

# **Social Psychology of Prejudice:**

*Historical and  
Contemporary Issues*

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# The Social Science Study of American Race Relations in the 20<sup>TH</sup> Century

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## Introduction

Racial oppression and conflict have remained a major concern of the United States throughout its history. Not surprisingly, then, “race relations”—as it is euphemistically termed—has been a focus of American social science since its origins in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This focus, however, has been uneven over the past century—often dim and reflecting the racist norms of the times but on occasion intense and pointing the way for reform. This chapter will briefly outline this uneven history of reflection and reform throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century with special attention to how the emerging discipline of American social psychology fits into this larger social scientific scene.

### *Reflection and Reform*

Social science faces a persistent dilemma (Becker, 1971; Pettigrew, 1980a). On the one hand, a vital mission of these sciences is to be a critic of culture and society, to judge skeptically the conventional wisdom of its time and place. In short, social science is maximally useful when it effectively “debunks” popular myths (Pettigrew, 1996; Williams, 1976). Social psychology acts in this role when, for example, it counters the pervasive American belief in dispositional causation by demonstrating the enormous power of situations to shape human behavior. Yet, on the other hand, social science is of necessity a part of its society and depends on it for support and acceptance. Recent limitations on research funding for social psychology and sociology by the National Science Foundation, in contrast with sharp increases for other social sciences, highlights this side of the dilemma.

The tension between critic and supplicant, between being both outside and inside society, is unavoidable. As Becker (1971, p.70) tartly observes, “A society which is willing to apply social science in the active process of changing its own vested-interest institutions has never yet been seen on the face of this planet.” And nowhere in American society is this tension more intense than in the study of black-white relations. Throughout its history, social science has both reflected racist norms and attempted to reform them. In each era of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we shall see examples of both reflection and reform in the race relations literature. But first we must see how this tension shapes the major theoretical positions on race relations during the century.

*Schools of Racial Thought and Theory*

In broad strokes, Figure 1 outlines the basic schools of thought on black-white relations. Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, two competing conceptions existed. Most Americans viewed these issues in purely racist terms, and Social Darwinism largely shaped their view of race. Crude biological interpretations had largely replaced the previous century's religious rationalizations for racial oppression—that it was somehow “God’s will.” Marxists mounted a weak counter to this dominant ideology; but their claim that black-white conflict was simply another form of class warfare had scant influence on popular American thought.

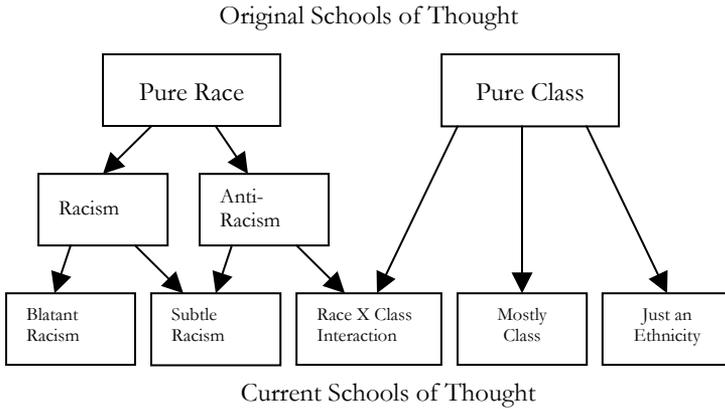


Figure 1. *Schools of thought on prejudice.*

Direct legacies of these schools of thought exist today. Pure racism still thrives—even in intellectual circles. Early in the century, psychology as a discipline importantly contributed to the respectability of racist thinking. In particular, the discipline's naïve and too-literal interpretation of the test scores of black Americans and newly-arrived immigrants had wide influence and strengthened the political arguments for racial segregation and anti-immigration laws during the 1920s. And a series of psychologists from Canada, England, and the U.S.—Cyril Burt, Hans Eysenck, Henry Garrett, Richard Herrnstein, Arthur Jensen, Frank McGurk, J. P. Rushton, Audrey Shuey and others—have helped to keep the pure race theory a force in the nation's racial debate. Their actions are made significant by the enormous attention the mass media provide their untestable claims. Largely unnoticed in this genetic argument is the remarkable absence of geneticists in the public debate.

Social psychologists have rarely joined this school of thought. Their principal contribution to it has been to highlight the more subtle forms

racist thinking has taken at the close of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Whether called symbolic racism (Sears, 1988), aversive racism (Kovel, 1970; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000), modern racism (McConahay, 1983), everyday racism (Essed, 1984), latent racism (Bergmann & Erb, 1986), the new racism (Barker, 1984), racial ambivalence (Katz & Hass, 1988), or subtle prejudice (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995), a large accumulation of field, survey and experimental research reveals that racist assumptions often undergird opinions and behavior that are widely viewed both in North America and Europe to be non-racial. This is a threatening insight at a time when racism is regarded as “bad.” Not surprisingly, then, critics have repeatedly directed heated attacks at all forms of this work (e.g., Coenders, Scheepers, Sniderman & Verbeck, 2001; Sniderman, Piazza, Tetlock, & Kendrick, 1991; Sniderman & Tetlock, 1986a, 1986b). In turn, the proponents have answered with a shelf of social psychological rebuttals (e.g., Kinder, 1986; Kinder and Sanders, 1996; Meertens and Pettigrew, 1997; Pettigrew & Meertens, 2001; Sears, Sidanius and Bobo, 2000).

As Figure 1 indicates, the Marxist emphasis on social class also has its modern-day descendants. Some, such as Glazer and Moynihan (1963), would prefer to view African Americans as simply another ethnic group battling for its rights and privileges with European ethnic groups. This school of thought simply denies that blacks in America have special claims like no other group save those of Native Americans. Two centuries of slavery, another century of legalized segregation, and the evolution of these structures into today’s unique and entrenched system of racial discrimination deny any validity to this politically convenient perspective.

