, if not impossible, to accurately analyze ethnic cultural patterns, socialization, voting behavior, or protest activity (Katznelson, 1972:145). And Van der Berghe (1967) writes, "Insofar as systems of ethnic relations are

largely determined by structural asymmetries in wealth, prestige and power between groups, an inventory of cultural differences gives one a very incomplete picture of group relations. Cultural differences are frequently symptoms rather than determinants of intergroup behavior, even in systems where the distinguishing criteria of group membership are cultural" (1967:141). Important contributions to this emphasis on structure in ethnic studies in the United States have been made by Hershberg et al. (1979), Yancey, Erickson, and Julani (1976), Thernstrom (1973), and Esslinger (1974); thus it is that before turning to the survey data on the attitudes and behavior of the respondents we seek to establish a structural context for the analysis. By attempting to locate blacks and whites in the social structure of the nation, we are in a better position to interpret the data on racial group cultural patterns, interests, and political behavior.

Although he breaks slightly with this position in *City Trenches* and other recent work (1981:25-44), Katznelson suggests that structural analysis in ethnic research can best be promoted by "adhering strictly to Weber's multidimensional approach to stratification that distinguishes between the power resources of class, status and political position" (1972:154).

Although there tends to be a close correspondence empirically between class, status, and power, they are not, as Weber points out, identical; therefore, it is necessary to isolate each analytically in order to identify potential differential bases of ethnic group stratification. This is especially necessary in ethnic research since, in its extreme, Weber argues, the status dimension of power is "ethnic" (Weber, 1946:189).

Our approach in this section, then, is to analyze census and other data in order to determine the relative standing of blacks and whites in the social structure of the United States with respect to class, status, and political office.

Class

Weber (1946:181) understands a class to constitute a number of people who have in common "specific causal components of their life chances" insofar as the components affect access to goods and opportunities for income in a marketplace. Although Weber indicates that property or lack of property is the basic component of class analysis, in bourgeois society most persons are propertyless, and therefore their life chances or class situations are determined by their labor. As a result, property fails to

differentiate between the masses of citizens with respect to class; rather, such persons' life chances in the market are determined by their occupations and resultant opportunities for income. Thus, in trying to locate blacks and whites in the nation's class structure the focus is primarily on occupational and income distributions. Income and occupation in modern society, however, are substantially determined by education; therefore, the educational attainments of the groups are also analyzed. In addition to these standard sociological indices of class situation, two other measures—home ownership and welfare dependency—are employed. To complete our description of the class basis of race formations in the United States, we also examine racial differences in wealth and asset ownership.

Analysis of the data in Table 1.1 shows that on the standard sociological measures of class—education, employment, and income, and with respect to home ownership and welfare dependency—the class structure of the United States is easily differentiated on race lines, with whites possessing a decidedly advantaged class position. Whites are better educated (twice as likely to have been graduated from college), and are twice as likely to be employed; when employed, blacks are much more likely to be employed in low-wage service and laborer occupations. For example, in 1980 blacks, although only about 10 percent of the civilian labor force, constituted 14 percent of operators, fabricators, and laborers and 18 percent of service workers. Differential representation was even more evident at the level of detailed occupational categories. Blacks accounted for 54 percent of all private household cleaners and servants, one-third of maids and garbage collectors, and one-fourth of nursing aides, orderlies, and attendants, but less than 3 percent of lawyers, doctors, and other highly paid professionals (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1983:11). This higher rate of unemployment and disproportionate representation in low-wage occupations results in a substantial gap in black-white income (blacks earn 60 percent of white income) and the representation of blacks among the poor and welfare-dependent at a rate three times greater than whites.

Net worth, more than income, constitutes the real basis of class location in capitalist societies. Current census data show total net worth of U.S. households at \$6.8 trillion. Blacks account for \$192 billion of this amount, less than 2.8 percent compared to their 12 percent of the population. On a per-household basis, the average net worth of blacks is \$3,400, compared to \$39,000 for whites. This means that whites possess 12 times-

Table 1.1 Selected Characteristics on the Social and Economic Status of the Black and White Populations in the United States, 1982

VARIABLE	BLACKS	WHITES ¹
<i>Education</i>		
Median years	11.3	12.7
% High School Graduates ²	79	87
% College Graduates ³	13	25
<i>Employment</i>		
Unemployment	18.9	8.6
Managerial and Professional Specialty	6.1	95.9
Technical, Sales, Administrative	8.3	91.7
Support Services	13	87
Operators, Fabricators, Laborers	19.1	80.9
<i>Income</i>		
Median Family	\$19,620	\$25,470
% Families Below Poverty	34	10
% Families Receiving AFDC	38	11
% Families in Owner-occupied Homes	44	64

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *America's Black Population, 1982: A Statistical View* (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1983).

