

CHAPTER 3

FACETS OF THE NEGRO PROBLEM

I. AMERICAN MINORITY PROBLEMS

For some decades there has been a tendency to incorporate the American Negro problem into the broader American minority problem.¹ In the United States, the term "minority people" has a connotation different from that in other parts of the world and especially in Central and Eastern Europe, where minority problems have existed. This difference in problem is due to a difference in situation. The minority peoples of the United States are fighting for status in the larger society; the minorities of Europe are mainly fighting for independence from it. In the United States the so-called minority groups as they exist today—except the Indians and the Negroes—are mostly the result of a relatively recent immigration, which it was for a long time the established policy to welcome as a nationally advantageous means of populating and cultivating the country. The newcomers themselves were bent upon giving up their language and other cultural heritages and acquiring the ways and attitudes of the new nation. There have been degrees of friction and delay in this assimilation process, and even a partial conscious resistance by certain immigrant groups. But these elements of friction and resistance are really only of a character and magnitude to bring into relief the fundamental difference between the typical American minority problems and those in, say, the old Austrian Empire. Of greatest importance, finally, is the fact that the official political creed of America denounced, in general but vigorous terms, all forms of suppression and discrimination, and affirmed human equality.

In addition to a cultural difference between the native-born and the foreign-born in the United States, there was always a class difference. At every point of time many of those who were already established in the new country had acquired wealth and power, and were thus in a position to lay down the rules to late-comers. The immigrants, who left their native lands mainly because they had little wealth, had to fit themselves as best they could into the new situation. Their lack of familiarity with the English language and ways of life also made them an easy prey of economic exploitation. But as long as the West was open to expansion, immigrant groups could avoid becoming a subordinate class by going to a place

where they were the only class. Gradually the frontier filled up, and free land no longer offered the immigrants cultural independence and economic self-protection. Increasingly they tended to come from lands where the cultures were ever more distant from the established American standards. They became distinguished more markedly as half-digested isolates, set down in the slums of American cities, and the level of discrimination rose.

The first stage of their assimilation often took them through the worst slums of the nation. Group after group of immigrants from every part of the world had their first course in Americanization in the squalid and congested quarters of New York's East Side and similar surroundings. They found themselves placed in the midst of utter poverty, crime, prostitution, lawlessness, and other undesirable social conditions. The assimilation process brought the immigrants through totally uncontrolled labor conditions and often through personal misery and social pressures of all kinds. The American social scientist might direct his curiosity to the occasional failures of the assimilation process and the tension created in the entire structure of larger society during its course. To the outside observer, on the other hand, the relative success will forever remain the first and greatest riddle to solve, when he sees that the children and grandchildren of these unassimilated foreigners are well-adjusted Americans. He will have to account for the basic human power of resistance and the flexibility of people's minds and cultures. He will have to appreciate the tremendous force in the American educational system. But it will not suffice as an explanation. He will be tempted to infer the influence upon the immigrant of a great national *ethos*, in which optimism and carelessness, generosity and callousness, were so blended as to provide him with hope and endurance.

From the viewpoint of the struggling immigrant himself, the harsh class structure, which thrust him to the bottom of the social heap, did not seem to be a rigid social determinant. In two or three generations, if not in one, the immigrant and his descendants moved into, and identified themselves with, the dominant American group, and—with luck and ability—took their position in the higher strata. Only because of this continuous movement of former immigrants and their descendants up and into the established group could the so-called "Americans" remain the majority during a century which saw more than a score of millions of immigrants added to its population. The causal mechanism of this social process has been aptly described as a continuous "push upwards" by a steady stream of new masses of toiling immigrants filling the ranks of the lower social strata. The class structure remained, therefore, fairly stable, while millions of individuals were continuously climbing the social ladder which it constituted. The unceasing process of social mobility and the prospect of its continuation, and also the established Creed of America promising and sanctioning social

mobility, together with many other factors of importance, kept the minority groups contented and bent on assimilation.

Religious differences, differences in fundamental attitudes, and "racial" differences entered early as elements of friction in the process of assimilation and as reasons for discrimination while the process was going on. With the growing importance of the new immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe in the decades before the War, these factors acquired increased importance. They are, in a considerable degree, responsible for the fact that even recent community surveys, undertaken decades after the end of the mass immigration, give a picture of American class stratification which closely corresponds to the differentiation in national groups. This type of differentiation is one of the most distinguishing characteristics of the American social order.

The split of the nation into a dominant "American" group and a large number of minority groups means that American civilization is permeated by animosities and prejudices attached to ethnic origin or what is popularly recognized as the "race" of a person.* These animosities or prejudices are commonly advanced in defense of various discriminations which tend to keep the minority groups in a disadvantaged economic and social status. They are contrary to the American Creed, which is emphatic in denouncing differences made on account of "race, creed or color." In regard to the Negro, as well as more generally to all the other minorities, this conflict is what constitutes the problem, and it also contains the main factors in the dynamic development. Taking a cross-sectional view at any point of time, there is thus revealed an inconsistency in practically every American's social orientation. The inconsistency is not dissolved, at least not in the short run. Race prejudice and discrimination persist. But neither will the American Creed be thrown out. It is a hasty conclusion from the actual

* The popular term "race prejudice," as it is commonly used, embraces the whole complex of valuations and beliefs which are behind discriminatory behavior on the part of the majority group (or, sometimes, also on the part of the minority group) and which are contrary to the equalitarian ideals in the American Creed. In this very inclusive sense the term will be used in this inquiry. It should be noted that little is explained when we say that "discrimination is due to prejudice." The concept "race prejudice" unfortunately carries connotations that the intergroup situation is fairly stable and that the complex of attitudes behind discrimination is homogeneous and solid. (This is, incidentally, the danger with the concept of "attitude" as it is often used; see Appendix 1.) For a discussion of the empirical study of race prejudice, see Appendix 10, Section 4.

We do not need to enter into a discussion of whether "anti-minority feelings" in general are different from the "race prejudices" as they are displayed against Negroes. On the one hand, people in general also refer the former attitude to what they usually perceive of as "race." As Donald Young points out, there is also something of a common pattern in all discriminations (see footnote 1 to this chapter). On the other hand, there is this significant difference which we shall stress, that in regard to the colored minorities, amalgamation is violently denied them, while in regard to all the other minorities, it is welcomed as a long-run process.

facts of discrimination that the Creed will be without influence in the long run, even if it is suppressed for the moment, or even that it is uninfluential in the short run.

In trying to reconcile conflicting valuations the ordinary American apparently is inclined to believe that, as generations pass on, the remaining minority groups—with certain distinct exceptions which will presently be discussed—will be assimilated into a homogeneous nation.² The American Creed is at least partially responsible for this, as well as for the American's inclination to deem this assimilation desirable. Of course, this view is also based on the memories of previous absorption of minority groups into the dominant "American" population. Even the American Indians are now considered as ultimately assimilable. "The American Indian, once constituting an inferior caste in the social hierarchy, now constitutes little more than a social class, since today his inferior status may be sloughed off by the process of cultural assimilation."³ This, incidentally, speaks against the doctrine that race prejudice under all circumstances is an unchangeable pattern of attitudes.

This long-range view of ultimate assimilation can be found to coexist with any degree of race prejudice in the actual present-day situation. In many parts of the country Mexicans are kept in a status similar to the Negro's or only a step above. Likewise, in most places anti-Semitism is strong and has apparently been growing for the last ten years.⁴ Italians, Poles, Finns, are distrusted in some communities; Germans, Scandinavians, and the Irish are disliked in others, or sometimes the same communities. There are sections of the majority group which draw the circle exclusively and who hate all "foreigners." There are others who keep a somewhat distinct line only around the more exotic peoples. The individual, regional, and class differentials in anti-minority feeling are great.⁵

In spite of all race prejudice, few Americans seem to doubt that it is the ultimate fate of this nation to incorporate without distinction not only all the Northern European stocks, but also the people from Eastern and Southern Europe, the Near East and Mexico. They see obstacles; they emphasize the religious and "racial" differences; they believe it will take a long time. But they assume that it is going to happen, and do not have, on the whole, strong objections to it—provided it is located in a distant future.

2. THE ANTI-AMALGAMATION DOCTRINE

The Negroes, on the other hand, are commonly assumed to be unassimilable and this is the reason why the characterization of the Negro problem as a minority problem does not exhaust its true import.⁶ The Negroes are set apart, together with other colored peoples, principally the Chinese and

⁶ See Chapter 4.

the Japanese. America fears the segregation into distinctive isolated groups of all other elements of its population and looks upon the preservation of their separate national attributes and group loyalties as a hazard to American institutions. Considerable efforts are directed toward "Americanizing" all groups of alien origin. But in regard to the colored peoples, the American policy is the reverse. They are excluded from assimilation. Even by their best friends in the dominant white group and by the promoters of racial peace and good-will, they are usually advised to keep to themselves and develop a race pride of their own.

