

## RACE RELATIONS AND THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION \*

EVERETT C. HUGHES

*Brandeis University*

*The situations in which race relations occur are of such variety that they furnish a laboratory for many sociological problems. Social and economic changes call inter-racial arrangements and status bargains into question. The two great cases of this on this continent are the relations of French with English Canadians and of Negro with White Americans. Both have given rise to new, massive movements for change of status; but the changes sought are not the same. The Negroes want to disappear as a group; the French Canadians, to be more distinct. To understand such movements and to predict their occurrence and outcome requires full use of the sociological imagination and of a variety of methods of research.*

WHAT is there new to say about race relations? A colleague with great knowledge and deep experience of American race relations—he is a Negro—asked me that. I could have answered that new things are happening in race relations here and all over the world; things from which we can still learn.

A younger colleague who builds models and tries them out in the laboratory wanted to know to what general theoretical problem I would direct this discussion. I could have answered that race relations are so much a feature of most societies, and that they are in such flux that one could find in them a living laboratory for almost any problem of social interaction, social identity and social structure which one could imagine.

While these points are indeed part of my discussion, a deeper question concerning sociology and social life lurks in the background: Why did social scientists—and sociologists in particular—not foresee the explosion of collective action of Negro Americans toward immediate full integration into American society? It is but a special instance of the more general question concern-

ing sociological foresight of and involvement in drastic and massive social changes and extreme forms of social action.

Robert E. Park defined race relations thus:

. . . the term . . . includes all the relations which exist between members of different ethnic and genetic groups which are capable of provoking race conflict and race consciousness, or of determining the relative status of the racial groups of which a community is composed. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Park's definition makes study of race relations a part of the study of society itself, not

<sup>1</sup> Robert E. Park, "The Nature of Race Relations," pp. 3-45 in E. T. Thompson (ed.), *Race Relations and the Race Problem*. Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1939. Reproduced in Park, *Race and Culture*, Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1950, pp. 81-116. See p. 82. He continues thus (p. 114): "What then, finally, is the precise nature of race relations that distinguishes them, in all the variety of conditions in which they arise, from other fundamental forms of human relations? It is the essence of race relations that they are the relations of strangers; of peoples who are associated primarily for secular and practical purposes; for the exchange of goods and services. They are otherwise the relations of people of diverse races and cultures who have been thrown together by the fortunes of war, and who, for any reason, have not been sufficiently knit together by intermarriage and interbreeding to constitute a single ethnic community with all that it implies."

\* Presidential address read at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Los Angeles, August, 1963.

a peculiar problem requiring special concepts for its analysis.

In the same paper Park—it was in 1939—spoke of a great movement among “national minorities to control and direct their own destinies;” a movement “which began in Europe in the early part of the last century, and has now spread, as if it were contagious, to every part of the world; every part of the world at any rate, which has felt or still feels itself oppressed in its provincial, autonomous life, or for any other reason, inferior in its international status.”<sup>2</sup>

We of this country ushered in that great movement for national independence a little earlier than the beginning of the 19th century. Never ethnically homogeneous, we became less so by swallowing the remnants of Spanish and French empires, by importing black labor from Africa, and by encouraging immigration from Europe and, for a time, from Asia. The movement continued in Central and South America; those new states were also, all of them, racially mixed. The Spanish- or Portuguese-speaking cities were surrounded by latifundia with indigenous,

---

<sup>2</sup> *Loc. cit.* The following longer quotation may be useful to the reader:

“In these cities [of the twentieth century] a new civilization, new peoples, the modern world, with new local varieties of culture, is visibly coming into existence.

“One of the evidences of this is the sudden and wide-spread interest in nationalism and in local nationalities. The struggle of minor racial and language groups for some sort of independent and individual expression of their traditional and national lives, which began in Europe in the early part of the last century, has now spread, as if it were contagious, to every part of the world; every part of the world at any rate, which has felt or still feels itself oppressed in its local, autonomous life, or for any other reason, inferior in its international status.

“It is interesting that this ambition of national minorities, if I may so describe them, to control and direct their own destinies, in accordance with their own tradition and sense of values, has not in the least diminished their interest in, or determination to possess and use, in their own interest, all the technical knowledge and all the technical devices upon which the dominance of Europe in the modern world seems to have been based.

“The present nationalist movement, associated as it is by the practical cessation of migration and the so-called “devolution” of missions, is evidence that we are at the end of one epoch in human and racial relations and at the beginning of another.”

African or mixed labor force, beyond which generally there lay a back country whose inhabitants were not part of any body politic. As in North America, immigration from Europe and even from Asia continued. To our North, Canada gradually took on national status, by a confederation of provinces, the oldest of which was French-speaking Quebec.<sup>3</sup>

In Europe the continental Empires began to break up; Belgium, Greece, Italy, Norway, Finland and the Balkan states became nation-states. At the end of the First World War, the process went on until a belt of independent states was formed between Russia and the west. Established in the name of the self-determination of peoples—of people of common language and culture governing themselves on their historic territory—not one of those nation-states corresponded to the ideal. Every one contained some minority of another people than the one in whose name independence had been claimed. Norway, indeed, was any one of the dominant states from which these peoples had got independence, made into a country of one language and people by this cleansing. Germany tried to reverse the trend under Hitler, but ended up smaller than ever, as two states each racially purer—in our broad sense—than any in Europe. In that sense, Hitler won.