A second outgrowth of the class perspective dilutes the contention slightly but still argues that modern black-white relations largely involve social class issues. The neo-Marxist interpretation advanced by William Wilson (1978) in his controversial volume, *The Declining Significance of Race*, best represents this school of thought. Here was a thesis white America could embrace with enthusiasm. With such a reassuring title, the mass media and political conservatives welcomed the book and made it a best seller. But the volume offers no evidence whatsoever for its title (Pettigrew, 1980b)—that was shrewdly suggested by the publisher after Wilson had completed his manuscript.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, there was a growing influence of social class in race relations during the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; but the race-class interaction model captures this trend more precisely.<sup>2</sup> This model emphasizes the importance of both racial and class factors in modern black-white relations. As Figure 1 indicates, this position unites the original two schools of thought. At the macro-level, the growth of the black American middle-class in recent decades was a pre-condition for this interaction. Yet poverty remains disproportionately widespread among African

Americans. Thus, when poverty combines with intense racial segregation in America's largest urban ghettos, this model predicts that indices of disorganization will be sharply higher. And this result is precisely what Massey and Denton (1993) found in their classic volume, *American Apartheid*.

Social psychology has not systematically studied the role of social class in its black-white research. Future work should more explicitly introduce class factors. But one principal finding of the vast literature on intergroup stereotyping supports the race-class interaction model. Global stereotypes of African Americans have faded and become more favorable since the original study of Katz and Braly (1933) at Princeton. For instance, superstitious, once a central component of the anti-black image, has virtually disappeared (Madon et al., 2001). But often substituting for the old global stereotype of yesteryear are current subtype stereotypes (e.g., the violent young ghetto male, the cheating welfare mother) that combine racial with class characteristics.

### **Race and Social Science Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

Within these various schools of thought, the competing themes of reflection and reform are evident throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A brief review demonstrates this and highlights social psychology's role in this unfolding pattern.

#### *1890-1915: The Nadir*

American social science began when black fortunes were at their lowest ebb since Emancipation. The U.S. Supreme Court's *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling in 1896 found state-sanctioned racial segregation constitutional. This decision ushered in a two-decade legislative period of massive racial segregation—a formidable instrument of racial oppression that the Court did not reverse for 58 years.

Social Darwinism was dominant, with biological and evolutionary thinking pervading all the social sciences. Herbert Spencer had turned “the survival of the fittest” principle into a social policy argument for letting nature improve the human stock. From this widely accepted perspective, humanitarian intervention for the poor and stigmatized only harms posterity. Eugenics carried this reasoning one step further. It held systematic sterilization of the fast breeding “inferiors” to be necessary to preserve human abilities. Soon advocates, including such leading psychologists as Carl Brigham and Henry Goddard, extended these arguments to whole nations and groups (Tucker, 1994).

With the massive migration of Eastern and Southern Europeans to American shores, this thinking shaped largely how journal articles of this period viewed the new immigrants. For the most part, African Americans were out of the view of most white Americans—including social scientists. To be sure, there were occasional racist tracts. In the *American Journal of Sociology*, one article held that the racial capabilities of blacks were best served by slavery (Belin, 1908). Another advocated compulsory

work for African Americans of all ages to relieve them of “the strain of personal initiative and responsibility” (Gilman, 1908). Yet the same journal also carried articles defending the Japanese as the equals of Caucasians (Buckley, 1906) and decrying the discrimination against blacks in voting and education (West, 1901).

Social psychology had not developed as a discipline in this period, but several prominent social psychologists were active in the debate. Again we note the reflection and reform duality of the response. William McDougall (1908) and Edward Ross (1908)—authors of the first two social psychological texts in 1908—both espoused blatant racism. In repeated works, McDougall held blacks to be inferior and such a biological threat to America that complete segregation was the only viable social policy (Tucker, 1994, pp.75, 85-87). Ross was a Populist and Progressive but also for much of his life a nativist who believed in Anglo-Saxon superiority and bitterly opposed immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe (Tucker, 1994; Weinberg, 1968). In his later years, however, Ross repudiated his racist beliefs. These men commanded considerable attention in the early twentieth century. A citation study of textbooks in the 1908-1929 era shows McDougall to be the most cited by psychological authors and Ross the most cited by sociological authors (Collier, Minton & Reynolds, 1991, pp. 4-8).

Two other famous social psychologists stood against the Social Darwinist tide. They opposed the dominant paradigm in a manner befitting modern social psychology. One was W. I. Thomas—author of the famous dictum, “if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences” (Thomas & Thomas, 1928, p. 572). An early situationalist, Thomas (1904) countered the prevailing dictum of “racial antipathy as a fixed and irreducible element.” Freed of caste-feeling, the native Virginian surmised, racial prejudice was perhaps no more stable than fashions. The day will come, he optimistically predicted, when individual abilities will count for more than skin color.

Anticipating Myrdal’s (1944) famous analogy by four decades, Thomas (1907) compared the oppression of African Americans with that of women. “The world of modern intellectual life is in reality a white man’s world,” he wrote. “Few women and perhaps no blacks have ever entered this world in the fullest sense.” In this rare environmentalistic position, he was joined by another social psychologist—Charles Cooley (Angell, 1968). Far ahead of its time, Cooley’s (1897) essay on “genius, fame and the comparison of races” directly challenged the disregard for social factors that such Social Darwinists as Francis Galton routinely displayed.

This era ended in 1915 with a momentous shift in the nation’s racial scene that permanently reshaped black life in the United States. The start of World War I in August 1914 cut off European immigration and led to large war orders to American factories in the North and Midwest.

Suddenly there was an enormous need for labor, and labor recruiters flocked to the South. Offering a free rail ticket and wages far greater than the rural South paid, poor blacks and whites came North in unprecedented numbers. Indeed, this watershed year for black migration refocused race relations from largely a Southern phenomenon into a national one.

*1916-1930: Racist Norms Solidify*

Though only established during the previous two decades, legalized racial segregation in the South soon evolved into a deeply entrenched “tradition.” Now whites viewed it as an unalterable central component of “the Southern way of life.” Threat from the new influx of black Southerners caused many whites in the urban north also to harden their racial attitudes. There was fear that the returning black servicemen from the war would challenge racial discrimination. This led to 1919 witnessing a sharp increase in indescribably horrible lynchings of black Americans, many of them veterans and some still in uniform. And the Ku Klux Klan rose again with its anti-black, anti-Catholic, and anti-Jewish appeals not only in the South but in some northern and western areas as well.