Among the groups commonly considered unassimilable, the Negro people is by far the largest. The Negroes do not, like the Japanese and the Chinese, have a politically organized nation and an accepted culture of their own outside of America to fall back upon. Unlike the Oriental, there attaches to the Negro an historical memory of slavery and inferiority. It is more difficult for them to answer prejudice with prejudice and, as the Orientals may do, to consider themselves and their history superior to the white Americans and their recent cultural achievements. The Negroes do not have these fortifications for self-respect. They are more helplessly imprisoned as a subordinate caste in America, a caste* of people deemed to be lacking a cultural past and assumed to be incapable of a cultural future.

To the ordinary white American the caste line between whites and Negroes is based upon, and defended by, the anti-amalgamation doctrine. This doctrine, more than anything else, gives the Negro problem its uniqueness among other problems of lower status groups, not only in terms of intensity of feelings but more fundamentally in the character of the problem. We follow a general methodological principle, presented previously, when we now start out from the ordinary white man's notion of what constitutes the heart of the Negro problem.

When the Negro people, unlike the white minority groups, is commonly characterized as unassimilable, it is not, of course, implied that amalgamation is not biologically possible. But crossbreeding is considered undesirable. Sometimes the view is expressed that the offspring of crossbreeding is inferior to both parental stocks. Usually it is only asserted that it is inferior to the "pure" white stock. The assumption evidently held is that the Negro stock is "inferior" to the white stock. On the inherited

* In this inquiry we shall use the term "caste" to denote the social status difference between Negroes and whites in America. The concept and its implications will be discussed in some detail in Part VIII. It should be emphasized that, although the *dividing line* between Negroes and whites is held fixed and rigid so that no Negro legitimately can pass over from his caste to the higher white caste, the *relations* between members of the two castes are different in different regions and social classes and changing in time. It is true that the term "caste" commonly connotes a static situation even in the latter respect. However, for a social phenomenon we prefer to use a social concept with too static connotations rather than the biological concept "race" which, of course, carries not only static but many much more erroneous connotations.

inferiority of the Negro people there exists among white Americans a whole folklore, which is remarkably similar throughout the country. To this we shall refer in the next chapter.

Whether this concept of the inferiority of the Negro stock is psychologically basic to the doctrine that amalgamation should be prohibited, or is only a rationalization of this doctrine, may for the moment be left open. The two notions, at any rate, appear together. The fact that one is used as argument for the other does not necessarily prove such a causal psychic relation between them. In many cases one meets an unargued and not further dissolvable *primary* valuation, which is assumed to be self-evident even without support of the inferiority premise. Miscegenation^a is said to be a threat to "racial purity." It is alleged to be contrary to "human instincts." It is "contrary to nature" and "detestable." Not only in the South but often also in the North the stereotyped and hypothetical question is regularly raised without any intermediary reasoning as to its applicability or relevance to the social problem discussed: "Would you like to have your sister or daughter marry a Negro?" This is an unargued appeal to "racial solidarity" as a primary valuation. It is corollary to this attitude that in America the offspring of miscegenation is relegated to the Negro race.

A remarkable and hardly expected peculiarity of this American doctrine, expounded so directly in biological and racial terms, is that it is applied with a vast discretion depending upon the purely social and legal circumstances under which miscegenation takes place. As far as lawful marriage is concerned, the racial doctrine is laden with emotion. Even in the Northern states where, for the most part, intermarriage is not barred by the force of law, the social sanctions blocking its way are serious. Mixed couples are punished by nearly complete social ostracism. On the other hand, in many regions, especially in the South where the prohibition against intermarriage and the general reprehension against miscegenation have the strongest moorings, illicit relations have been widespread and occasionally allowed to acquire a nearly institutional character. Even if, as we shall find later when we come to analyze the matter more in detail,^b such relations are perhaps now on the decline, they are still not entirely stamped out.

Considering the biological emphasis of the anti-amalgamation doctrine and the strong social sanctions against intermarriage tied to that doctrine, the astonishing fact is the great indifference of most white Americans

^a Miscegenation is mainly an American term and is in America almost always used to denote only relations between Negroes and whites. Although it literally implies only mixture of genes between members of different races, it has acquired a definite emotional connotation. We use it in its literal sense—without implying necessarily that it is undesirable—as a convenient synonym of amalgamation.

^b See Chapter 5.

toward real but illicit miscegenation. In spite of the doctrine, in some regions with a large Negro population, cohabitation with a Negro woman is, apparently, considered a less serious breach of sexual morals than illicit intercourse with a white woman. The illicit relations freely allowed or only frowned upon are, however, restricted to those between white men and Negro women. A white woman's relation with a Negro man is met by the full fury of anti-amalgamation sanctions.

If we now turn to the American Negro people, we can hardly avoid the strong impression that what there is of reluctance in principle toward amalgamation is merely in the nature of a reaction or response to the white doctrine, which thus stands as primary in the causal sense and strategic in a practical sense. It is true that white people, when facing the Negro group, make an ideological application of the general Jim Crow principle—"equal but separate" treatment and accommodations for the two racial groups—and proceed from the assertion that both races are good to the explanation that there is a value in keeping them unmixed. They appeal also to the Negroes' "race pride" and their interest in keeping their own blood "pure." But this is a white, not a Negro, argument.

The Negro will be found to doubt the sincerity of the white folks' interest in the purity of the Negro race. It will sound to him too much like a rationalization, in strained equalitarian terms, of the white supremacy doctrine of race purity. "But the outstanding joke is to hear a white man talk about race integrity, though at this the Negro is in doubt whether to laugh or swear."⁶ Even the Negro in the uneducated classes is sensitive to the nuances of sincerity, trained as he is both in slavery and afterwards to be a good dissembler himself. The Negro will, furthermore, encounter considerable intellectual difficulties inherent in the idea of keeping his blood pure, owing to the fact that the large majority of American Negroes actually are of mixed descent. They already have white and Indian ancestry as well as African Negro blood. And in general they are aware of this fact.

In spite of this, race pride, with this particular connotation of the undesirability of miscegenation, has been growing in the Negro group. This is, however, probably to be interpreted as a defense reaction, a derived *secondary* attitude as are so many other attitudes of the Negro people.^a After weighing all available evidence carefully, it seems frankly incredible that the Negro people in America should feel inclined to develop any particular race pride at all or have any dislike for amalgamation, were it not for the common white opinion of the racial inferiority of the Negro people and the whites' intense dislike for miscegenation. The fact that a large amount of exploitative sexual intercourse between white men and Negro women has always been, and still is, part of interracial relations, coupled with the further fact that the Negroes sense the disgrace of their women who are

^a See Appendix 10, Section 4.

not accepted into matrimony, and the inferior status of their mixed offspring, is a strong practical reason for the Negro's preaching "race pride" in his own group. But it is almost certainly not based on any fundamental feeling condemning miscegenation on racial or biological grounds.

On this central point, as on so many others, the whites' attitudes are primary and decisive; the Negroes' are in the nature of accommodation or protest.

3. THE WHITE MAN'S THEORY OF COLOR CASTE

We have attempted to present in compressed and abstract formulation the white supremacy doctrine as applied to amalgamation, sex relations and marriage. The difficulty inherent in this task is great. As no scientifically controlled nation-wide investigations have been made, the author has here, as in other sections, had to rely on his own observations.⁷

Every widening of the writer's experience of white Americans has only driven home to him more strongly that the opinion that the Negro is unassimilable, or, rather, that his amalgamation into the American nation is undesirable, is held more commonly, absolutely, and intensely than would be assumed from a general knowledge of American thoughtways. Except for a handful of rational intellectual liberals—who also, in many cases, add to their acceptance in principle of amalgamation an admission that they personally feel an irrational emotional inhibition against it—it is a rare case to meet a white American who will confess that, if it were not for public opinion and social sanctions not removable by private choice, he would have no strong objection to intermarriage.

The intensity of the attitude seems to be markedly stronger in the South than in the North. Its strength seems generally to be inversely related to the economic and social status of the informant and his educational level. It is usually strong even in most of the non-colored minority groups, if they are above the lowest plane of indifference. To the poor and socially insecure, but struggling, white individual, a fixed opinion on this point seems an important matter of prestige and distinction.