1. The employment data for whites includes other races (excluding blacks), i.e. Asians and Hispanics. Whites constitute approximately 92% of the category.
2. Percentages are for persons 25 and older.
3. Percentages are for persons 25 and older.

the net worth of blacks (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1984). Looking at the extremes in household wealth, 54 percent of blacks report net worth of less than \$5,000, compared to 22 percent of whites. But at the top of the economic order, only 3.9 percent of black households, compared to 23 percent of whites, report net worth of more than \$100,000. Black assets or wealth is concentrated in home equity (65 percent) and automobiles (11 percent), while white wealth is more diversified. In Table 1.2 data are displayed on selected household assets by race. The most basic conclusion to be drawn from the data is the relative absence of black wealth in other than the durable assets of homes and cars. In municipal and corporate bonds, money market funds, government securities, stocks, mutual funds, and certificates of deposit, black wealth is minuscule.

In summary, the data on class clearly document the ethclass phenomenon: Race and class intersect sharply to yield racial communities that are disproportionately poor and working class and disproportionately middle and upper class.

Table 1.2 Household Wealth and Asset Ownership by Race

ASSET	BLACK	WHITE
Own Home	44.0%	67%
Automobiles	65	89
Other Real Estate	3	11
Rental Property	7	10
Mortgages	.1	3
Own Business/Profession	4	14
Money Market Accounts	3	18
Certificates of Deposit	4	21
U.S. Government Securities	.1	2
Stocks and Mutual Funds	5	22
Municipal/Corporate Bonds	.3	3

Source: Adapted from U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Report. *Household Wealth and Asset Ownership* (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1984): Tables 1-2.

Status

Of the three dimensions of Weber's approach to stratification, status is the most difficult to gauge empirically because it tends to be subjective and symbolic, based, as Weber (1946:187) writes, on "positive or negative social estimations of honor." And although persons may possess status on the basis of individual achievement of honor or deference, generally status is ascribed, a group phenomenon, so that in Weber's schema we refer to status-groups. Consequently, an individual's status is linked not to attainment of personal deference or honor but to the deference or honor accorded her or his group by the society. In order, therefore, to determine status it is useful to look, at least initially, at the history and customs of the society with respect to the honor or deference accorded individuals on the basis of their membership in discrete racial, religious, or nationality groups.

This approach to the problem renders our task relatively easy given the well documented history of racial and religious intolerance in the United States (Higham, 1955; Meyers, 1943; Frederickson, 1971; Jordan, 1968). This history demonstrates that the largely English founders of the republic established an ethnic-status hierarchy based on religion, nationality, and race. At the top of the hierarchy were white Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs), followed by Catholics, Jews, and blacks. This ethnic status system, as Baltzell demonstrated in *The Protestant Estab-*

lishment (1964), endured into the postwar World War II period, and while there is evidence of a decline of ethnic intolerance in recent decades, this historical status system probably still forms the basis and point of departure of ethnic status differentiation in modern American society.

In 1978 the National Conference of Christians and Jews (NCCJ) commissioned Louis Harris Associates to conduct a survey of a nationwide sample in order to "provide an inventory of where America stands in its attitudes toward racial and religious minorities" (NCCJ, 1978:i). The survey provides measures of what the white Protestant majority thinks about each of the ethnic groups (Catholics, Jews, Hispanics, and blacks) and data on the attitudes of minorities toward each other. In general, the survey results show continued intolerance toward minorities by the "majority"; however, the study shows that "Catholics are widely viewed by non-Catholics in America as part of the mainstream of life in this country [and] by and large not discriminated against" (NCCJ, 1978:xv). Jews and especially blacks, on the other hand, still experience considerable prejudice and intolerance, while Hispanics have "suffered from being ignored by the dominant white community" (NCCJ, 1978:iv-xx). Thus, the results of this recent empirical inquiry tend to suggest confirmation of the historical status hierarchy in the United States, except that non-Hispanic Catholics appear to have experienced more status mobility in recent years than have Jews and blacks. (For more recent data on white attitudes toward blacks that confirm the Harris findings see Schuman, Steeth and Bobo, 1985).

Perhaps the most we can say about the status system of the United States in the 1980s was that it is ethnically stratified, with whites in a higher position vis a vis nonwhites. Thus, there is correspondence between the nation's class and status system, insofar as race is concerned.

Power

Power is measured by the extent of holding authoritative positions in society—in the United States, elected and appointed officials of government. Dahrendorf (1959) has argued that in modern society authority relations may be more important than class relations in determining an individual's life chances. We may not agree with Dahrendorf's argument in order to accept the notion that possession of authority (state power) is an important criterion of a group's location in the social structure.