The victors of the First World War were proponents of the self-determination of European peoples, but all had overseas empires to which they did not apply that principle—as Max Weber pointed out in a speech at the time.<sup>4</sup> Their turn came after World War II. Their Asiatic, Oceanic and African possessions then sought and got political independence. None of these former colonies is racially homogeneous. India, Indonesia, the Philippines all contain a variety of languages, historic religions, cultures and tribes. Mass migrations, some voluntary, some forced, have, if anything, made people more aware of those divisions. In the little artificial states

---

<sup>3</sup> New Zealand, Australia and the Union of South Africa became, like Canada, self-governing states with minorities, either indigenous or European, or both.

<sup>4</sup> Max Weber, “Deutschland unter den europäischen Weltmächten (October, 1916),” pp. 73-93 in *Gesammelte Politische Schriften*. Munich: Drei Masken Verlag, 1921. See pp. 89-90.

of the old French Asiatic colonies, probably few people know what state they do live in. In the Near East and northern Africa, a series of states, supposedly Muslim in religion and Arab in culture, are in fact a mosaic of languages, sects, tribes, races, classes and "communities." Israel, enclaved among them, is itself an ethnic pressure-cooker; linguistic and patriotic conformity are insisted upon.

In the oldest state south of the Sahara, South Africa, the European population is divided into majority and minority, which are numerically but a fraction of the total population of the country. The black Africans, once tribal, are being welded into something like an entity by the effort of the Europeans to keep them from it. Among the Europeans themselves, the former minority of Afrikaners has become the dominant group in politics, although English South Africans still dominate the economy. The other countries and the few remaining colonies in sub-Saharan Africa are all diverse in language, culture, tribal loyalties and degree of integration into modern urban economy and life. So diverse are they that the language of the battle for independence is generally that of the oppressor from whom they seek emancipation; language, that is, in both senses, of letters and words and of political and social philosophy. A bit of African chant and rhythm make the rhetoric seem more indigenous than it is. Portugal has thus far saved her empire by not teaching the language of independence, in either sense, to her African subjects.

All of these African countries are observation posts for those interested in the process of nation-making on which Bagehot wrote a classic essay a century ago. The development of a feeling of national, rather than local or tribal, identity proceeds but painfully in some of them.<sup>5</sup> Lucy Mair thinks its growth depends not upon a state of mind induced by propaganda, but upon social structure. Cities, communications, education and experience of industrial employment will create people who identify themselves with a nation. "The structure of an industrial society," she says, "is such that no section of it can pursue its interests by trying to cut

itself off from the rest."<sup>6</sup> Whether or not she is right on that point, certainly the new African states are not yet nations. It may be that the state makes the nation, and not the reverse.

This tremendous burgeoning of so-called nation-states took place in a time of colossal migrations, voluntary or forced, of people seeking land or wanted as labor for industrial agriculture, the extractive or more advanced industries. Migration makes diversified populations. Even Japan, of all nations perhaps the one with the strongest myth of national homogeneity, got a large population of strange people as she became industrial and an empire—Koreans, Okinawans, her traditional Eta and her tribal Ainu have given the Japanese something on which to exercise their racial exclusiveness. As a final twist, some of the centers of erstwhile empires are now getting a reverse migration from their former colonies. West Indian Negroes are entering the British labor force at the bottom, as are Algerians in France and Puerto Ricans in New York.

The very era in which the concept of nation-state has been so powerful has been one of empire-building and empire-breaking; an era in which the idea has spread, as Park said, like a contagion; a queer contagion, since the European countries which spread it did their best to prevent others—those in their own empires, at any rate—from catching it. The nation-state, far from eliminating race relations, intensifies them; its ideology of the correspondence of cultural and racial with political boundaries makes internal problems of what were external or international problems in the days of empire or in the more primitive times of tribal rule. It has made great numbers of human individuals aware of race as a fateful personal characteristic, determining the terms of their struggle for a place. It has made whole groups of people conscious of themselves as having a status, not merely in their own region, but in the world. Race, in our broad sense, has been made a part of the political, economic and social processes of much of the world. The United Nations has become an organ of

<sup>5</sup> Walter Bagehot, *Physics and Politics*. Chapters III and IV, "Nation-Making."

<sup>6</sup> Lucy Mair, "Divide and Rule in the New Countries?" *New Society*, No. 37 (June 13, 1963), p. 18.

world opinion which makes every domestic racial problem again a diplomatic and international one as well.

The relations among races are now even more disturbed than when Park wrote. They offer a richer and more varied living laboratory than ever for any of us sociologists who would consider going abroad other than to attend conferences. But it is not precisely a laboratory which they offer, for we have but one chance to observe, to understand and to act.