Social science research during this period remained primitive by today’s standards. Racists preferred to make their armchair analyses based largely on uninformed comparisons with Africans on the “Dark Continent.” The materials used were typically travelers’ biased and selected reports. Ellsworth Faris (1918) revealed the worthlessness of this work in a scathing methodological article. Like Thomas, Faris was a leading sociological social psychologist, a native Southerner, and highly skeptical of the Spencerian tradition.

The social science reformers of this period, including Faris, were largely of Protestant and southern or mid-western origins, often with ministerial training and in the social gospel tradition best remembered today in the writings of Reinhold Niebuhr (1941). But they, too, had inadequate empirical resources. Often they rendered their armchair analyses based on analogies with the presumed peaceful assimilation of varied races in Hawaii (e.g., Park, 1914; Smith, 1928). Their reformist tendencies, then, centered on cultural and biological assimilation of minorities rather than on civil rights in the modern sense. By the close of the period, social scientists began to develop better measurement and methods—with Emory Bogardus’s (1928) introduction of the social distance scale a notable advance. Still in wide use today, this easily administered measure offers an early example of a Guttman cumulative scale. This improvement in attitude scaling allowed for the first time quantitative research on individual prejudice.

Major attention still centered on immigrants viewed as different “races.” Legislation passed by the U.S. Congress in 1921 and 1924 aimed to eliminate immigration from southern and eastern Europe as well as Asia. In this legislative effort, psychologists played important roles

(Tucker, 1994). Armed with the test results from the Army alpha and beta tests given to World War I draftees, psychologists who were also leaders of the eugenics movement argued that many of the new immigrants were genetically inferior and should not be allowed to enter the country. Harvard's Robert Yerkes and such other eugenicists as Goddard had developed these tests during the war. Now through writings and congressional testimony they used them successfully to provide ostensibly "scientific" grounds for the sweeping anti-immigration laws of the 1920s.<sup>3</sup>

At the close of this period, the problem of the role of values in social science arose. Should social science conform, reform, or simply gather "facts?" Positivist philosophy was gaining hold throughout natural and social science, and it seemed to dictate the last of these possibilities. William Ogburn, in his famous 1929 presidential address to the American Sociological Association, argued forcefully that social science must be "value free" and leave social policy to others. But the old dilemma is not so simple. Criticism without method offers no unique contribution for social science. Method without a critical focus all too easily becomes "technique in the service of the ongoing ideology" (Becker, 1971:41).

This debate continues today, particularly in such controversial fields as race relations (Pettigrew, 2001). A "value-free" social science is impossible; the social disciplines consist of human beings studying human beings. Objectivity becomes, then, a sought-for-goal that is never fully attainable. This does not exclude social commitment. But we must make this social commitment clear to others and match it with an equally strong commitment to competent research and rigorous methods. Thus, science and values need not conflict. The problem arises when the desired goals distort the means. This travesty results not only in poor science but in poor support of one's values as well. Fifteen years after Ogburn's speech, Gunnar Myrdal (1944), in a famous appendix to his monumental *An American Dilemma*, advanced the balance between value and rigor that we need in such fields as race relations in which research often carries policy implications.

Even if Ogburn's 1929 address denied the role of values in social science, it had positive consequences in race relations research. It focused attention on values and ushered in an era of renewed interest in method.<sup>4</sup> This attention to rigor is evident in the improved quality of race relations work of the 1930s.

#### *1930-1940: Surviving the Great Depression*

Most Americans suffered deprivation during these years. A proud, confident, optimistic nation became disoriented; high aspirations for the future gave way to hopes for mere survival. African Americans were particularly hard hit; disproportionately poor at the start of the depression, they endured further discrimination even in governmental relief efforts. Such times are hardly conducive to improved race relations.

Yet social science progress in the study of American race relations accelerated during these lean years. Theory as well as research grew more sophisticated, and the basic paradigm shifted dramatically. In a movement led by the Columbia University anthropologist, Franz Boaz (Lesser, 1968),<sup>5</sup> environmentalism replaced Social Darwinism throughout social science. This dramatic alteration in thinking triggered a *tradition of white culpability* in the study of race relations that prevailed into the 1960s. This tradition strove to disprove racist claims of black inferiority by demonstrating that racial segregation and discrimination created racial disparities in the litany of social indices from health and crime statistics to test scores. Black as well as white social scientists participated in this paradigm shift. Howard University's Ralph Bunch, the political scientist and later United Nations leader, and E. Franklin Frazier, the sociologist, were especially influential. Kenneth and Mamie Clark's (1947; Horowitz, 1939) celebrated doll studies were a central and celebrated component of this tradition.

Frazier (1931, 1939, 1943, 1949) advanced the new paradigm in the major theoretical controversy of the decade. He argued family patterns and other phenomena of black America were largely the consequence of slavery and post-Emancipation discrimination. In particular, he challenged the anthropological thesis of Melville Herskovits (1934, 1941) concerning the importance of cultural survivals from Africa in black life. Demonstrating the hold that the white culpability thesis had gained by the 1930s, Frazier's contentions won dominant approval from both black and white social scientists. But, in truth, the heated Frazier-Herskovits dispute, like many academic debates, exaggerated the differences between the two positions and talked past each other. Frazier, the sociologist, focused on black institutions such as the family; Herskovits, the anthropologist, focused on the cross-Atlantic transmission of such cultural components as place-names, superstitions, dance steps, singing and speech forms, and religious folk customs.

Beyond this debate, racial theory made advances. In particular, W. Lloyd Warner (1937) introduced his caste and class model—a forerunner of the race and class interaction model discussed earlier. Inspired by Freudian theory, John Dollard and his Yale University colleagues (Dollard, et al., 1939) introduced frustration-aggression theory with applications to such racial phenomena as lynching (Hovland & Sears, 1940).

In looking for social psychology's involvement in this history, I have cited so far—with the exceptions of McDougall and the Yale group—a series of sociological social psychologists. This reflects the earlier establishment of this branch and its great interest in race relations. But the 1930s witnessed the entry of psychological social psychologists. Slowly winning acceptance in psychological departments, these pioneers of the field immediately made their mark in race research. A prime

example is Otto Klineberg's (1935) famous study of the test scores of black children in the New York City schools—a major contribution to the new paradigm.