But even a liberal-minded Northerner of cosmopolitan culture and with a minimum of conventional blinds will, in nine cases out of ten, express a definite feeling against amalgamation. He will not be willing usually to hinder intermarriage by law. Individual liberty is to him a higher principle and, what is more important, he actually invokes it. But he will regret the exceptional cases that occur. He may sometimes hold a philosophical view that in centuries to come amalgamation is bound to happen and might become the solution. But he will be inclined to look on it as an inevitable deterioration.⁸

⁸ The response is likely to be anything but pleasant if one jestingly argues that possibly a small fraction of Negro blood in the American people, if it were blended well with all

This attitude of refusing to consider amalgamation—felt and expressed in the entire country—constitutes the center in the complex of attitudes which can be described as the “common denominator” in the problem. It defines the Negro group in contradistinction to all the non-colored minority groups in America and all other lower class groups. The boundary between Negro and white is not simply a class line which can be successfully crossed by education, integration into the national culture, and individual economic advancement. The boundary is fixed. It is not a temporary expediency during an apprenticeship in the national culture. It is a bar erected with the intention of permanency. It is directed against the whole group. Actually, however, “passing” as a white person is possible when a Negro is white enough to conceal his Negro heritage. But the difference between “passing” and ordinary social climbing reveals the distinction between a class line, in the ordinary sense, and a caste line.

This brings us to the point where we shall attempt to sketch, only in an abstract and preliminary form, the social mechanism by which the anti-amalgamation maxim determines race relations. This mechanism is perceived by nearly everybody in America, but most clearly in the South. Almost unanimously white Americans have communicated to the author the following logic of the caste situation which we shall call the “*white man’s theory of color caste.*”

- (1) The concern for “race purity” is basic in the whole issue; the primary and essential command is to prevent amalgamation; the whites are determined to utilize every means to this end.
- (2) Rejection of “social equality” is to be understood as a precaution to hinder miscegenation and particularly intermarriage.
- (3) The danger of miscegenation is so tremendous that the segregation and discrimination inherent in the refusal of “social equality” must be extended to nearly all spheres of life. There must be segregation and discrimination in recreation, in religious service, in education, before the law, in politics, in housing, in stores and in breadwinning.

This popular theory of the American caste mechanism is, of course, open to criticism. It can be criticized from a valuational point of view by main-

the other good stock brought over to the new continent, might create a race of unsurpassed excellence: a people with just a little sunburn without extra trouble and even through the winter; with some curl in the hair without the cost of a permanent wave; with, perhaps, a little more emotional warmth in their souls; and a little more religion, music, laughter, and carefreeness in their lives. Amalgamation is, to the ordinary American, not a proper subject for jokes at all, unless it can be pulled down to the level of dirty stories, where, however, it enjoys a favored place. Referred to society as a whole and viewed as a principle, the anti-amalgamation maxim is held holy; it is a consecrated taboo. The maxim might, indeed, be a remnant of something really in the “mores.” It is kept unproblematic, which is certainly not the case with all the rest of etiquette and segregation and discrimination patterns, for which this quality is sometimes erroneously claimed.

taining that hindering miscegenation is not a worthwhile end, or that as an end it is not sufficiently worthwhile to counterbalance the sufferings inflicted upon the suppressed caste and the general depression of productive efficiency, standards of living and human culture in the American society at large—costs appreciated by all parties concerned. This criticism does not, however, endanger the theory which assumes that white people actually are following another valuation of means and ends and are prepared to pay the costs for attaining the ends. A second criticism would point out that, assuming the desirability of the end, this end could be reached without the complicated and, in all respects, socially expensive caste apparatus now employed. This criticism, however adequate though it be on the practical or political plane of discussion, does not disprove that people believe otherwise, and that the popular theory is a true representation of their beliefs and actions.

To undermine the popular theory of the caste mechanism, as based on the anti-amalgamation maxim, it would, of course, be necessary to prove that people really are influenced by other motives than the ones pronounced. Much material has, as we shall find, been brought together indicating that, among other things, competitive economic interests, which do not figure at all in the popular rationalization referred to, play a decisive role. The announced concern about racial purity is, when this economic motive is taken into account, no longer awarded the exclusive role as the *basic* cause in the psychology of the race problem.

Though the popular theory of color caste turns out to be a rationalization, this does not destroy it. For among the forces in the minds of the white people are certainly not only economic interests (if these were the only ones, the popular theory would be utterly demolished), but also sexual urges, inhibitions, and jealousies, and social fears and cravings for prestige and security. When they come under the scrutiny of scientific research, both the sexual and the social complexes take on unexpected designs. We shall then also get a clue to understanding the remarkable tendency of this presumably biological doctrine, that it refers only to legal marriage and to relations between Negro men and white women, but not to extra-marital sex relations between white men and Negro women.

However these sexual and social complexes might turn out when analyzed, they will reveal the psychological nature of the anti-amalgamation doctrine and show its "meaning." They will also explain the compressed emotion attached to the Negro problem. It is inherent in our type of modern Western civilization that sex and social status are for most individuals the danger points, the directions whence he fears the sinister onslaughts on his personal security. These two factors are more likely than anything else to push a life problem deep down into the subconscious and load it with emotions. There is some probability that in America both com-

plexes are particularly laden with emotions. The American puritan tradition gives everything connected with sex a higher emotional charge. The roads for social climbing have been kept more open in America than perhaps anywhere else in the world, but in this upward struggle the competition for social status has also become more absorbing. In a manner and to a degree most uncomfortable for the Negro people in America, both the sexual and the social complexes have become related to the Negro problem.

These complexes are most of the time kept concealed. In occasional groups of persons and situations they break into the open. Even when not consciously perceived or expressed, they ordinarily determine interracial behavior on the white side.

4. THE "RANK ORDER OF DISCRIMINATIONS"

The anti-amalgamation doctrine represents a strategic constellation of forces in race relations. Their charting will allow us a first general overview of the discrimination patterns and will have the advantage that white Americans themselves will recognize their own paths on the map we draw. When white Southerners are asked to rank, in order of importance, various types of discrimination,^a they consistently present a list in which these types of discrimination are ranked according to the degree of closeness of their relation to the anti-amalgamation doctrine. This rank order—which will be referred to as "*the white man's rank order of discriminations*"—will serve as an organizing principle in this book. It appears, actually, only as an elaboration of the popular theory of color caste sketched above. Like that theory, it is most clearly and distinctly perceived in the South; in the North ideas are more vague but, on the whole, not greatly divergent. Neither the popular theory of caste nor the rank order of discriminations has been noted much in scientific literature on the Negro problem.

The rank order held nearly unanimously is the following:

- Rank 1. Highest in this order stands the bar against intermarriage and sexual intercourse involving white women.
- Rank 2. Next come the several etiquettes and discriminations, which specifically concern behavior in personal relations. (These are the barriers against dancing, bathing, eating, drinking together, and social intercourse generally; peculiar rules as to handshaking, hat lifting, use of titles, house entrance to be used, social forms when meeting on streets and in work, and so forth. These patterns are sometimes referred to as the denial of "social equality" in the narrow meaning of the term.)

^a In this introductory sketch the distinction between "segregation" and "discrimination" is entirely disregarded. This distinction, signified by the popular theory and legal construct "separate but equal," is mainly to be regarded as an equalitarian rationalization on the part of the white Americans, indicating the fundamental conflict of valuations involved in the matter. "Segregation" means only separation and does not, in principle, imply "discrimination." In practice it almost always does. (See Chapter 28.)

- Rank 3. Thereafter follow the segregations and discriminations in use of public facilities such as schools, churches and means of conveyance.
- Rank 4. Next comes political disfranchisement.
- Rank 5. Thereafter come discriminations in law courts, by the police, and by other public servants.
- Rank 6. Finally come the discriminations in securing land, credit, jobs, or other means of earning a living, and discriminations in public relief and other social welfare activities.

It is unfortunate that this cornerstone in our edifice of basic hypotheses, like many of our other generalizations, has to be constructed upon the author's observations.⁸ It is desirable that scientifically controlled, quantitative knowledge be substituted for impressionistic judgments as soon as possible.⁹ It should be noted that the rank order is very apparently determined by the factors of sex and social status, so that the closer the association of a type of interracial behavior is to sexual and social intercourse on an equalitarian basis, the higher it ranks among the forbidden things.

Next in importance to the fact of the white man's rank order of discriminations is the fact that *the Negro's own rank order is just about parallel, but inverse, to that of the white man.* The Negro resists least the discrimination on the ranks placed highest in the white man's evaluation and resents most any discrimination on the lowest level. This is in accord with the Negro's immediate interests. Negroes are in desperate need of jobs and bread, even more so than of justice in the courts, and of the vote. These latter needs are, in their turn, more urgent even than better schools and playgrounds, or, rather, they are primary means of reaching equality in the use of community facilities. Such facilities are, in turn, more important than civil courtesies. The marriage matter, finally, is of rather distant and doubtful interest.