Of course, we need not go abroad. Racial turmoil is here at home. In North America, two elderly nation-states—as those things go—contain two of the oldest established minorities of the world, Negro Americans and French Canadians. When I call them old, I refer to the duration of their position in the nation-states of which they are a part. Negro Americans, aided by some others, are engaged in their most massive, determined, urgent and detailed struggle for equality. French Canadians are vigorously demanding an overhaul of the century-old bargain sealed by the Confederation of the provinces into a single dominion.

Although there have always been agitators in both minorities, there have been long periods of quiet in which there was an entente between the leading classes of each minority and the dominant groups and implicit acceptance of it by the masses of the people. During these periods the dominant group apparently thought that an equilibrium had been established for an indefinite period, with changes going on so slowly as not to upset it. One might have said of both American and Canadian society what Park says of all:

Every society represents an organization of elements more or less antagonistic to each other but united for the moment, at least, by an arrangement which defines the reciprocal relations and respective sphere of action of each. This accommodation, this *modus vivendi*, may be relatively permanent as in a society constituted by castes, or quite transitory as in societies made up of open classes. In either case, the accommodation, while it is maintained, secures for the individual or for the group a recognized status.

In the accommodation, then, antagonism of the hostile elements is, for the time being, regulated, and conflict disappears as overt action, although it remains latent as a potential force.

With a change in the situation, the adjustments that had hitherto held in control the antagonistic forces fail. There is confusion and unrest which may result in open conflict. Conflict . . . invariably issues in a new accommodation or social order, which in general involves a changed status in the relations among the participants.<sup>7</sup>

Park's view of society is that status arrangements are always tentative and likely to be questioned. In our two minorities, many of the younger people are questioning the bargain—the status arrangement—made by their forebears and consented to by their elders (for failure to act is considered consent). But what is the time perspective of parties to a bargain? The group with the greatest interest in the status quo may be expected to think of the arrangement as permanent, and to justify it by various devices—such as the doctrine of racial superiority and inferiority. The group disadvantaged in status may use some principle of permanency, which has been violated by the status-bargain forced upon them. Thus a national minority, such as the French Canadian, will prove that it was there first; that it is an older nation than the oppressor. The function of folklore is to establish antiquity and the rights based upon it. Colonial tribal minorities can achieve a sort of apocalyptic eternity, as Nadine Gordimer says so well of Africans:

You can assure yourself of glory in the future, in a heaven, but if that seems too nebulous for you—and the Africans are sick of waiting for you—and the Africans are sick of waiting for things—you can assure yourself of glory in the past. It will have exactly the same sort of effect on you, in the present. You'll feel yourself, in spite of everything, worthy of either your future or your past.<sup>8</sup>

In both our minorities, the Negro-American and the French-Canadian, the time perspectives of past bargains are being called into question; in both cases, the dominant group asks either that the bargain be permanent or that it be changed but slowly.

Why the great outbreak of unrest and demand for change in these two minorities at just this moment? Certainly there have been great changes in the situation of both. At the last census, French Canadians had become

<sup>7</sup> R. E. Park and E. W. Burgess, *Introduction to the Science of Sociology*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1921, p. 665.

<sup>8</sup> Nadine Gordimer, *Occasion for Loving*, New York: Viking, 1960, pp. 9–10.

more urban than other Canadians; Negroes, more urban than other Americans. With the precipitous drop in the agricultural labor force of both countries, these minorities have undergone changes of occupational structure probably greater than those of the rest of the population. Both minorities, in the industrial and urban order in which their fate now lies, are concentrated at lower points of the socio-economic scale than are the dominant groups.

These similarities may appear strained. They cover great differences. French Canadians do not, and never have, suffered civil or personal disabilities; they have not had to give deference to others. No social rank inheres in being French Canadian; the only aristocracy Canada ever had was French. French institutions in Canada are more venerable than English. French Canadians have headed the national government and always control the governments of their province and of most cities within it.

The two minorities are alike in that they have gone from a rural condition to an urban and see themselves as thereby put into a position of increased disadvantage; and at precisely that time in history when such disadvantage is no longer a purely domestic matter. But they seek opposite remedies. The Negro Americans want to disappear as a defined group; they want to become invisible as a group, while each of them becomes fully visible as a human being. Only so will they, in the myriad relations of American life, be judged by the characteristics pertinent to each. They want to be seen, neither as Negroes nor as if they were not; but as if it did not matter. The French Canadians, on the other hand, struggle not for survival as individuals—in which their problems are those of other Canadians—but for survival as a group with full social, economic and political standing.

These two apparently opposite goals represent one of the dialectics of human beings and the groups with which they identify themselves and are identified. How like others, how different from them shall I, shall we, can I, can we, be? And in what respects? Jews in the western world are generally thought to find these questions difficult, and the solutions unstable. Such a group as Negro Americans is at one pole—where all is to be gained from reduction of the social percep-

tion of differences. Their end will have been gained when Negroid characteristics and African descent matter no more and no less than other physical traits and quirks of ancestry. At that point, there would be no racial bargain. Whether all persons known as Negroes—and their descendants of that future day—would be content to wipe out their collective past and all features of Negro-American culture is another matter.