A Canadian originally trained in medicine and strongly influenced by Boas, Klineberg initiated the white culpability tradition within psychology with this study. He showed with repeated samples that the intelligence test score averages of southern-born black children improved with each year in New York schools. The differences were not trivial; over the full range of grades, the mean gains approximated a full standard deviation. Klineberg also showed that moving from the rural South to southern cities improved black test scores. And, answering Yerkes' earlier contentions, he found that his dramatic results could not be accounted for by a selection factor of migrant southern children being systematically more talented than the South's non-migrant children.<sup>6</sup> Three decades later, Klineberg's student, Kenneth Clark (1965), wrote the last of social psychology's contributions to the white culpability tradition with his pointed volume, *Dark Ghetto*.

Other investigations of the 1930s became disciplinary classics and remain influential to this day. Katz and Braley (1933) began the famous series of Princeton University stereotype studies. LaPiere (1934), a sociological social psychologist at Stanford University, conducted his much-debated research on the differences between racial attitudes and behavior.<sup>7</sup> Sims and Patrick (1936) conducted early intergroup contact research at the University of Alabama. With each year that college students from the North remained at the southern university, their anti-black attitudes increased. Since the university was then all white, these students met only lower-status blacks and behaved according to Alabama's racist norms of that period.

*1941-1950: World War II Initiates Change*

It took a global war to open deep cracks in racial segregation. Racism remained blatant—made painfully clear in the illegal internment of 120,000 Japanese Americans at the start of the war.<sup>8</sup> Though an integral part of the massive war effort, African Americans continued to endure blatant discrimination in both the armed services and in the burgeoning war factories. Yet blacks astutely sensed that the nation's desperate need for their participation opened new possibilities for basic racial change.

Whites typically viewed the new militancy among young blacks as threatening. But black social scientists at once saw that basic institutional change was imminent. Charles Gomillion (1942) predicted that events were causing “a changing conception of self” among African Americans that foretold demands for change. “The troubles” that so bothered many whites were, Charles Johnson (1944) insisted, the start of new racial patterns in the United States. Oliver Cox (1942) objected to Warner's use of “caste” and the religious analogy from India as implying far more permanence and solidity to racial segregation than justified.

Adolf Hitler gave bigotry a bad name. A post-war Human Relations Movement developed to exploit this sentiment. Such organizations as the American Jewish Committee, the Commission for Interracial Cooperation, and the National Conference of Christians and Jews (now the National Conference for Community and Justice) began educational efforts to “cure” prejudiced individuals. Brotherhood Week in February, complete with Brotherhood Dinners and awards, became an annual event throughout the nation. But these well-meaning efforts assiduously avoided tackling racism as a societal problem and such politically explosive structural issues as racial segregation.

The Human Relations Movement directly benefited social psychology. Before the days of major federal funding for social research, these organizations sponsored both the racial field studies in New York and the authoritarian personality studies in California that shaped the field for future work. The series of field studies conducted during the late 1940s just at the start of racial desegregation in public housing and employment in New York City had an enormous influence on social psychological thinking (Deutsch & Collins, 1951; Harding & Hogrefe, 1952; Jahoda & West, 1951; Wilner, Walkley & Cook, 1955). These studies constitute excellent examples of quasi-experimental field studies before Campbell and Stanley (1963) invented the term. And they provided strong tests of intergroup contact; their results later shaped Allport’s (1954) influential formulation of contact theory as well as the famous 1954 social science statement to the U.S. Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education* (Cook, 1979).

Published in 1950 and sponsored by the American Jewish Committee, *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno, et al., 1950) was the culmination of work that the Frankfurt School had begun two decades earlier in Germany. Maslow (1943, 1949), Fromm (1947), and Allport and Kramer (1946) had set forth outlines of the theory earlier. But it remained for the University of California at Berkeley psychologists—two of them German refugees, two American—to produce a massive tome with both questionnaire and clinical evidence for the syndrome.

From a sociology of knowledge perspective, this work was remarkably in tune with its time. The Human Relations Movement stressed prejudiced individuals as the core problem while ignoring social norms and structure. The authoritarian personality research had precisely the same emphasis. For example, when the prisoners in San Quentin prison scored extremely high on the F scale measure of authoritarianism, the Berkeley researchers interpreted this as an accurate reading of the prisoners’ personalities without considering the influence of the highly authoritarian institution in which they resided. Critiques during the 1950s stressed this inattention to the social context (e.g., Pettigrew, 1958, 1959) as well as methodological problems (e.g., Christie & Jahoda, 1954).

Nonetheless, the Berkeley study constituted a major advance in social psychology's understanding of prejudice at the individual level of analysis.

*The Authoritarian Personality* was only one of several landmark volumes that appeared during the 1941-1950 era. Black sociologists wrote three of them. Frazier's *The Negro in the United States* offered a sweeping view in the white culpability tradition. Cox's (1948) *Caste, Class and Race* presented an extensive Marxist analysis of American race relations. And St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton (1945) provided in *Black Metropolis* an intensive study of Chicago's black community.

One of the most cited race relations books appeared in 1944. Gunnar Myrdal's (1944) magisterial *An American Dilemma* advanced a psychological thesis. The Swedish economist argued that a conflict existed between the consciences and practices of most white Americans. He wrote the volume in the white culpability tradition with an eye toward policy alterations. The book ambitiously and systematically describes the entire landscape of American race relations in the late 1930s. Some have questioned the validity of its psychological thesis (Jackson, 1990; Southern, 1987). Others, myself included, have defended it. Myrdal hoped to provoke with his book the dilemma that he believed existed in America society. And Leach (2001) points out that much of his discussion of anti-black prejudice anticipates current discussions of subtle prejudice.<sup>9</sup> In any event, *An American Dilemma* serves today as a valuable time capsule for comparing today's racial patterns with those of the past. Indeed, all 1,483 pages should be required reading for young observers who mistakenly believe today that "nothing has changed" in American race relations.