Such reflections are obvious; and most Negroes have them in their minds. It is another matter, however, whether the white man is prepared to stick honestly to the rank order which he is so explicit and emphatic in announcing. The question is whether he is really prepared to give the Negro a good job, or even the vote, rather than to allow him entrance to his front door or to ride beside him in the street car.

Upon the assumption that this question is given an affirmative answer, that the white man is actually prepared to carry out in practice the implications of his theories, this inverse relationship between the Negro's and the white man's rank orders becomes of strategical importance in the practical and political sphere of the Negro problem. Although not formulated in this way, such a relationship, or such a minimum moral demand on the ordinary white man, has always been the basis of all attempts to compromise and come to a better understanding between leaders of the two groups. It has

been the basis for all interracial policy and also for most of the practical work actually carried out by Negro betterment organizations. Followed to its logical end, it should fundamentally change the race situation in America.

It has thus always been a primary requirement upon every Negro leader—who aspires to get any hearing at all from the white majority group, and who does not want to appear dangerously radical to the Negro group and at the same time hurt the “race pride” it has built up as a defense—that he shall explicitly condone the anti-amalgamation maxim, which is the keystone in the white man’s structure of race prejudice, and forbear to express any desire on the part of the Negro people to aspire to intermarriage with the whites. The request for intermarriage is easy for the Negro leader to give up. Intermarriage cannot possibly be a practical object of Negro public policy. Independent of the Negroes’ wishes, the opportunity for intermarriage is not favorable as long as the great majority of the white population dislikes the very idea. As a defense reaction a strong attitude against intermarriage has developed in the Negro people itself.¹⁰ And the Negro people have no interest in defending the exploitative illicit relations between white men and Negro women. This race mingling is, on the contrary, commonly felt among Negroes to be disgraceful. And it often arouses the jealousy of Negro men.

The required soothing gesture toward the anti-amalgamation doctrine is, therefore, readily delivered. It is iterated at every convenient opportunity and belongs to the established routine of Negro leadership. For example, Robert R. Moton writes:

As for amalgamation, very few expect it; still fewer want it; no one advocates it; and only a constantly diminishing minority practise it, and that surreptitiously. It is generally accepted on both sides of the colour line that it is best for the two races to remain ethnologically distinct.¹¹

There seems thus to be unanimity among Negro leaders on the point deemed crucial by white Americans. If we attend carefully, we shall, however, detect some important differences in formulation. The Negro spokesman will never, to begin with, accept the common white premise of racial inferiority of the Negro stock. To quote Moton again:

. . . even in the matter of the mingling of racial strains, however undesirable it might seem to be from a social point of view, he [the Negro] would never admit that his blood carries any taint of physiological, mental, or spiritual inferiority.¹²

A doctrine of equal natural endowments—a doctrine contrary to the white man’s assumption of Negro inferiority, which is at the basis of the anti-amalgamation theory—has been consistently upheld. If a Negro leader publicly even hinted at the possibility of inherent racial inferiority, he

would immediately lose his following. The entire Negro press watches the Negro leaders on this point.

Even Booker T. Washington, the supreme diplomat of the Negro people through a generation filled with severe trials, who was able by studied unobtrusiveness to wring so many favors from the white majority, never dared to allude to such a possibility, though he sometimes criticized most severely his own people for lack of thrift, skill, perseverance and general culture. In fact, there is no reason to think that he did not firmly believe in the fundamental equality of inherent capacities. Privately, local Negro leaders might find it advisable to admit Negro inferiority and, particularly earlier, many individual Negroes might have shared the white man's view. But it will not be expressed by national leaders and, in fact, never when they are under public scrutiny.¹³ An emphatic assertion of equal endowments is article number one in the growing Negro "race pride."

Another deviation of the Negro faith in the anti-amalgamation doctrine is the stress that they, for natural reasons, lay on condemning exploitative illicit amalgamation. They turn the tables and accuse white men of debasing Negro womanhood, and the entire white culture for not rising up against this practice as their expressed antagonism against miscegenation should demand. Here they have a strong point, and they know how to press it.¹⁴

A third qualification in the Negro's acceptance of the anti-amalgamation doctrine, expressed not only by the more "radical" and outspoken Negro leaders, is the assertion that intermarriage should not be barred by law. The respect for individual liberty is invoked as an argument. But, in addition, it is pointed out that this barrier, by releasing the white man from the consequences of intimacy with a Negro woman, actually has the effect of inducing such intimacy and thus tends to increase miscegenation. Moton makes this point:

The Negro woman suffers not only from the handicap of economic and social discriminations imposed upon the race as a whole, but is in addition the victim of unfavourable legislation incorporated in the marriage laws of twenty-nine states, which forbid the intermarriage of black and white. The disadvantage of these statutes lies, not as is generally represented, in the legal obstacle they present to social equality, but rather in the fact that such laws specifically deny to the Negro woman and her offspring that safeguard from abuse and exploitation with which the women of the white race are abundantly surrounded. On the other side, the effect of such legislation leaves the white man, who is so inclined, free of any responsibility attending his amatory excursions across the colour line and leaves the coloured woman without redress for any of the consequences of her defencelessness; whereas white women have every protection, from fine and imprisonment under the law to enforced marriage and lynching outside the law.¹⁵

But even with all these qualifications, the anti-amalgamation doctrine, the necessity of assenting to which is understood by nearly everybody,

obviously encounters some difficulties in the minds of intellectual Negroes. They can hardly be expected to accept it as a just rule of conduct. They tend to accept it merely as a temporary expedient necessitated by human weakness. Kelly Miller thus wrote:

. . . you would hardly expect the Negro, in derogation of his common human qualities, to proclaim that he is so diverse from God's other human creatures as to make the blending of the races contrary to the law of nature. The Negro refuses to become excited or share in your frenzy on this subject. The amalgamation of the races is an ultimate possibility, though not an immediate probability. But what have you and I to do with ultimate questions, anyway?¹⁶

And a few years later, he said:

It must be taken for granted in the final outcome of things that the color line will be wholly obliterated. While blood may be thicker than water, it does not possess the spissitude or inherency of everlasting principle. The brotherhood of man is more fundamental than the fellowship of race. A physical and spiritual identity of all peoples occupying common territory is a logical necessity of thought. The clear seeing mind refuses to yield or give its assent to any other ultimate conclusion. This consummation, however, is far too removed from the sphere of present probability to have decisive influence upon practical procedure.¹⁷

This problem is, of course, tied up with the freedom of the individual. "Theoretically Negroes would all subscribe to the right of freedom of choice in marriage even between the two races,"¹⁸ wrote Moton. And Du Bois formulates it in stronger terms:

. . . a woman may say, I do not want to marry this black man, or this red man, or this white man. . . . But the impudent and vicious demand that all colored folk shall write themselves down as brutes by a general assertion of their unfitness to marry other decent folk is a nightmare.¹⁹

Negroes have always pointed out that the white man must not be very certain of his woman's lack of interest when he rises to such frenzy on behalf of the danger to her and feels compelled to build up such formidable fences to prevent her from marrying a Negro.

With these reservations both Negro leadership and the Negro masses acquiesce in the white anti-amalgamation doctrine. This attitude is noted with satisfaction in the white camp. The writer has observed, however, that the average white man, particularly in the South, does not feel quite convinced of the Negro's acquiescence. In several conversations, the same white person, in the same breath, has assured me, on the one hand, that the Negroes are perfectly satisfied in their position and would not like to be treated as equals, and on the other hand, that the only thing these Negroes long for is to be like white people and to marry their daughters.

Whereas the Negro spokesman finds it possible to assent to the first rank of discrimination, namely, that involving miscegenation, it is more

difficult for him to give his approval to the second rank of discrimination, namely, that involving "etiquette" and consisting in the white man's refusal to extend the ordinary courtesies to Negroes in daily life and his expectation of receiving certain symbolic signs of submissiveness from the Negro. The Negro leader could not do so without serious risk of censorship by his own people and rebuke by the Negro press. In all articulate groups of Negroes there is a demand to have white men call them by their titles of Mr., Mrs., and Miss; to have white men take off their hats on entering a Negro's house; to be able to enter a white man's house through the front door rather than the back door, and so on. But on the whole, and in spite of the rule that they stand up for "social equality" in this sense, most Negroes in the South obey the white man's rules.