Some Negro Americans have given up hope that white Americans will ever live up to the bargain of the American ideology of equal rights for all. They reject everything American—the country, the Christian religion, their Anglo-Saxon names; as so-called Black Muslims they claim complete and eternal difference from white Americans and seek to develop such solidarity among Negroes as will enable them to fight and bargain for a separate realm. To support their claim, they have imagined themselves a glorious past as the Muslims who were the scourge of Europe and Christianity throughout the centuries. They project themselves into an apocalyptic future when, in cargo-cult fashion, their ship will come in and the evil white race will be destroyed.<sup>9</sup> This, mind you, is not in the South Seas, in Black Africa or among dispossessed American Indians, but among urban Americans. The question one must ask is this: at what point do people so far lose confidence in the “others” with whom they are destined to live as to reject all the collective symbols of their common society, and to erase from their talk all phrases which imply common humanity. Such symbolic Apartheid has not been the prevailing mind of Negro Americans, but it lurks ready to be called into the open with every alienating rebuff. The balance is still with the movement for complete integration.

Indeed it is so much so that some Negroes are claiming special treatment in order to make the integration more rapid, on the ground that past discrimination has loaded

<sup>9</sup> M. Eliade, “‘Cargo-Cults’ and Cosmic Regeneration,” pp. 139–143 in S. L. Thrupp (ed.), *Millennial Dreams in Action. Comparative Studies in Society and History, Supplement II*, The Hague, 1962. See other articles in this volume. The members of such cults are enjoined to prepare for the great day, not by political action, but by strict abstinence from all contact with the enemy and his works.

them with a competitive disadvantage which it will take a long time to overcome. Thus, for the moment, they appear to be asking that their Negro-ness be not forgotten, in order that, in the long run, it may be. It is the vigor and urgency of the Negro demand that is new, not its direction or the supporting ideas. It was that vigor and urgency that sociologists, and other people, did not foresee, even though they knew that Negroes would not be content forever with their situation, and should have sensed that the contradiction between "speed" and "deliberate" would become the object of both wit and anger.

In Canada, the tension between French and English has always existed, and has always turned upon the question of the survival and status of the French as a linguistic, cultural and political entity. French Canadians believe that a large proportion of English Canadians assume that French Canada will and ought to cease to exist, just as English Canadians believe that many Americans assume that Canada itself will and ought to cease to exist. From time to time, the tension becomes great and various French nationalist movements arise. In time of war, English Canadians accuse French Canadians of less than full devotion to the cause, while French Canadians resent the attempt of the others to tell them their duty. In the great depression there was tension over jobs and the burden of unemployment centering about the fact that management and ownership of industry were English, while labor was French.

The present movement is the first major one in time of peace and prosperity, when critics can say, and do, "They never had it so good. What do they want anyway?" To be sure it is a *drôle de paix* in which some other Canadians wish the French might join more heartily in the campaign against Castro—as they ought, it is said, being Catholics and therefore presumably leaders in the battle against Communism. Not only are the circumstances different from the times of earlier nationalist upsurgings, but the very rhetoric is contrary, and some of the most ardent of earlier leaders are dubbed compromisers, or even traitors.

Most earlier French nationalist leaders called upon their fellow Canadians to respect

the bargain of Confederation everywhere in Canada; bilingualism and public support of Catholic schools should prevail, or at least be tolerated, everywhere, not only in Quebec. The French were to have parity, their just proportion of all positions in government, and eventually in business and industry. But to merit their survival French Canadians should retain their rural virtues, including a high birth rate which would win for them, in due time, a victory of the cradle. To retain those virtues, their unemployed and the extra sons of farmers should go north to clear and settle new lands. Only so would they save themselves from the vices of the city, which were alleged to be English, American—and Jewish. To document their charter-membership of Canada, they cultivated folklore and song; their novelists wrote of the clearing of the land, of the drive of logs down the rivers after the spring thaw, of the land passing from father to son. They emphasized their place as the true Canadians—*Canadiens* without qualifying adjective—while English Canadians were *Anglais*, or perhaps *Canadiens anglais*.

Thus equal rights with English in a common country was the theme of most of the earlier leaders, and was the sentiment of most French Canadians, whether active in any movement or not. But the new movement talks of separation of the State, not Province, of Quebec from Canada; if not separation, then a new constitution giving Quebec a special status. It calls the French people of Quebec by the name *Québécois*. English Canadians are called Canadians, with English spelling, and the French word *Canadien*, is avoided. The government in Ottawa is spoken of as an alien power maintaining unjust colonial rule; the *Québécois* are chid for allowing themselves to remain the only white colonized people in the world and, indeed, one of the few colonized peoples, white or colored. Instead of seeking bilingualism everywhere in Canada, the more extreme wing—and even some quite conservative groups—ask for a Quebec with one language, French, and complete fiscal independence from Canada. The movement takes the doctrine of the nation-state in its extreme form as defining the goal to be attained.