#### *1951-1960: The Great Promise*

The confluence of two events in the early 1950s raised hopes further for fundamental racial changes. First, war once again accelerated changes. The Korean War witnessed racially desegregated units in the armed forces and new employment opportunities for African Americans. And then on May 17, 1954 came the great promise of a better day—the dramatic and unanimous decision of the U. S. Supreme Court that racially segregated public schools were unconstitutional.

The discipline can take pride in the important role that social psychologists played in support of this historic decision. The list of those who testified as expert witnesses in the cases leading up to the Supreme Court reads like a who's who of American social psychology of the period—Jerome Bruner, Isadore Chein, Kenneth Clark, Stuart Cook, Otto Klineberg, David Kretch and Brewster Smith (Kluger, 1987). Working with the legal arm of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Clark organized this effort. Then he joined with Chein and Cook to write the social science brief for the Supreme Court in favor of school desegregation (Cook, 1979; Kluger, 1987; Pettigrew, 2001; Williams, 1998).

It is difficult a half-century later to appreciate the full force of this decision on American society. Among African Americans, hopes for the future rose sharply. And this trend was especially marked among the most deprived—black Southerners, laborers, and those with only a grammar school education (Pettigrew, 1964:184-185). Among white Americans, it signaled the inevitability of major structural changes in race relations—in particular, the end of state-sanctioned racial segregation. This sense of inevitability was even evident among southern white segregationists.<sup>10</sup> As Kenneth Clark (1953) and Gordon Allport (1954) had maintained, authority sanction for change was a long-needed element in American race relations.

Critical events soon followed. In 1956, a young black Baptist minister led a successful bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s strict adherence to non-violence established a new instrument for change that greatly influenced the Civil Rights Movement it helped to initiate. His appeal to white America's conscience followed directly from Myrdal's American dilemma thesis as well as Mohandas Gandhi's model of non-violent resistance. In 1957, a crisis arose around the racial desegregation of the public schools in Little Rock, Arkansas (Campbell & Pettigrew, 1959). When the Arkansas governor attempted to prevent the process, a reluctant President Dwight Eisenhower called in U. S. Army paratroopers to restore order and enforce the desegregation. Once again, federal intervention underlined the certainty of racial change. In 1960, black college students in Greensboro, North Carolina, inspired by King's leadership in Montgomery, began lunch counter "sit-in" demonstrations at Woolworth stores. The students' determination and non-violent demeanor, in sharp contrast to often violent white reactions, received worldwide media coverage. A nationwide civil rights movement was now in full swing.

In the midst of these events, Gordon Allport's (1954) classic volume, *The Nature of Prejudice*, appeared—first in hardback in 1954, then in a best-selling abridged edition in paperback in 1958. The book both reflected its time and shaped the next five decades of social psychological work on the subject. Like *The Authoritarian Personality*, *The Nature of Prejudice* focuses on personality, and it continued the tradition of white culpability. Indeed, Allport aimed the book at "his own kind"—white, Protestant, male Americans (Pettigrew, 1999a). But he did allow for social factors and stressed the importance of conformity to social norms in prejudice—something the Berkeley study had virtually ignored. Allport also broke with the Human Relations Movement's chief tenet—namely, that education could eradicate prejudice. Instead, he emphasized the importance of optimal intergroup contact.

There are two principal and lasting contributions of this landmark volume. First, it organized the field, defined the phenomenon, and detailed the many issues that required research. Allport once told me that

he felt the table of contents was the most important feature of the book. Second, as a “closet Gestaltist” (Pettigrew, 1979a), he stressed cognitive factors and drew attention to the importance of stereotypes—and this was just prior to the “cognitive revolution” spreading to psychology. One-third of the book’s chapters are devoted to cognitive factors. He countered the then fashionable assumption that group stereotypes were simply the aberrant distortions of “prejudiced personalities.” Advancing the view now universally accepted, Allport insisted that the cognitive components of prejudice were natural extensions of normal processes. Stereotypes and prejudgment, he concluded, were not aberrant at all, but unfortunately all too human.

*1961-1970: The Civil Rights Movement*

Dramatic events sometimes catch social science by surprise. For example, political science exaggerated the solidity of the communist regime in the Soviet Union and did not predict its sudden implosion in the late 1980s. Similarly, both sociology and social psychology overestimated the solidity of racial segregation; and neither foresaw the civil rights movement (Pettigrew & Back, 1967). The tradition of white culpability had established the depth of the problem and who was responsible—critical initial steps. But its weakness was to overlook the strengths of black America. Myrdal’s *An American Dilemma* has rightfully been criticized for this oversight (Jackson, 1990; Southern, 1987), but in truth the entire tradition is guilty on this count. On a personal note, when I look back now, I regard my volume, *A Profile of the Negro American* (Pettigrew, 1964), as an interstitial work that combined the waning tradition of white culpability with the emerging *tradition of African American proaction*. Heavily influenced by Allport, Clark, and Myrdal, I devoted four chapters to answering racist claims. But having studied and participated in the movement, I saved the final two chapters to focus on black activism and protest.

Another reason for failing to predict the movement was the enormous attention to individual prejudice and the neglect of societal factors. Social science published more than 2,000 studies during the 1950s on authoritarianism; and sociology was almost as focused on the individual as social psychology (Pettigrew & Back, 1967). Once the 1960s began, however, other social sciences attended to the racial scene as much as allowed by the severely restricted funding available from the federal government and private foundations. But the movement and the racial changes underway went largely unstudied by social psychology. Even the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issue, the discipline’s most policy-oriented group, paid only minimal attention. The Society’s *Journal of Social Issues* devoted but three of its 40 issues to racial concerns during the decade—one on racism and values in crisis (Snoek, 1969), another on ghetto riots (Allen, 1970), and a third on black American personality that

asked why there was not more research on the subject (Pettigrew & Thompson, 1964).