Booker T. Washington went a long way, it is true, in his Atlanta speech in 1895 where he explained that: "In all things that are purely social we [the two races] can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress."²⁰ He there seemed to condone not only these rules of "etiquette" but also the denial of "social equality" in a broader sense, including some of the further categories in the white man's rank order of discrimination. He himself was always most eager to observe the rules. But Washington was bitterly rebuked for this capitulation, particularly by Negroes in the North. And a long time has passed since then; the whole spirit in the Negro world has changed considerably in three decades.

The modern Negro leader will try to solve this dilemma by iterating that no Negroes want to intrude upon white people's private lives. But this is not what Southern white opinion asks for. It is not satisfied with the natural rules of polite conduct that no individual, of whatever race, shall push his presence on a society where he is not wanted. It asks for a general order according to which *all* Negroes are placed under *all* white people and excluded from not only the white man's society but also from the ordinary symbols of respect. No Negro shall ever aspire to them, and no white shall be allowed to offer them.

Thus, on this second rank of discrimination there is a wide gap between the ideologies of the two groups. As we then continue downward in our rank order and arrive at the ordinary Jim Crow practices, the segregation in schools, the disfranchisement, and the discrimination in employment, we find, on the one hand, that increasingly larger groups of white people are prepared to take a stand against these discriminations. Many a liberal white professor in the South who, for his own welfare, would not dare to entertain a Negro in his home and perhaps not even speak to him in a friendly manner on the street, will be found prepared publicly to condemn disfranchisement, lynching, and the forcing of the Negro out of employment. Also, on the other hand, Negro spokesmen are becoming increasingly firm in

their opposition to discrimination on these lower levels. It is principally on these lower levels of the white man's rank order of discriminations that the race struggle goes on. The struggle will widen to embrace all the thousand problems of education, politics, economic standards, and so forth, and the frontier will shift from day to day according to varying events.

Even a superficial view of discrimination in America will reveal to the observer: first, that there are great differences, not only between larger regions, but between neighboring communities; and, second, that even in the same community, changes occur from one time to another. There is also, contrary to the rule that all Negroes are to be treated alike, a certain amount of discretion depending upon the class and social status of the Negro in question. A white person, especially if he has high status in the community, is, furthermore, supposed to be free, within limits, to overstep the rules. The rules are primarily to govern the Negro's behavior.

Some of these differences and changes can be explained. But the need for their interpretation is perhaps less than has sometimes been assumed. The variations in discrimination between local communities or from one time to another are often not of primary consequence. All of these thousand and one precepts, etiquettes, taboos, and disabilities inflicted upon the Negro have a common purpose: to express the subordinate status of the Negro people and the exalted position of the whites. They have their meaning and chief function as symbols. As symbols they are, however, interchangeable to an extent: one can serve in place of another without causing material difference in the essential social relations in the community.

The differences in patterns of discrimination between the larger regions of the country and the temporal changes of patterns within one region, which reveal a definite trend, have, on the contrary, more material import. These differences and changes imply, in fact, a considerable margin of variation within the very notion of American caste, which is not true of all the other minor differences between the changes in localities within a single region—hence the reason for a clear distinction. For exemplification it may suffice here to refer only to the differentials in space. As one moves from the Deep South through the Upper South and the Border states to the North, the manifestations of discrimination decrease in extent and intensity; at the same time the rules become more uncertain and capricious. The "color line" becomes a broad ribbon of arbitrariness. The old New England states stand, on the whole, as the antipode to the Deep South. This generalization requires important qualifications, and the relations are in process of change.

The decreasing discrimination as we go from South to North in the United States is apparently related to a weaker basic prejudice. In the North the Negroes have fair justice and are not disfranchised; they are not Jim-Crowed in public means of conveyance; educational institutions

are less segregated. The interesting thing is that the decrease of discrimination does *not* regularly follow the white man's rank order. Thus intermarriage, placed on the top of the rank order, is legally permitted in all but one of the Northern states east of the Mississippi. The racial etiquette, being the most conspicuous element in the second rank, is, practically speaking, absent from the North. On the other hand, employment discriminations, placed at the bottom of the rank order, at times are equally severe, or more so, in some Northern communities than in the South, even if it is true that Negroes have been able to press themselves into many more new avenues of employment during the last generation in the North than in the South.

There is plenty of discrimination in the North. But it is—or rather its rationalization is—kept hidden. We can, in the North, witness the legislators' obedience to the American Creed when they solemnly pass laws and regulations to condemn and punish such acts of discrimination which, as a matter of routine, are committed daily by the great majority of the white citizens and by the legislators themselves. In the North, as indeed often in the South, public speakers frequently pronounce principles of human and civic equality. We see here revealed in relief the Negro problem as an American Dilemma.

5. RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN LOWER CLASS GROUPS

It was important to compare the Negro problem with American minority problems in general because both the similarities and the dissimilarities are instructive. Comparisons give leads, and they furnish perspective.

This same reason permits us to point out that the consideration of the Negro problem as one minority problem among others is far too narrow. The Negro has usually the same disadvantages and some extra ones in addition. To these other disadvantaged groups in America belong not only the groups recognized as minorities, but all economically weak classes in the nation, the bulk of the Southern people, women,^a and others. This country is a "white man's country," but, in addition, it is a country belonging primarily to the elderly, male, upper class, Protestant Northerner. Viewed in this setting the Negro problem in America is but one local and temporary facet of that eternal problem of world dimension—how to regulate the conflicting interests of groups in the best interest of justice and fairness. The latter ideals are vague and conflicting, and their meaning is changing in the course of the struggle.

There seems to be a general structure of social relations between groups on different levels of power and advantage. From a consideration of our

^a The parallel between the status of Negroes and of women, who are neither a minority group nor a low social class, is particularly instructive; see Appendix 5, "A Parallel to the Negro Problem."

exaggeratedly "typical" case—the Negro—we may hope to reach some suggestions toward a more satisfactory general theory about this social power structure in general. Our hypothesis is that in a society where there are broad social classes and, in addition, more minute distinctions and splits in the lower strata, *the lower class groups will, to a great extent, take care of keeping each other subdued*, thus relieving, to that extent, the higher classes of this otherwise painful task necessary to the monopolization of the power and the advantages.

It will be observed that this hypothesis is contrary to the Marxian theory of class society, which in the period between the two World Wars has been so powerful, directly and indirectly, consciously and unconsciously, in American social science thinking generally. The Marxian scheme assumes that there is an actual solidarity between the several lower class groups against the higher classes, or, in any case, a potential solidarity which as a matter of natural development is bound to emerge. The inevitable result is a "class struggle" where all poor and disadvantaged groups are united behind the barricades.

Such a construction has had a considerable vogue in all discussions on the American Negro problem since the First World War. We are not here taking issue with the political desirability of a common front between the poorer classes of whites and the Negro people who, for the most part, belong to the proletariat. In fact, we can well see that such a practical judgment is motivated as a conclusion from certain value premises in line with the American Creed. But the thesis has also been given a theoretical content as describing actual trends in reality and not only political *desiderata*. A solidarity between poor whites and Negroes has been said to be "natural" and the conflicts to be due to "illusions." This thesis, which will be discussed in some detail in Chapter 38, has been a leading one in the field and much has been made of even the faintest demonstration of such solidarity.

In partial anticipation of what is to follow later in this volume, we might be permitted to make a few general, and perhaps rather dogmatic, remarks in criticism of this theory. Everything we know about human frustration and aggression, and the displacement of aggression, speaks against it. For an individual to feel interest solidarity with a group assumes his psychological identification with the group. This identification must be of considerable strength, as the very meaning of solidarity is that he is prepared to set aside and even sacrifice his own short-range private interests for the long-range interests of his group. Every vertical split within the lower class aggregate will stand as an obstacle to the feeling of solidarity. Even within the white working class itself, as within the entire American nation, the feeling of solidarity and loyalty is relatively low.^a Despite the

^a See Chapter 13.

considerable mobility, especially in the North, the Negroes are held apart from the whites by caste, which furnishes a formidable bar to mutual identification and solidarity.

It has often occurred to me, when reflecting upon the responses I get from white laboring people on this strategic question, that my friends among the younger Negro intellectuals, whose judgment I otherwise have learned to admire greatly, have perhaps, and for natural reasons, not had enough occasion to find out for themselves what a bitter, spiteful, and relentless feeling often prevails against the Negroes among lower class white people in America. Again relying upon my own observations, I have become convinced that the laboring Negroes do not resent whites in any degree comparable with the resentment shown in the opposite direction by the laboring whites. The competitive situation is, and is likely to remain, highly unstable.