There are about a half-million elected officials in the United States and an uncounted number of appointed officials who exercise the authority of the state. Systematic data are not available on the representation of blacks in appointed office nationally, however, the data reported in Table 1.3 on representation of blacks in elected office show that despite the highly publicized increase in black elected officials since the end of the civil rights era (from fewer than 500 in 1965 to more than 6000 in 1984), blacks are only 1.3 percent of the nation's holders of authority. The table reveals that blacks have achieved their highest level of representation in state and federal legislative office (excluding the U.S. Senate, where there is no black representation). But even at this highest level, at about 4 percent it is only a third of what one would expect if race did not structure the distribution of authority. Among the other categories of elected officials—state administrators and regional, municipal, and county authorities—one finds a level of representation of little more than 1 percent.

Table 1.3 Representation of Blacks in Popularly Elected Authority Positions in the United States

TYPE OF OFFICE	NUMBER OF BLACKS	% BLACKS OF TOTAL
All Elected Officials (490,200)	4912	1.0%
Federal Officials ^a (537)	20	3.5
State Legislators (7497)	317	4.2
Elected State Administrators (564)	6	1.1
Regional Officials ^b (72,377)	25	.003
County Officials (62,922)	451	7
Municipal Officials (132,789)	2356	1.7
Education Officials (93,337)	1214	1.3

Source: Eddie Williams, "Black Political Progress in the 1970s: The Electoral Arena," in M. Preston, L. Henderson, and P. Puryear (eds.), *The New Black Politics* (New York: Longman, 1982): 73–108.

^aIncludes the President, Vice President, the Senate and the 435 voting members of the House of Representatives.

^bIncludes a wide variety of special purpose metropolitan or area-wide bodies that deliver a range of services such as transportation, conservation, or recreation.

While there are no systematic data on appointed offices, since appointed officials get their jobs from mostly white elected officials it is likely that their numbers in the aggregate are small. Representation of blacks in appointed office will vary by level of government, the size of the black population in a state or locality,

systemic racism, black mobilization in a given jurisdiction, and which of the two major parties is in power; we expect, however, that at the level of policymaking cabinet, subcabinet, and agency heads aggregate black representation is low (see Eisinger, 1982). At the federal level, reasonably systematic data have been collected on black representation in presidentially appointed offices, and they show that in the post-civil rights era black representation has fluctuated from 2 percent in the Kennedy–Johnson administrations to 4 percent under Nixon and Ford, 12 percent under Carter, and about 5 percent in the Reagan administration (Smith, 1984a; Mock, 1982; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1983). In the judicial branch, 1980s data show that blacks were 6 percent of federal judges and 4.5 percent of all judges (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1983:12; Slotnick, 1984). Thus, here again one observes ethclass, pronounced racial asymmetry in authority relations.

We have shown in this analysis that in the United States today class, status, and power tend to coincide and that blacks and whites are not only cultural (perhaps) groups but also potential class and interest conflict groups as well. Thus, studies comparing black and white opinion and behavior must take account at the outset of these structural or systemic differences between the races. Although it is difficult to employ these differences in statistical models, simple demographic comparisons that do not take account of these structural considerations are likely to distort analysis and especially interpretation of the findings. As Walton writes:

Behaviorally oriented researchers, in setting up experimental and control groups mandated by the scientific method, invariably developed black and white samples that were equal on demographic variables. Each sample has similar educational, economic, age, regional, housing, and social status levels. This pairing of demographic realities leads one to assume that the two groups are equal, politically and socially. Then, when the comparisons between the two groups are drawn and vast gaps inevitably emerge, explanations are sought only in terms of individual variables, which are inherent in the very nature of the behavioral approach. But the disparities might be due to the difference in the two groups themselves.... Similar demographics do not make groups equal—politically or socially.... In fact, the politics of race (systemic variables) are the determinants account-

ing for the differences and must be included with the individual ones (1985:12).

Given this analysis of the structural basis of racial group formations and before turning to a discussion of data, method, and analytic procedures, it might be useful at this point to compare selected class characteristics of respondents in the General Social Survey (GSS) with the characteristics derived from the census data reported in Table 1.4. The data reported in the table show essential comparability between the class characteristics of the populations and the respondents in the GSS. The intersection of class and race is clear. Whites in the sample are better educated and have higher occupational prestige and higher incomes. Indeed, although the correspondence is not exact between the census and sample data, the fit on most measures is very close, which promotes confidence in the validity of the findings.