Cognitive dissonance and attribution theories held sway, but the discipline rarely applied them to racial phenomena. We must note, however, two important exceptions to this trend. Muzifer Sherif (1966; Sherif et al., 1961) stressed the importance of norms and interdependent group contact with his famous Robbers Cave field experiment. This contribution was a refreshing return to a more macro-level, group-oriented approach, breaking from the singular emphasis on personality and cognitive issues. The ingenious study went into social psychologists' undergraduate lecture notes, but Sherif's theoretical thrust did not make a large impact on the discipline. In addition, Milton Rokeach (1960; Rokeach & Mezei, 1966) raised another theoretical issue with his argument that the perception of conflicting beliefs and values more than race itself triggered prejudice. While he overstated his case (Stein, Hardyck, & Smith, 1965; Triandis, 1961; Triandis & Davis, 1965), Rokeach added a valuable new perspective on the prejudice phenomenon.

This disciplinary inattention occurred in the midst of the most momentous decade of the century for American race relations. Long overdue federal civil rights acts were enacted in 1964, 1965 and 1968; racial desegregation extended beyond schools to employment, voting and other areas; and severe race riots erupted in cities across the nation between 1964 and 1968.

To be sure, there was some relevant social psychological work. Social psychologists at U.C.L.A. studied the Watts riot in Los Angeles intensively (Allen, 1970; Cohen, 1970; Johnson, Sears, & McConahay, 1971; Sears, 1969; Sears & McConahay, 1969, 1970, 1973); and social psychology was represented in two federally-sponsored national studies of school desegregation (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1967; U.S. Office of Education, 1966). A few social psychologists again served as expert witnesses in shaping the implementation orders of lower courts in specific school districts (Pettigrew, 1979b). Such testimony typically relied heavily on Allport's (1954) intergroup contact hypothesis. But in full perspective it cannot be said that the discipline was importantly engaged in race research during the 1960s. This inattention may have contributed to the so-called "crisis in social psychology" at the close of the decade.

*1971-1985: Retreat and Retrenchment*

Not unlike the post-Reconstruction era a century before, the United States soon retreated from its promises to its black citizens. President Richard Nixon began the retrenchment in 1968 with a "southern strategy" that opposed school desegregation (derided as "bussing") and other racial advances (Harris, 1970). The Republican Party, once the party of Lincoln and Emancipation, so successfully developed this southern strategy that it now uses the white South as its assured base of support

(Carmines & Simpson, 1989; Edsall & Edsall, 1991). In the early 1980s, President Ronald Reagan refused even to meet with black leaders, drastically reduced the staffs of federal agencies that enforced civil rights laws, and initiated the attack on affirmation action for minorities. Publicly referring to social science as “the enemy” (Pettigrew, 1988), Reagan reduced federal funding for race research and ended numerous invaluable U.S. Census data series on African Americans. If the data were not available to demonstrate racial disparities and discrimination, then the problem could always be denied and ignored.

In social science, some writers took the tradition of African American proaction to extremes. As with many intellectual movements influenced by dramatic events, the tradition went too far. This view so focused on countering the white culpability thesis that it began to deny damage to minority populations from discrimination altogether. “By this reasoning,” grumbled Kenneth Clark to me once, “slavery was downright therapeutic!” Soon theorists sought a balance between the two traditions. Discrimination does have severely negative effects, but minorities are far more resilient in the face of such adversity than the old white culpability thesis allowed (Adam, 1978; Pettigrew, 1978). James Jones (1972, 1997) cast this balance in cultural terms in his widely read two editions of *Prejudice and Racism*.

In American social psychology, social cognition’s emphasis on stereotypes virtually replaced the study of prejudice. This extensive work has greatly enhanced our understanding of stereotypes and their operation. In particular, the rise of stereotypes for outgroup sub-types highlights an important component of modern prejudice (Ashmore, Del Boca, & Wohlers, 1986; Deaux & LaFrance, 1998). But this single-minded focus stifled other developments. In particular, “cold” cognitive concerns ignored the “hot” emotional core of prejudice. Allport (1954) maintained that stereotypes were typically rationalizations for negative affect; he noted that developmental research showed that negative feelings toward outgroups typically came first in children before they had a clear understanding of just what people comprised the disliked outgroup. But this insight went untested during these years.

Moreover, the rapid increase of women in the discipline led to a vast expansion of research on gender prejudice and discrimination. Long neglected, both laboratory and field studies detailed the operation of social psychological processes operating in gender attitudes and interaction. We can trace this new interest in the specialized issues of the *Journal of Social Issues*. Not one installment was devoted to gender during the 1960s. The first, entitled “new perspectives on women” (Mednick & Tangri, 1972), appeared in 1972, followed by four more in the 1970s, nine in the 1980s, and six in the 1990s.

These two emphases—the focus on stereotypes and gender—meant that work on racial prejudice and discrimination declined (with the

notable exception of symbolic racism discussed earlier). One might interpret these trends as meaning that social psychologists were retreating from controversy and social policy just as the nation itself was retreating from conflict and reform. But this interpretation is too harsh. The focus on stereotypes and gender issues may appear at first to involve less controversy and little policy significance. But Fiske and her colleagues (Fiske et al., 1991) disprove such an impression. In such situations as job discrimination, gender issues can generate as much threat and heat as racial issues. Moreover, in the critical U. S. Supreme Court case of *Price Waterhouse v. Hopkins*, gender stereotype research proved as convincing to the High Court as social science evidence had in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954.

It was European social psychologists who returned a group emphasis to intergroup research. Though also largely cognitively focused, Henri Tajfel's (1982) social identity theory (SIT) did not receive immediate acceptance in the U.S. Save for a few researchers, such as Marilyn Brewer (1979), American social psychology paid little attention to the SIT contentions during this period. But now SIT and the more recent self-categorization theory have gained a strong North American base.

#### *1986-2000: Two Black Americas*

Recent years have witnessed a bifurcation in African American fortunes. Those blacks with education and opportunities have prospered, even though they still face discrimination on a regular basis in their daily lives (Collins, 1997; Feagin & Sikes, 1994). But those trapped in the largest ghettos of major cities with limited education did not see even minimal gains until late in the 1992-2000 period of prosperity. Housing discrimination remains rampant throughout the nation (Massey & Denton, 1993; Yinger, 1995), and even black executives face systematic discrimination in promotions (Collins, 1997). Howard Schuman (1985, 1997) and his colleagues in sociological social psychology showed how white American opinion viewed this scene of continuing discrimination. In reviewing all available survey data on the question, they showed that large majorities opposed anti-black discrimination in principle, but most white Americans remained opposed to the implementation of many of the effective means to combat this discrimination.