It must be admitted that, in the midst of harsh caste resentment, signs of newborn working class solidarity are not entirely lacking; we shall have to discuss these recent tendencies in some detail in order to evaluate the resultant trend and the prospects for the future.²⁰ On this point there seems, however, to be a danger of wishful thinking present in most writings on the subject. The Marxian solidarity between the toilers of all the earth will, indeed, have a long way to go as far as concerns solidarity of the poor white Americans with the toiling Negro. This is particularly true of the South but true also of the communities in the North where the Negroes are numerous and competing with the whites for employment.

Our hypothesis is similar to the view taken by an older group of Negro writers and by most white writers who have touched this crucial question: that the Negro's friend—or the one who is least unfriendly—is still rather the upper class of white people, the people with economic and social security who are truly a "noncompeting group." There are many things in the economic, political, and social history of the Negro which are simply inexplicable by the Marxian theory of class solidarity but which fit into our hypothesis of the predominance of internal lower class struggle. Du Bois, in *Black Reconstruction*, argues that it would have been desirable if after the Civil War the landless Negroes and the poor whites had joined hands to retain political power and carry out a land reform and a progressive government in the Southern states; one sometimes feels that he thinks it would have been a possibility.²¹ From our point of view such a possibility did not exist at all, and the negative outcome was neither an accident nor a result of simple deception or delusion. These two groups, illiterate and insecure in an impoverished South, placed in an intensified competition with each other, lacking every trace of primary solidarity, and marked off from each other by color and tradition, could not possibly be expected to

²⁰ See Chapter 18.

clasp hands. There is a Swedish proverb: "When the feed-box is empty, the horses will bite each other."

That part of the country where, even today, the Negro is dealt with most severely, the South, is also a disadvantaged and, in most respects, backward region in the nation. The Negro lives there in the midst of other relatively subordinated groups. Like the Negro, the entire South is a problem. We do not want to minimize other obvious explanations of the harsher treatment of the Negro in the South: his concentration there in large numbers, the tradition of subordination retained from slavery, and the traumatic effect of the Civil War and Reconstruction; but we do want to stress the fact that the masses of white Southerners are poor and to keep in mind the tendency of lower class groups to struggle against each other.^a

^a The great similarity in cultural situation—on a different level—between the Negro people in all America and the white South should not be overlooked. Many of the general things which can be said about the Negroes hold true, in large measure, of the white Southerners, or something quite similar can be asserted. Thus, just as the Negro sees himself economically excluded and exploited, so the Southern white man has been trained to think of his economy as a colony for Yankee exploitation. As the Negro has been compelled to develop race pride and a "protective" community, so the white South has also a strong group feeling. The white South is also something of a nation within a nation. It is certainly no accident that a "regional approach" in social science has been stressed in the South. The Southerner, like the Negro, is apt to be sensitive and to take any personal remark or observation as a rebuke, and a rebuke not only against himself but against the whole South. In analyzing himself, he finds the same general traits of extreme individualism and romanticism which are ascribed to the Negro. His educators and intellectual leaders find it necessary to complain of the same shortcomings in him as he finds in the Negro: violence, laziness, lack of thrift, lack of rational efficiency and respect for law and social order, lack of punctuality and respect for deadlines. The rickety rocking-chair on the porch has a symbolic meaning in the South not entirely different from that of the Negro's watermelon, although there is more an association of gloom and dreariness around the former stereotype, and happy-go-lucky carefreeness around the latter. The expression "C.P.T."—colored people's time—is often referred to in the South, but nearly as frequently it is jestingly suggested that it fits the folkways also of the white Southerners. The casual carrying of weapons, which is so associated in the Northerners' minds with the Negro, is commonplace among white Southerners. Both groups are on the average more religious than the rest of America, and the preacher is, or has been, more powerful in society. In both groups there is also a tendency toward fundamentalism and emotionalism, the former characteristic more important for the whites, the latter for the Negroes. The general educational level in the South has, for lack of school facilities, been lower than the national norm, and as a result an obvious double standard in favor of Southerners is actually being applied by higher educational institutions and by such organizations as foundations awarding fellowships and encouraging research projects. The Yankee prejudice against the South often takes the form of a paternalistic favoring of a weaker group. The white writers of the South, like the Negro writers, are accustomed to work mainly for a "foreign" public of readers. And they have, for the benefit of the out-group, exploited the in-group's romance and oddness. During the 'twenties both groups had a literary renaissance, commonly described in both cases as an emancipation from outside determinants and as a new earthbound realism. This list could be continued to a considerable length, but it has already been made understandable both why the Negro in a way feels so much at home in the South and why his lot there sometimes becomes so sad and even tragic.

A few remarks are now relevant on the internal social stratification of the Negro group itself. The stratification of the Negro caste into classes is well developed and the significance attached to class distinctions is great. This is not surprising in view of the fact that caste barriers, which prevent individuals of the lower group from rising out of it, force all social climbing to occur within the caste and encourage an increase in internal social competition for the symbols of prestige and power. Caste consigns the overwhelming majority of Negroes to the lower class. But at the same time as it makes higher class status rarer, it accentuates the desire for prestige and social distance within the Negro caste. It fact it sometimes causes a more minute class division than the ordinary one, and always invests it with more subjective importance.* The social distinctions within a disadvantaged group for this reason become a fairly adequate index of the group's social isolation from the larger society.

Caste produces, on the one hand, a strong feeling of mutuality of fate, of in-group fellowship—much stronger than a general low class position can develop. The Negro community is a protective community, and we shall, in the following chapters, see this trait reflected in practically all aspects of the Negro problem. But, on the other hand, the interclass strivings, often heightened to vigorous mutual repulsion and resentment, are equally conspicuous.

Negro writers, especially newspapermen, particularly when directing themselves to a Negro audience, have always pointed out, as the great fault of the race, its lack of solidarity. The same note is struck in practically every public address and often in sermons when the preacher for a moment leaves his other-worldliness. It is the campaign cry of the organizations for Negro business. Everywhere one meets the same endless complaints: that the Negroes won't stick together, that they don't trust each other but rather the white man, that they can't plan and act in common, that they don't back their leaders, that the leaders can't agree, or that they deceive the people and sell out their interests to the whites.

In order not to be dogmatic in a direction opposite to the one criticized, we should point out that the principle of internal struggle in the lower classes is only one social force among many. Other forces are making for solidarity in the lower classes. In both of the two problems raised—the solidarity *between* lower class whites and Negroes and the internal solidarity *within* the Negro group—there can be any degree of solidarity, ranging between utter mistrust and complete trustfulness. The scientific problem is to find out and measure the degree of solidarity and the social forces determining it, not just to assume that solidarity will come about "naturally" and "inevitably." The factors making for solidarity are both irrational and rational. Among the irrational factors are tradition, fear, charisma, brute

* See Chapter 3a.

force, propaganda. The main rational factors are economic and social security and a planned program of civic education.

While visiting in Southern Negro communities, the writer was forced to the observation that often the most effective Negro leaders—those with a rational balance of courage and restraint, a realistic understanding of the power situation, and an unfailing loyalty to the Negro cause—were federal employees (for example, postal clerks), petty railway officials, or other persons with their economic basis outside the local white or Negro community and who had consequently a measure of economic security and some leisure time for thinking and studying. They were, unfortunately, few. Generally speaking, whenever the masses, in any part of the world, have permanently improved their social, economic, and political status through orderly organizations founded upon solidarity, these masses have not been a semi-illiterate proletariat, but have already achieved a measure of economic security and education. The vanguards of such mass reform movements have always belonged to the upper fringe of the lower classes concerned.

If this hypothesis is correct and if the lower classes have interests in common, the steady trend in this country toward improved educational facilities and toward widened social security for the masses of the people will work for increased solidarity between the lower class groups. But changes in this direction will probably be slow, both because of some general factors impeding broad democratic mass movements in America^a and—in our special problems, solidarity between whites and Negroes—because of the existence of caste.

In this connection we must not forget the influence of ideological forces. And we must guard against the common mistake of reducing them solely to secondary expressions of economic interests. Independent (that is, independent of the economic interests involved in the Negro problem) ideological forces of a liberal character are particularly strong in America because of the central and influential position of the American Creed in people's valuations.

It may be suggested as an hypothesis, already fairly well substantiated by research and by common observation, that those liberal ideological forces tend to create a tie between the problems of all disadvantaged groups in society, and that they work for solidarity between these groups. A study of opinions in the Negro problem will reveal, we believe, that persons who are inclined to favor measures to help the underdog generally, are also, and as a part of this attitude, usually inclined to give the Negro a lift. There is a correlation between political opinions in different issues,^b which probably rests upon a basis of temperamental personality traits and has its

^a See Chapter 33.