Table 1.4 Selected Socioeconomic Characteristics of Respondents by Race, 1987 General Social Survey

CHARACTERISTIC	BLACK	WHITE
<i>Education</i>		
Mean Years	12.7	11.6
Less than High School	33.1%	25%
High School Graduate	29.6	34.2
Some College	21.4	17.1
College Graduate	16.	25.2
<i>Occupational Prestige (Mean)</i>		
Lower	34.8	42.2
Mid-Lower	32.5	19.5
Mid-Upper	32.5	22.5
Upper	18.8	28.8
	16.2	29.2
<i>Income (Mean)</i>		
	\$18,387	\$29,606
Under \$10,000	36.9	17.
\$10,000–19,999	19.3	27.
\$20,000–34,999	21.2	28.1
\$35,000 +	14.8	35.6

Data and Methods

In his critical assessment of the behavioral literature in political science as it relates to the Afro-American experience, Walton writes:

Another limitation stemming from comparison is that most studies are really studies of white political behavior with small or moderate samples of blacks included as an afterthought, as a curious exception, or to fulfill the dictates of the scientific method. This has created a vast behavioral literature, yielding complex interpretations and generalizations about political behavior, based on extremely small samples of the black population. These samples never reached the magnitude of the samples on which the theories about white political behavior are based. Nor did the limited size of the sample cause any of the behavioralists to qualify their findings. Knowledge of black political behavior rests on some of the most tenuous empirical evidence possible. But nowhere in the literature will one find discussion of this almost scandalous practice, which is below the standard accepted by the profession. (1985:12)

We employ in this study the National Opinion Research Center's 1987 General Social Survey in order to avoid the limitations described by Walton. The 1987 GSS is a full-probability sample of noninstitutionalized English-speaking persons 18 years of age or older living in the United States. In 1982 and 1987 the survey included special oversamples of blacks, 510 in 1982 and 544 in 1987. These special oversamples obviate the limitations of small samples in most black opinion studies and allow for more detailed intraracial analysis among blacks. (In 1982 the GSS included 1323 whites and in 1987, 1222.) In earlier exploratory work we used the 1982 GSS in a series of papers dealing with aspects of the problem of racial differences in mass opinion (Seltzer and Smith, 1984, 1985a, 1985b, 1987, 1991). We use here the 1987 survey because it is the most recent and because the items tend to overlap from year to year. (In a few instances, items from the 1982 survey are used because they are important to what we wish to do and they were not replicated in 1987.)

In a study of this sort we would prefer a longitudinal data base; however, the limitations of available surveys make this all but impossible. Thus, this study is limited by the context of the times and the behavior and opinions observed may be influenced by circumstances of the 1980s era in American society and politics. Although we will compare findings here with the results of earlier studies, the cross-sectional nature of the data is an unavoidable limitation, given the available surveys and the

kinds of detailed intraracial analysis we wish to undertake.

A second limitation is the GSS itself as an instrument to study mass culture. First, the GSS is, as the name indicates, a general survey of attitudes and behavior, rather than an instrument specifically designed to study racial differences in mass culture. We would of course prefer a survey especially constructed to get at racial differences in mass culture, but resources for the development, testing, and execution of such a survey were not available. Thus, we make do with what we have.

A related limitation is that any survey, however designed, is a blunt tool to get at ethnic cultures. Cultures are complex phenomena, involving subtly formed and expressed interrelationships between values, beliefs, attitudes, and behavior. Even the skilled and experienced anthropologist several years in the field encounters problems that impede understanding and explanation of cultures (Banton, 1955:111-19; Whyte, 1943:3-69; Hannerz, 1969:201-10). The problem is even more difficult for the political scientists using the results of a general survey of hundreds of persons interviewed for a couple of hours. The best we may hope for here is a set of attitudes and reported behavior that may be rough indicators of cultural differences at the mass level. What is lost in the depth, richness, and detail of anthropological field studies is, we hope, balanced here by what is gained in theoretical power, systematic generalizability, reliability, and validity. Even in studies of culture the intuitive and idiosyncratic approach of the anthropologists might be strengthened if supplemented by the insights, however limited, of the systematic social survey (on this point, see also Wildavsky, 1987).

Conceptual Components of Mass Political Culture

In this section we explain the selection of the components or dimensions of mass culture used in the book, specify the variables employed as indicators, and explain their operationalization. The General Social Survey includes a large number of items dealing with a wide variety of attitudes and behavior on social and political life, ranging from the consequential to the trivial. We are interested in politically relevant mass opinion or culture. Political scientists have done the most work in trying to define and measure elements of politically relevant mass culture, beginning with Almond and Verba's now classic study, *The Civic Cul-*