Since white Americans generally encounter blacks in interracial job situations, they are typically aware of the prospering "haves" among African Americans but often unaware of the "have-nots." This differential association process has contributed to the rise of five myths in white America concerning black-white relations (Pettigrew, 1999b).

*Myth 1: Today's white opposition to policies that benefit African Americans originates largely from "principled conservatism" and not prejudice.* Kinder and Sanders (1996), in their extensive volume, *Divided by Color*, effectively answer this mistaken belief. Indeed, social psychology has often

addressed this myth directly; but the discipline needs to focus additional work relevant to the remaining myths.

*Myth 2: Racial segregation is largely a concern of the past. The residential segregation that remains is largely a function of economics and personal preference—not racial discrimination.* Demographers and economists have countered this misconception (Massey & Denton, 1993; Yinger, 1995).

*Myth 3: Major black problems today, such as teen-age pregnancies and rampant crime, are largely self-imposed and not a result of racial discrimination. Only blacks themselves can solve these problems that are internal to black communities.* In this latest version of “blaming the victim” (Ryan, 1976), the core issue involves causal attribution. Bigots see blacks as the cause of social disorganization; social science analyses demonstrate that intense segregation and economic deprivation cause the disorganization (e.g., Massey & Denton, 1993). For example, when prosperity during the century’s waning years finally reached down to the black poor, both teen-age pregnancies and crime in black areas declined sharply.

*Myth 4: Although the black poor still have problems, ambitious and talented blacks face little discrimination today as they form a growing black middle class that is rapidly entering previously all-white institutions.* This fiction, too, represents a dispositional attribution for racial problems.

Almost half of a national probability sample of adult blacks reported in 2000 that they had experienced discrimination within the last 30 days (Smith, 2000). But do these survey data simply show that black Americans are “oversensitive” to possible discrimination—a popular white contention? Unobtrusive studies of racial discrimination, reviewed by Faye Crosby (Crosby et al., 1980), support black perceptions. And a massive, two-million dollar study of housing discrimination by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development provides an even more definitive answer (Yinger, 1995). It used a technique developed by social psychologists—the controlled audit field experiment. The study conducted 3,745 audits of advertised housing sales and rentals in 25 metropolitan areas—half with black-white and half with Latino-Anglo testing teams. These audits uncovered widespread discrimination in all 25 areas against both blacks and Latinos—but especially against African Americans in areas with large black populations. From these results, Yinger, 1995, p. 133) estimates that “discrimination has produced a deficit in net housing wealth of about \$414 billion for blacks and \$186 billion for Hispanics.”

*Myth 5: For whatever reasons, racial integration has not and cannot be achieved in the United States. The fanciful 1960s idea that government and major institutions could achieve such integration is now thoroughly discredited.* Many American institutions have never made full-faith efforts to integrate racially. Where such efforts have begun, as in professional sports and the armed services, considerable success has been achieved (Moscos & Butler, 1996). Social psychology is especially well equipped to contribute to this immediate

need to turn mere racial desegregation into genuine integration (Oskamp, 2000).

These myths underlie much of both blatant and subtle forms of white opposition to racial change. And while subtle forms of racism have apparently increased, older blatant forms persist. Throughout the period, David Duke, a Louisiana Ku Klux Klan leader, repeatedly ran for high office. In 1988, George Bush conducted the most blatantly racist presidential campaign in modern American political history—featuring the threatening “Willie Horton” television advertisement. A series of black church burnings spread across the South in the 1990s. The decade also witnessed an accelerated retreat in racial desegregation of the public schools. By 1999, black children were more likely to be attending predominantly-black schools than at any point in recent decades (Orfield & Eaton, 1996; Orfield & Gordon, 2001). And in the disputed 2000 presidential election, one out of ten blacks sampled reported voting problems—twice that reported by whites (Dawson & Bobo, 2000). This issue is at the core of the hotly disputed voting returns from Florida. According to the U. S. Commission of Civil Rights, African American voters in Florida were five times more likely to have their ballots rejected than other voters—a disparity that drew scant mass media attention.

Psychology was once again represented in this blatant racist trend. Richard Herrnstein joined with a political scientist from the far-right-wing Heritage Foundation to produce a volume that reiterated the hoary racist contention of innate black inferiority in intelligence (Herrnstein & Murray, 1995). Though neither co-author had ever conducted research on intelligence, their *The Bell Curve* received enormous attention in the mass media that mistook it for “science.” Herrnstein’s collaboration in this effort stemmed directly from psychology’s racist past. As a longtime colleague of his at Harvard University, I asked him once why he had embarked on such an endeavor so distant from his expertise in Skinnerian learning. He told me that he had become fascinated with early work on race and intelligence in the 1920s by his Harvard teacher, Edwin Boring, which had used the Army alpha and beta test data.

With these ominous events swirling around them, social psychologists broadened their theory and research on prejudice and discrimination considerably during these years. Indeed, the other chapters in this volume attest to this expansion of interests, methods, and models in this domain. In particular, a turn away from limited stereotype work to more direct concern with prejudice and discrimination was evident. This trend coincided with a more general shift from purely cognitive concerns to increased attention to emotion and motivation.

Two seminal volumes on stereotypes, both edited by David Hamilton, highlight the overdue correction. In *Cognitive Processes in Stereotyping and Intergroup Behavior* (Hamilton, 1981), affect received brief mention and mood and emotion are not even in the index. A dozen years

later, *Affect, Cognition and Stereotyping* (Mackie & Hamilton, 1993) centers on the role of affect. In this volume, Elliot Smith (1993, p. 304) even defined prejudice as “a social emotion experienced with respect to one’s social identity as a group member, with an outgroup as a target.” And a spate of empirical work using a variety of methods supported the critical importance of affect for prejudice (Dijker, 1987; Edwards & von Hippel, 1995; Esses, Haddock & Zanna, 1993; Pettigrew, 1997a; Stangor, Sullivan & Ford, 1991; Zanna, Haddock & Esses, 1990).