Instead of praising rural life, they speak of an urban and industrial Quebec, which

will solve its problems by becoming master in its own house. They dismiss return to the land and the victory of the cradle as dreams that divert French Canadians from attaining realistic goals. Those goals of well-being for an urban and industrial people are to be gained by socialistic means, and by breaking the power of Yankee capitalism.

Some talk of Freud, Marx and alienation. In literary criticism, they talk of emancipation from obsession with the past, the frontiers, the land and France; not of denying the past and French identity, but of taking them for granted while they deal with their problems as North American city dwellers, as a people who need no justification except that they exist and have the same problems to write about as do others.

The new rhetoric may not be used in extreme form by many, but it has permeated a great deal of French-Canadian writing and political talk. It has spread much more rapidly than any one expected. There are indeed some extreme groups who have turned to the bombing of symbols of British hegemony—a statue of Queen Victoria, an army recruiting station, and mailboxes in what is considered a well-to-do English quarter. The members of this small terrorist sect are not the leaders of the separatist movement, but their existence and temper indicate the intensity of the general feeling of malaise. Those arrested and accused of the bombings are alienated young men of the city, not intellectuals, but part of the white-collar Lumpenproletariat, semi-employed. It has been said that the whole separatist movement is one of the little bureaucrats of business and government. In its more moderate form, the movement has certainly been joined by many people of various classes, whose rhetoric also turns in the direction of a special status for the State of Quebec, of a renegotiation of the terms of Confederation.

To return to this country, the new things about the Negro movement are not its ultimate goals and its rhetoric, but its immediate goals, its mass and its structure. It got under way and took on mass as a struggle for the equal right to consume goods and services—food, transportation, education, housing and entertainment. This is a goal of people with at least some money to spend and with the aspiration to spend as others do. The Negro

Americans who led those first sit-ins were indeed so American that they seem more humiliated by not being able to spend the dollar than they would be at not having a dollar to spend. "My money is as good as the other fellow's," is probably the ultimate expression of American democracy. Here we meet the great paradox in American social structure. While our race line is, next to South Africa's, the world's tightest, we have the times-over largest Negro middle class in the world, and the largest group of Negroes approaching middle-class western tastes and with the money to satisfy them in some measure. This may be due to the fact that we are that country in which industry first depended upon its own workers to be its best customers, and in which movement has gone farthest in that direction.<sup>10</sup> Handicapped though Negro Americans are in employment and income, they are well-enough off to resent the barriers which prevent them from keeping up with the white Joneses. This reflects a great change in the Negro social structure itself; goal and social structure are doubtless functions of each other. In the struggle for consumption it appears generally to have been true that the Negro participants were of higher social class than the whites who have set upon them, or perhaps it is that racial struggles bring out the low-class side of white people.

Now that the movement for equality of the right to consume has moved into high gear—and especially in the South—the movement for equality in employment has taken on new momentum in the North. When, during the war, a number of us worked to get Negroes employed in industry in Chicago, our first objective was to get them moved into semi-skilled production jobs, and out of maintenance and unskilled work. The effort now is aimed higher—at the kinds of work controlled by craft unions, and especially those in construction. For in the precariously sea-

<sup>10</sup> F. P. Spooner shows that in South Africa the high standard of living of Whites rests upon the poverty of the Blacks; seven-eighths of the labor in mining, the industry that brings money to the country, is Black. The consumption industries import raw materials with the foreign exchange earned by mining, and produce at prices which only Whites can afford. *South African Predicament. The Economics of Apartheid*, New York: Praeger, 1960, pp. 181 *et seq.*

sonal construction trades apprenticeships and jobs are notoriously held tightly in ethnic and family cliques. The battle for equality of right to consume may be essentially won long before access to all kinds of training and jobs is open. There are many inaccessible crevices in the American labor market. I have seen no good account of who the people are who are demonstrating at construction sites, but apparently many have been drawn in who never took part in demonstrations before. We may expect, I believe, that each new immediate objective, whether for the right to consume or to work, will draw in new kinds of participants.

One of the most striking cases of this is the apparent mobilization of the National [Negro] Medical Association. It was reported in the press that members of the National Medical Association were to picket the convention of the American Medical Association in Atlantic City and their headquarters in Chicago. The permanent executive secretary of the Negro association declared himself against the picketing as it would embarrass his good friends in the American Medical Association; but the young president was reported to have said he would himself lead the picketing. Negro physicians have been notoriously conservative in their attack on racial discrimination—even against themselves. Safely ensconced in general practice with patients whom white physicians did not want, they enjoyed a certain security provided they were content to practice in their own offices or in segregated hospitals, letting such Negro patients as could get into other hospitals go to white physicians. But that security is in danger. Negro physicians no longer have a near monopoly on Negro patients, for the patients may be part of insurance schemes which give them access to clinics or hospitals and which will pay their bills. The few segregated Negro hospitals are in generally sad and declining condition. Young Negro physicians do not want to tie their professional fate to them. Back of all this, however, lies a general change in the structure of medical organization. The capital goods of medicine are concentrated more and more in hospitals and clinics; patient and physician meet where the tools and machines and auxiliary personnel are found. If the Negro patient has more access to them than

the Negro physician, the latter is in a poor position. Thus a general change in the social structure of medical institutions strikes hard at the position of one of the Negro-American elites. If the younger Negro physicians are to survive, they must get into the main institutions of modern medicine; that means specialization, access to clinics, hospitals and laboratories, membership of various colleague groups and ability to move freely. The American Medical Association is the bastion of the older organization of medicine, for the power to accept members lies completely in the hands of county medical associations, dominated by local physicians out of sympathy with the modern trends in medicine as well as likely to be opposed to recognizing Negroes as full colleagues.