^b For a discussion of the correlation of opinions in different issues, see Appendix 2, Section 1.

deeper roots in all the cultural influences working upon a personality. If this correlation is represented by a composite scale running from radicalism, through liberalism and conservatism, to reactionism, it is suggested that it will be found that all subordinate groups—Negroes, women, minorities in general, poor people, prisoners, and so forth—will find their interests more favored in political opinion as we move toward the left of the scale. This hypothesis of a system of opinion correlation will, however, have to be taken with a grain of salt, since this correlation is obviously far from complete.

In general, poor people are not radical and not even liberal, though to have such political opinions would often be in their interest. Liberalism is not characteristic of Negroes either, except, of course, that they take a radical position in the Negro problem. We must guard against a superficial bias (probably of Marxian origin) which makes us believe that the lower classes are naturally prepared to take a broad point of view and a friendly attitude toward all disadvantaged groups. A liberal outlook is much more likely to emerge among people in a somewhat secure social and economic situation and with a background of education. The problem for political liberalism—if, for example, we might be allowed to pose the problem in the practical, instead of the theoretical mode—appears to be first to lift the masses to security and education and then to work to make them liberal.

The South, compared to the other regions of America, has the least economic security, the lowest educational level, and is most conservative. The South's conservatism is manifested not only with respect to the Negro problem but also with respect to all the other important problems of the last decades—woman suffrage, trade unionism, labor legislation, social security reforms, penal reforms, civil liberties—and with respect to broad philosophical matters, such as the character of religious beliefs and practices. Even at present the South does not have a full spectrum of political opinions represented within its public discussion. There are relatively few liberals in the South and practically no radicals.^a

The recent economic stagnation (which for the rural South has lasted much more than ten years), the flood of social reforms thrust upon the South by the federal government, and the fact that the rate of industrialization in the South is higher than in the rest of the nation, may well come to cause an upheaval in the South's entire opinion structure. The importance of this for the Negro problem may be considerable.^b

6. THE MANIFOLDNESS AND THE UNITY OF THE NEGRO PROBLEM

The Negro problem has the manifoldness of human life. Like the women's problem, it touches every other social issue, or rather, it represents an angle of them all. A glance at the table of contents of this volume

^a See Chapter 21, Section 5.

^b See Chapter 21, Section 4.

shows that in our attempt to analyze the Negro problem we have not been able to avoid anything: race, culture, population, breadwinning, economic and social policy, law, crime, class, family, recreation, school, church, press, organizations, politics, attitudes.

The perplexities and manifoldness of the Negro problem have even increased considerably during the last generation. One reason is migration and industrialization. The Negro has left his seclusion. A much smaller portion of the Negro people of today lives in the static, rather inarticulate folk society of the old plantation economy. The Negro people have increasingly stepped into the midst of America's high-gear metropolitan life, and they have by their coming added to the complication of these already tremendously complicated communities. This mass movement of Negroes from farms to cities and from the South to the North has, contrary to expectation, kept up in bad times as in good, and is likely to continue.

Another and equally important reason why the Negro problem shows an increasing involvement with all sorts of other special problems is the fact that America, especially during the last ten years, has started to use the state as an instrument for induced social change. The New Deal has actually changed the whole configuration of the Negro problem. Particularly when looked upon from the practical and political viewpoints, the contrast between the present situation and the one prior to the New Deal is striking.

Until then the practical Negro problem involved civil rights, education, charity, and little more. Now it has widened, in pace with public policy in the new "welfare state," and involves housing, nutrition, medicine, education, relief and social security, wages and hours, working conditions, child and woman labor, and, lately, the armed forces and the war industries. The Negro's share may be meager in all this new state activity, but he has been given a share. He has been given a broader and more variegated front to defend and from which to push forward. This is the great import of the New Deal to the Negro. For almost the first time in the history of the nation the state has done something substantial in a social way without excluding the Negro.

In this situation it has sometimes appeared as if there were no longer a Negro problem distinct from all the other social problems in the United States. In popular periodicals, articles on the general Negro problem gave way to much more specific subjects during the 'thirties. Even on the theoretical level it has occurred to many that it was time to stop studying the Negro problem in itself. The younger generation of Negro intellectuals have become tired of all the talk about the Negro problem on which they were brought up, and which sometimes seemed to them so barren of real deliveries. They started to criticize the older generation of Negroes for their obsession with the Negro problem. In many ways this was a move-

ment which could be considered as the continuation, during the 'thirties, of the "New Negro Movement" of the 'twenties.

We hear it said nowadays that there is no "race problem," but only a "class problem." The Negro sharecropper is alleged to be destitute not because of his color but because of his class position—and it is pointed out that there are white people who are equally poor. From a practical angle there is a point in this reasoning. But from a theoretical angle it contains escapism in new form.^a It also draws too heavily on the idealistic Marxian doctrine of the "class struggle." And it tends to conceal the whole system of special deprivations visited upon the Negro only because he is not white. We find also that as soon as the Negro scholar, ideologist, or reformer leaves these general ideas about how the Negro should think, he finds himself discussing nothing but Negro rights, the Negro's share, injustices against Negroes, discrimination against Negroes, Negro interests—nothing, indeed, but the old familiar Negro problem, though in some new political relations. He is back again in the "race issue." And there is substantial reason for it.

The reason, of course, is that there is really a common tie and, therefore, a unity in all the special angles of the Negro problem. All these specific problems are only outcroppings of one fundamental complex of human valuations—that of American caste. This fundamental complex derives its emotional charge from the equally common race prejudice, from its manifestations in a general tendency toward discrimination, and from its political potentialities through its very inconsistency with the American Creed.

7. THE THEORY OF THE VICIOUS CIRCLE

A deeper reason for the unity of the Negro problem will be apparent when we now try to formulate our hypothesis concerning its dynamic causation. The mechanism that operates here is the "principle of cumulation," also commonly called the "vicious circle."^b This principle has a much wider application in social relations. It is, or should be developed into, a main theoretical tool in studying social change.

Throughout this inquiry, we shall assume a general interdependence between all the factors in the Negro problem. White prejudice and discrimination keep the Negro low in standards of living, health, education, manners and morals. This, in its turn, gives support to white prejudice. White prejudice and Negro standards thus mutually "cause" each other. If things remain about as they are and have been, this means that the two

^a See Chapter 38, Sections 5 to 7.

^b See Appendix 3, "A Methodological Note on the Principle of Cumulation." We call the principle the "principle of cumulation" rather than "vicious circle" because it can work in an "upward" desirable direction as well as in a "downward" undesirable direction.

forces happen to balance each other. Such a static "accommodation" is, however, entirely accidental. If either of the factors changes, this will cause a change in the other factor, too, and start a process of interaction where the change in one factor will continuously be supported by the reaction of the other factor. The whole system will be moving in the direction of the primary change, but much further. This is what we mean by cumulative causation.

If, for example, we assume that for some reason white prejudice could be decreased and discrimination mitigated, this is likely to cause a rise in Negro standards, which may decrease white prejudice still a little more, which would again allow Negro standards to rise, and so on through mutual interaction. If, instead, discrimination should become intensified, we should see the vicious circle spiraling downward. The original change can as easily be a change of *Negro standards* upward or downward. The effects would, in a similar manner, run back and forth in the interlocking system of interdependent causation. In any case, the initial change would be supported by consecutive waves of back-effects from the reactions of the other factor.

The same principle holds true if we split one of our two variables into component factors. A rise in Negro employment, for instance, will raise family incomes, standards of nutrition, housing, and health, the possibilities of giving the Negro youth more education, and so forth, and all these effects of the initial change, will, in their turn, improve the Negroes' possibilities of getting employment and earning a living. The original push could have been on some other factor than employment, say, for example, an improvement of health or educational facilities for Negroes. Through action and interaction the whole system of the Negro's "status" would have been set in motion in the direction indicated by the first push. Much the same thing holds true of the development of white prejudice. Even assuming no changes in Negro standards, white prejudice can change, for example, as a result of an increased general knowledge about biology, cradicating some of the false beliefs among whites concerning Negro racial inferiority. If this is accomplished, it will in some degree censor the hostile and derogatory valuations which fortify the false beliefs, and education will then be able to fight racial beliefs with more success.