The 1986-2000 period also witnessed renewed interests in group threat and conflict approaches (Bobo, 1996, 2000; Stephan & Stephan, 1985, 1992), intergroup contact theory (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000, Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Pettigrew, 1997b, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000), and in the personality correlates of prejudice. In particular, the work of Altemeyer (1988, 1998) on right-wing authoritarianism and that of Sidanius and Pratto (1999) on social dominance orientation sparked empirical attention to personality issues in intergroup relations once again both in Europe as well as North America. The African American proaction tradition continued to exert an influence. With a seminal paper by Jennifer Crocker and Brenda Major (1989) leading the way, social psychologists began to consider more systematically the reactions of minorities to stigma, prejudice and discrimination. And European research suggested far greater cross-national universalism of the social psychological processes that underlie prejudice than previously thought (Pettigrew, et al., 1998). In sum, recent years offer promise that social psychological work in the intergroup prejudice and discrimination domain will be considerably more comprehensive and useful in the future.

#### **A Wish List for the Future**

So where do we go from here? Let me close with a brief listing of my personal wish list for the discipline’s work in race relations during the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

First, I hope two current trends continue—the greater focus on the targets of prejudice and the development of models that combine cognitive and affective components of prejudice. Thus, the relations among minorities and the identity issues for the rapidly increasing numbers of Americans of mixed racial heritage deserve more attention. For the melding of cognitive and affective processes, the tripartite model of prejudice advanced by Esses, Haddock, and Zanna (1993) consisting of values, stereotypes, and affect is a promising case in point. As part of this development, the central role of affect—as proposed by Smith (1993)—should become increasingly evident.

Second, as part of an effort to address more directly the prevailing racial myths, work on attitudes needs to make more use of political ideologies and other closely patterned webs of highly interrelated attitudes. Social dominance research is a significant step in this direction. The discipline’s more explicit use of the ideology concept would help to

tie social psychological work to that of political science as well as to make it more applicable to practical problems in modern American race relations.

Third, the field needs to return to the old problem of the link between prejudice and discriminatory behavior. Some theorists, such as Rupert Brown (1995), would break from the Allportian tradition and include behavior as part of the definition of prejudice. I believe this approach risks papering over the problem. Future work on this issue, I hope, will explicate how social norms shape the complex relationship. Such an advance would help to translate work on prejudice into policy applications. Thus, this issue affords an important, affectively-charged, and applied-oriented test of one of the discipline's central problems—the attitude-behavior link.

Finally, my most expansive wish for the future requires a joint theoretical and empirical effort to unite many of the various theoretical threads and levels of analysis that now exist in social psychology's study of intergroup relations. We need bolder middle-range theories that merge critical parts of social identity, relative deprivation, authoritarianism, social dominance, realistic group conflict, intergroup contact, normative and other relevant theories. Such an enterprise requires a range of different empirical approaches.<sup>11</sup> In particular, longitudinal designs, field as well as laboratory studies, and more attention to causal sequencing would be necessary. And multilevel modeling is called for to bring together societal and situational variables with individual-level variables (Kreft & de Leeuw, 1998).

In short, social psychology has made important contributions to the study of race relations throughout much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. And there is every reason to expect that the discipline will provide comparable contributions in the new century.

### Notes

[1]. Personal communication to the author from William Wilson.

[2]. Wilson's argument assumed a hydraulic model—in effect, a zero-sum relationship between race and class. That is, if class factors were becoming more important, he reasoned that racial factors must be declining. But national data collected over recent decades do not support this position. Class factors have been gaining in significance, and this has altered the operation of racial factors. But these alterations, unfortunately, have not signaled the “declining significance of race.” Rather they reveal an interaction between the race and class factors involved in racial prejudice and discrimination. Thus, racial factors are *changing*—though not declining—in their significance (Pettigrew, 1980b).

[3]. Psychologists of the period also used the same specious test data against African Americans. But they had to explain away contradictory findings even in their own data. For instance, the scores of northern black recruits more closely resembled those of northern whites than those of southern blacks. Yerkes surmised this inconvenient result merely reflected a selection bias; smarter African

Americans had come North leaving duller group members behind in the South (Tucker, 1994:81). Otto Klineberg's pioneering research, we shall see in the next section, later failed to support Yerkes' claim.

[4]. It is worth noting that Ogburn's strict insistence on presumably "value-free" facts did not prevent him from making major contributions to the study of social problems and social change. By attempting to alleviate social problems, these contributions directly reflected his values.

[5]. Gossett (1963) even speculates that Boas did more to combat racial prejudice than any other person in history—a sweeping claim but not without merit.

[6]. Lee (1951) later replicated Kleinberg's work in a study of public school children in Philadelphia.

[7]. For pointed discussions of this critical study, see Dillehay (1973), Kelman (1978), and Schuman and Johnson (1976).

[8]. Four aspects of the internment make the racist motivation behind it abundantly clear. First, not one spying or sabotage conviction of a Japanese American ever occurred. Second, the government interned only selected German and Italian Americans with specific cause. Third, there was no mass internment of Japanese Americans in Hawaii—a militarily more dangerous location. Finally, the federal government later asked young Japanese-American men in the camps to serve in the U.S. Army in Europe—which many did with distinction. But, surely, this is an extraordinary request to make of people who were truly considered to be disloyal to the nation.

[9]. Leach (2001) emphasizes Myrdal's extended discussions of racism that American society did not regard as racist in the 1930s and 1940s.

[10]. One indication of this in the South was the failure to organize resistance groups during the 1954-55 period (Pettigrew, 1991). White Citizens' Councils and other resistance groups developed only after the U. S. Supreme Court retreated in its May 1955 ruling that public school desegregation need only proceed with "all deliberate speed." This ruling gave hope to segregationists that the process was not inevitable after all - for the white South had been traditionally, quite "deliberate" but never "speedy" when it came to racial change.

[11]. One small attempt in this direction empirically reduced the number of common predictor variables of prejudice to three principal factors: *political engagement* (e.g., intention to vote and political interest—negative predictors of prejudice); *generation and social class* (e.g., education—a negative predictor and age—a positive predictor); and *traditional conservatism* (e.g., political conservatism and national pride—positive predictors). A fourth factor labeled *cosmopolitanism*, consisting of urbanity and intergroup friendship, proved less stable (Pettigrew, 2000).

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