Perhaps it took this combination of changes in the structure of medical institutions, plus the momentum of a great social movement to stir the relatively well-off and well-entrenched to such undignified action as picketing. The change in medical institutions gives the younger Negro physician a motive for rejecting the bargains of the older ones; the new movement gives them the will and the courage.

The older Negro middle class—in the clergy, teaching, law, medicine, insurance and undertaking—had its being in segregated institutions. They got support from white people and organizations with an implicit bargain that there was to be no Negro middle class except what could be supported by giving services to Negro clients and customers; as Park said, the accommodation gave certain Negroes a defined place and field of activity. Now that these institutions are undergoing changes much like those in medicine, the very basis of the older Negro elite would be shaky even without changes in the race line itself.<sup>11</sup>

But that line is changing. With every increase of access of Negroes to consumption and service institutions, the security of the older Negro middle class, which depended upon segregated delivery of services takes another blow; and another front is opened in the battle for equality in the production and distribution of goods and services. Like

<sup>11</sup> E. Franklin Frazier, *The Black Bourgeoisie*, Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1957. That was the middle class of which Frazier wrote so mordantly.

so many battles in time of great change, it is in part a battle of the generations. In the larger, more itinerant and cosmopolitan system of distributing professional services in which younger men must make their careers, sponsorship of specialized colleagues and the good opinion of their peers about the country counts more than favor with a local clientele or local white leader. While the standards of judgment among professional peers are in some respects objective and universal, yet the specialized collegueships of the academic, scientific and professional world are small and relations are quite personal. People are loath to hire a stranger. This is the front on which Negro scholars and professional men have to move forward.<sup>12</sup>

Another new feature of the present movement is that some white people have joined not merely in financial support but in direct action itself. A few white Protestant, Catholic and Jewish religious dignitaries have lent not merely their voices, but also their bodies to the demonstrations. Larger numbers of young white persons, mainly students, have joined, perhaps at somewhat greater risk, in marches, demonstrations and sit-ins in both South and North. This is another matter on which Park commented, in 1923, just 40 years ago:

What has happened to other peoples in this modern world, has happened, is happening, to the Negro. Freedom has not given him the opportunity for participation in the common life of America and of the world that he hoped for. Negroes are restless and seeking. We are all restless, as a matter of fact.

<sup>12</sup> I have not commented on the role in this movement of the older organizations established to improve the condition of Negroes, to win their rights, or to consolidate their position. The Urban Leagues originally had the form of social agencies, with boards of leading citizens and support by community chests as well as by gifts. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was originally both a fighting and an elite organization without the features of a philanthropic agency; it became the organ of legal action. The new direct action has been led by new people. A division of labor seems to be emerging among them, with the whole enlivened by the popular direct action. This is a common enough feature of social movements; as some organizations settle down to one style of negotiation or action, new styles of action spring up around new, unofficial, charismatic leaders.

In some respects, however, it seems to me the Negro, like all the other disinherited peoples, is more fortunate than the dominant races. He is restless, but he knows what he wants. The issues in his case, at least, are clearly defined. More than that, in this racial struggle, he is daily gaining not merely new faith in himself, but new faith in the world. Since he wants nothing except what he is willing to give to every other man on the same terms, he feels that the great forces that shape the destinies of peoples are on his side. It is always a source of great power to any people when they feel that their interests, so far from being antagonistic, are actually identified with the interests of the antagonists. We of the dominant, comfortable classes, on the other hand, are steadily driven to something like an obstinate and irrational resistance to the Negro's claims, or we are put in the position of sympathetic spectators, sharing vicariously in his struggles but never really able to make his cause whole-heartedly our own.<sup>13</sup>

The obstinate and irrational resistance of which Park spoke is certainly in evidence, and apparently more on the consumption front than on the job front. Perhaps the American ego is more centered on symbolic consumption of housing among the right neighbors than on having the right job and colleagues. But what about those white people who join in the lively action on behalf of Negro equality? Are they really nothing more than sympathetic spectators? This raises questions concerning the part of people without status disadvantage in the struggles of those who have a disadvantage. The clergy and many white people are, for the first time, going into overt action on behalf of an eternal principle which they presumably believed and preached all the time. In this case, conscience seems to have been aroused only after the movement, initiated and led by the injured party, got momentum and showed some signs of success. This somewhat cynical suggestion is no answer to this problem: What circumstances so re-define a social situation that some espoused eternal moral principle is considered not merely to apply to it, but to require immediate drastic action of kinds the keepers of the principle ordinarily would not consider proper? Some years ago Samuel Stouffer discovered that the leaders of

<sup>13</sup> Robert E. Park, "Negro Race Consciousness as Reflected in Race Literature," *American Review*, I (Sept.-Oct., 1923), 505-516, reproduced in R. E. Park, *Race and Culture*, Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1950, pp. 284-300.