By this we have only wanted to give a hint of an explanatory scheme of dynamic causation which we are going to utilize throughout this inquiry. As pointed out in Appendix 3, and as we shall find in later chapters, the interrelations are in reality much more complicated than in our abstract illustrations, and there are all sorts of irregularities in the reaction of various factors. But the complications should not force us to give up our main hypothesis that a cumulative principle is working in social change. It is actually this hypothesis which gives a theoretical meaning to the Negro

problem as a special phase of all other social problems in America. Behind the barrier of common discrimination, there is unity and close interrelation between the Negro's political power; his civil rights; his employment opportunities; his standards of housing, nutrition and clothing; his health, manners, and law observance; his ideals and ideologies. The unity is largely the result of cumulative causation binding them all together in a system and tying them to white discrimination. It is useful, therefore, to interpret all the separate factors from a central vantage point—the point of view of the Negro problem.

Another corollary from our hypothesis is practical. In the field of Negro politics any push upward directed on any one of those factors—if our main hypothesis is correct—moves all other factors in the same direction and has, through them, a cumulative effect upon general Negro status. An upward trend of Negro status in general can be effected by any number of measures, rather independent of where the initial push is localized. By the process of cumulation it will be transferred through the whole system.

But, as in the field of economic anti-depression policy, it matters a lot how the measures are proportioned and applied. The directing and proportioning of the measures is the task of social engineering. This engineering should be based on a knowledge of how all the factors are actually interrelated: what effect a primary change upon each factor will have on all other factors. It can be generally stated, however, that it is likely that *a rational policy will never work by changing only one factor*, least of all if attempted suddenly and with great force. In most cases that would either throw the system entirely out of gear or else prove to be a wasteful expenditure of effort which could reach much further by being spread strategically over various factors in the system and over a period of time.

This—and the impracticability of getting political support for a great and sudden change of just one factor—is the rational refutation of so-called panaceas. Panaceas are now generally repudiated in the literature on the Negro problem, though usually without much rational motivation. There still exists, however, another theoretical idea which is similar to the idea of panacea: the idea that there is *one* predominant factor, a “basic factor.” Usually the so-called “economic factor” is assumed to be this basic factor. A vague conception of economic determinism has, in fact, come to color most of the modern writings on the Negro problem far outside the Marxist school. Such a view has unwarrantedly acquired the prestige of being a particularly “hard-boiled” scientific approach.

As we look upon the problem of dynamic social causation, this approach is unrealistic and narrow. We do not, of course, deny that the conditions under which Negroes are allowed to earn a living are tremendously important for their welfare. But these conditions are closely interrelated

to all other conditions of Negro life. When studying the variegated causes of discrimination in the labor market, it is, indeed, difficult to perceive what precisely is meant by "the economic factor." The Negro's legal and political status and all the causes behind this, considerations by whites of social prestige, and everything else in the Negro problem belong to the causation of discrimination in the labor market, in exactly the same way as the Negro's low economic status is influential in keeping down his health, his educational level, his political power, and his status in other respects. Neither from a theoretical point of view—in seeking to explain the Negro's caste status in American society—nor from a practical point of view—in attempting to assign the strategic points which can most effectively be attacked in order to raise his status—is there any reason, or, indeed, any possibility of singling out "the economic factor" as basic. In an interdependent system of dynamic causation there is no "primary cause" but everything is cause *to* everything else.

If this theoretical approach is bound to do away in the practical sphere with all panaceas, it is, on the other hand, equally bound to encourage the reformer. The principle of cumulation—in so far as it holds true—promises final effects of greater magnitude than the efforts and costs of the reforms themselves. The low status of the Negro is tremendously wasteful all around—the low educational standard causes low earnings and health deficiencies, for example. The cumulatively magnified effect of a push upward on any one of the relevant factors is, in one sense, a demonstration and a measure of the earlier existing waste. In the end, the cost of raising the status of the Negro may not involve any "real costs" at all for society, but instead may result in great "social gains" and actual savings for society. A movement downward will, for the same reason, increase "social waste" out of proportion to the original saving involved in the push downward of one factor or another.

These dynamic concepts of "social waste," "social gain," and "real costs" are mental tools originated in the practical man's workshop. To give them a clearer meaning—which implies expressing also the underlying social value premises—and to measure them in quantitative terms represents from a practical viewpoint a main task of social science. Fulfilling that task in a truly comprehensive way is a stage of dynamic social theory still to be reached but definitely within vision.

8. A THEORY OF DEMOCRACY

The factors working on the white side in our system of dynamic causation were brought together under the heading "race prejudice." For our present purpose, it is defined as discrimination by whites against Negroes. One viewpoint on race prejudice needs to be presented at this point, chiefly because of its close relation to our hypothesis of cumulative causation.

The chemists talk about "irreversible processes," meaning a trait of a chemical process to go in one direction with ease but, for all practical purposes, to be unchangeable back to its original state (as when a house burns down). When we observe race prejudice as it appears in American daily life, it is difficult to avoid the reflection that it seems so much easier to increase than to decrease race prejudice. One is reminded of the old saying that nineteen fresh apples do not make a single rotten apple fresh, but that one rotten apple rapidly turns the fresh ones rotten. When we come to consider the various causative factors underlying race prejudice—economic competition; urges and fears for social status; and sexual drives, fears, jealousies, and inhibitions—this view will come to be understandable. It is a common observation that the white Northerner who settles in the South will rapidly take on the stronger race prejudice of the new surroundings; while the Southerner going North is likely to keep his race prejudice rather unchanged and perhaps even to communicate it to those he meets. The Northerner in the South will find the whole community intent upon his conforming to local patterns. The Southerner in the North will not meet such concerted action, but will feel, rather, that others are adjusting toward him wherever he goes. If the local hotel in a New England town has accommodated a few Negro guests without much worry one way or the other, the appearance one evening of a single white guest who makes an angry protest against it might permanently change the policy of the hotel.

If we assume that a decrease in race prejudice is desirable—on grounds of the value premise of the American Creed and of the mechanism of cumulative wastage just discussed—such a general tendency, inherent in the psychology of race prejudice, would be likely to force us to a pessimistic outlook. One would expect a constant tendency toward increased race prejudice, and the interlocking causation with the several factors on the Negro side would be expected to reinforce the movement. Aside from all valuations, the question must be raised: Why is race prejudice, in spite of this tendency to continued intensification which we have observed, nevertheless, on the whole not increasing but decreasing?

This question is, in fact, only a special variant of the enigma of philosophers for several thousands of years: the problem of Good and Evil in the world. One is reminded of that cynical but wise old man, Thomas Hobbes, who proved rather conclusively that, while any person's actual possibilities to improve the lot of his fellow creatures amounted to almost nothing, everyone's opportunity to do damage was always immense. The wisest and most virtuous man will hardly leave a print in the sand behind him, meant Hobbes, but an imbecile crank can set fire to a whole town. Why is the world, then, not steadily and rapidly deteriorating, but rather, at least over long periods, progressing? Hobbes raised this question. His

answer was, as we know: the State, *Leviathan*. Our own tentative answer to the more specific but still overwhelmingly general question we have raised above will have something in common with that of the post-Elizabethan materialist and hedonist, but it will have its stress placed differently, as we shall subsequently see.

Two principal points will be made by way of a preliminary and hypothetical answer, as they influence greatly our general approach to the Negro problem. The first point is the American Creed, the relation of which to the Negro problem will become apparent as our inquiry proceeds. The Creed of progress, liberty, equality, and humanitarianism is not so influential on everyday life as might sometimes appear.

The second point is the existence in society of huge institutional structures like the church, the school, the university, the foundation, the trade union, the association generally, and, of course, the state. It is true, as we shall find, that these institutional structures in their operation show an accommodation to local and temporary interests and prejudices—they could not be expected to do otherwise as they are made up of individuals with all their local and temporary characteristics. As institutions they are, however, devoted to certain broad ideals. It is in these institutions that the American Creed has its instruments: it plays upon them as on mighty organs. In adhering to these ideals, the institutions show a pertinacity, matched only by their great flexibility in local and temporary accommodation.

The school, in every community, is likely to be a degree more broad-minded than local opinion. So is the sermon in church. The national labor assembly is prone to decide slightly above the prejudice of the median member. Legislation will, on the whole, be more equitable than the legislators are themselves as private individuals. When the man in the street acts through his orderly collective bodies, he acts more as an American, as a Christian, and as a humanitarian than if he were acting independently. He thus shapes social controls which are going to condition even himself.

Through these huge institutional structures, a constant pressure is brought to bear on race prejudice, counteracting the natural tendency for it to spread and become more intense. The same people are acting in the institutions as when manifesting personal prejudice. But they obey different moral valuations on different planes of life. In their institutions they have invested more than their everyday ideas which parallel their actual behavior. They have placed in them their ideals of how the world rightly ought to be. The ideals thereby gain fortifications of power and influence in society. This is a theory of social self-healing that applies to the type of society we call democracy.