American communities are more liberal on many issues than are people of less influence. What his study did not throw light on is this: When do those tolerant leaders initiate action to implement their views? The answer on many issues, is that they do not initiate action. In some Southern cities those leaders of the business community who would answer to Stouffer's description, enter to support the Negroes when the movement is under way and when stubborn opposition from another kind of community leader endangers prosperity and peace.<sup>14</sup>

Whether white people will remain sympathetic is one question; whether they will remain spectators is another. The alternative to being a spectator is entering the action. The more insistent Negroes become on equality now, the more other people will be forced to act one way or another. To the extent that they must act, the question is whether they will act for or against the Negroes' cause, and with what intensity and persistence. The mood of Negro Americans is, at the moment, one of sticking to the fight until it is won. White people, including the moral and religious functionaries, may persist only so long as they—as Park suggests—are restless and need a cause. Perhaps some other cause will win them away. Or perhaps they will lose their taste for causes.

I should not like to predict what equilibrium, what compromises, supported by what bargains, will be reached in American race relations. But it looks as if no long-term bargain short of fully equal status is likely to be accepted by Negroes. Compromises in some groups and structures will last longer than in others, depending in part upon how rapidly participants turn over. Customers can turn over quickly; where kinship, seniority and long tenure prevail, as in some

occupations and organizations, new kinds of people can come in only very slowly. Institutional time is not the time of social movements. Whether Negroes will be content to let old bargains stand where turn-over is slow, and whether they will be able to break slow-moving institutional processes are both questions which cannot be answered now. We must ask: What will be the rate of breakdown of the race line in various segments of society?

Even if we cannot answer these questions about the future state of things, we might at least speculate on them and even on that state in which it could be said that there is no longer a race problem. We might imagine a state of things in which Negroes and whites, as both are defined in our society, would be distributed in their chance proportions among all the occupational, income, educational, residential, or other cells in a great table of the population. That unlikely ultimate state could not be the immediate result of any bargain; it could come about only after a very, very long time in which Negroes could have penetrated, like some slow-moving dye, into the many small capillaries of our complex social system. Indeed, by the time it occurred, Negro and white, as discernible racial types, might long since have disappeared. That would take a long time, even if race as a barrier to inter-marriage were to disappear.

Last year I asked some students this question: "Suppose that tomorrow morning Americans were to wake up blind to all the distinguishing marks of race; what would be the long- and the short-term results?" One student, a mathematician, figured how many people of white, Negro and mixed ancestry there would be in the country after certain numbers of generations. There were, in her formula, certain assumptions which do not correspond to the present reality, but we must allow that license to mathematicians. Another student thought that we are so in need of someone to subordinate, that we would immediately visit upon the Jews or some other minority all we now visit upon Negroes; that might be called the "sick" answer. Others based their answers to this science-fiction question on other assumptions and worked out other possibilities. One student, of his own initiative, imagined that all the inhabitants of Samoa, whom we affect

<sup>14</sup> Charles Levy, in his study of Front Royal, Virginia, in an integration crisis, showed that the more liberal leaders simply abdicated and were replaced by more fanatical people who were not, in ordinary times, in positions of leadership. This is, again, a structural problem; in what circumstances does one type of leadership win over another in these crises? See his unpublished Master's thesis, "School Desegregation in Warren County, Virginia during 1958-1960: A Study in the Mobilization of Restraints," Department of Sociology, University of Chicago, 1961.

to love and admire, landed one morning, miraculously multiplied but penniless, in Los Angeles—to stay. Whether things would have worked out as he described them, I do not know. The only sociologist of note who ever did anything of the sort in print, was Gabriel Tarde. He imagined a society in which men were all assured of plenty of food and other comforts with but a few minutes of labor each day; the economic friction was taken out of human interaction. He then gave his notions of what would happen to sex, music, the mind, and many other things. He even gave a gently satirical account, by members of that society, of a group called sociologists who had existed in some ancient time—Tarde's own time.

I do not claim that either Tarde or those students to whom I gave that absurd assignment produced probable predictions. At least, they exercised their sociological imaginations in ways that are unaccustomed. Some of them may, in the future, attack problems not by making predictions based on projecting slow trends of opinion a few years into the future, but by imagining a wide range of possibilities, and following out the fantastic and improbable ones as well as those which seem most likely and immediate.

Herbert Hyman has lately complained that "applied social research seems oriented to the immediate issue rather than to be problem oriented. The latent aspects of an issue are neglected and trend designs for surveys have lost prestige."<sup>15</sup> I agree with him if his notion of trends includes a great many lines of change, some of which have no obvious relation to the problem in hand, all going on at the same time and at various rates. The concept of trend, as it is ordinarily used, appears to me too limited to stimulate the sociological imagination to its fullest and most fruitful level of activity. Some have asked why we did not foresee the great mass movement of Negroes; it may be that our conception of social science is so empirical, so limited to little bundles of fact applied to little hypotheses, that we are incapable of entertaining a broad range of possibilities, of following out the madly unlikely combinations of social circumstances.

<sup>15</sup> H. H. Hyman, "England and America, 1962," in Daniel Bell (ed.), *The Radical Right*, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1963, p. 238.

It is sometimes said that sociology deals with only those processes of social behavior which are repeated again and again. That statement, useful in its way, may have been taken too seriously. A process may be repeatable, but it may occur in some set of circumstances which has never happened before or yet. Whenever before was there a race-caste of 20,000,000 people, literate, with the aspirations and basic skills of a modern industrial society, with money to spend and the tastes which make them want to spend it on the same things as do other people of highly industrial societies, yet limited by others in their full realization of all these things; living in a society which has preached that all men are created free and equal, and has practiced it not fully, but enough so that with every increase of education, standard of living and of middle-class achievement of the race-caste, the discrepancy between partial and full practice of equality becomes a deeper, more soul-searing wound. Why should we have thought, apart from the comfort of it, that the relations of the future could be predicted in terms of moderate trends, rather than by the model of the slow burn reaching the heat of massive explosion?

Another possible impediment to claiming our full license to consider every possible human arrangement is that we internalize limits on our sociological imagination. Most of us apparently go about tacitly accepting the cliché that whites and Negroes don't want to marry each other, and that white women are never attracted sexually by Negro men, without considering the circumstances in which it would no longer be true (if it is indeed true now).<sup>16</sup> One of the accomplishments of Freud was to break the bonds of repression so that a person could make his memory match his outrageous impulses. One function of the sociologist is to be that sort

<sup>16</sup> Certain novelists have dealt with this theme, not merely frankly, but with penetration and some sense of the aesthetics of it. Among them are Alan Paton, *Too Late the Phalarope*; Gordimer, *The Lying Years and Occasion for Loving*; and James Baldwin, *Another Country*. Novelists of an earlier day dealt less with the physical attractions of such affairs, and more with the fate of children of such matings; e.g., Olive Schreiner and Gertrude Millin in South Africa; Lyle Saxon, William Faulkner and others in this country.

of analyst *cum* model-building mathematician for human society, who will break the bonds of ordinary thought and moral inhibition so as to conceive a great variety of human situations, even the most outrageous. Perhaps we failed to foresee present racial movements because our whole inward frame is adapted to study of the middle range of behavior, with occasional conducted tours toward, but not dangerously near, the extremes.

The kind of freeing of the imagination that I am speaking of requires a great and deep detachment, a pursuit of sociological thought and research in a playful mood. But it is a detachment of deep concern and intense curiosity that turns away from no human activity. Such curiosity is not likely to develop in minds which are not deeply involved in human affairs, and not concerned with our impossible human race. Detachment and indifference are not the same. I believe those sociologists who will contribute most to the fundamental, comparative and theoretical understanding of human society and of any of its problems are those so deeply concerned with it as to need a desperate, almost fanatical detachment from which to see it in full perspective.

Our problem is not that we are too deeply involved in human goings-on but that our involvement is so episodic and so bound to the wheel of particular projects with limited goals; in short, that we are too professional. While professionalizing an activity may raise the competence of some who pursue it by standardizing methods and giving license only to those who meet the standard, it also may limit creative activity, by denying license to some who let their imagination and their observations run far afield, and by putting candidates for the license (Ph.D.) so long in a straitjacket that they never move freely again. Our problem, as sociologists,

in the next few years will be to resist the drive for professionalizing, and to maintain broad tolerance for all who would study societies, no matter what their methods.

I would like to imagine a state of things in which there would be a grand and flexible division of labor among us. Some of us bend our efforts toward making sociology immediately useful to people who carry on action or have problems to solve; I would hope that breed would serve the impecunious and deviant as well as the well-heeled and legitimate, those who seek radical solutions to problems of society as well as those who want merely to maintain stability. Others of us make models of societies, large and small, without much thought as to whether societies corresponding to the models exist at present. Let them be even more free in their imaginations than they are. Let those who perform experiments go ahead, making sure only that they do no harm to the people they work on and that they do not pollute a whole generation with their own particular kind of fall-out (which they might very well do, if everyone goes to college and if all freshmen have to be experimented upon to pass Psychology and Sociology One). Finally there are among us some who look about the world for laboratory cases in which to study the problems of human society; and those who, deeply and passionately involved in some problem of real life, describe reality both with the intimacy and detail which comes from close participation and observation and with that utopian imagination which can conceive of all sorts of alternatives to the way things are now. If we encourage each other, and our students, to work in a variety of ways, and if we all make our projections into the future, the greater the chance that once in a while some of us will hit upon a prediction that will be right.