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E. Franklin Frazier
Howard University

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RACE CONTACTS AND THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE*

E. FRANKLIN FRAZIER

Howard University

IN THE PRESENT meeting of The American Sociological Society, we have returned to the central theme of the annual meeting of 1928, Race and Culture Contacts. That the Society has turned its attention once more to this subject is not due to any lack of other important problems deserving attention in the field of sociological inquiry. During the twenty years that have elapsed since the 1928 meeting an economic depression of almost global dimensions and a second world war have caused the problem of the relations of peoples with different racial and cultural backgrounds to become one of the most important problems of human relations in the modern world. Although the phenomenon of race and culture contacts involves economic and political factors, it is of primary concern to the sociologist since he is interested in the manner in which men are able to achieve a basis of understanding or consensus in order to carry on collective life.

In regarding consensus as the basis of social life, I am not unmindful of the recurrent problem in sociology concerning the nature of society or the frame of reference in which sociological research should be

undertaken. This problem, which involves the nature of the relation of the individual to the collectivity which we call society, is not unrelated to the phenomenon of race contacts. According to one school of sociologists, the nominalist, society is an aggregate of individuals and the key to an understanding of society is to be found in the study of the behavior of individuals as discrete units. The other school, known as the realist or organic school, has focussed its attention upon the social processes and the organized aspects of the collective life arising out of communication and interaction. Although the thinking of many American sociologists has been dominated by the latter point of view, their researches have reflected the former conception of society. This has been especially true in the study of race contacts where the members of the different racial groups have been treated as a mere aggregate of individuals. As a consequence, studies of race relations have often been based upon individual reactions, without reference to the behavior of men as members of a social group.

It is my purpose to indicate how the study of race contacts in the context of social relations or an organic conception of society will yield significant results for sociology. For this purpose I shall discuss Negro-white con-

* The Presidential Address read before the annual meeting of the American Sociological Society held in Chicago, Illinois, December 27-30, 1948.

tacts from the standpoint of the social structure of the Negro world.

Since the Negro has been chosen as the basis of this discussion it may be well to review briefly the general orientation of studies of the Negro by American sociologists. These sociologists fall into three groups whose works coincide roughly with historical periods in the development of American sociology. The first group consisting of the so-called fathers of American sociology—Ward, Sumner, Giddings, Cooley, Small and Ross, who established sociology as an academic discipline—did not deal specifically with the problem of race relations. Their theories concerning race relations were derived largely from European scholars who were concerned with the universal phenomenon of race contact. Ward, who accepted the theories of Gumpłowicz and Ratzenhofer concerning the rôle of the struggle of races in the social development of mankind, did not accept the theory of race differences. He took the position that the superior status of the dominant races was the result of their having had “the longest uninterrupted inheritance and transmission of human achievements.” Sumner regarded race differences as primarily a reflection of the ethos of different peoples. Consequently, the most important factor in race relations was the mores which gradually changed to meet new life conditions but could not be influenced by legislators and reformers. Although Giddings did not deal specifically with Negro-white relations, he thought that his concept of the “consciousness of kind” explained racial exclusiveness. He accepted the current notion of the instability of mixed races and regarded the “mental plasticity of mixed bloods” as a contribution to the development of nations. Although Small was influenced by Ratzenhofer, he did not make any contribution to theory in this field. Ross offered only some generalizations concerning racial temperament and felt that the more intelligent white race had an obligation to civilization to prevent Negroes from overwhelming it by their numbers. Cooley was an exception in that he offered an analysis of race relations in the

South based upon his theory of the origin and nature of caste and its relation to class. Cooley’s point of view not only anticipated a current approach to race relations, but placed the subject in a sociological frame of reference.

When the sociologist began to direct his attention to the Negro, it was to study him as a “social problem” in American life. The general point of view of the books and articles published by this group of sociologists was that the Negro was an inferior race because of either biological or social heredity or both; that the Negro because of his physical characteristics could not be assimilated; and that physical amalgamation was bad and therefore undesirable. These conclusions were generally supported by the marshalling of a vast amount of statistical data on the pathological aspects of Negro life.

The third group of American sociologists who have dealt with race relations was represented by W. I. Thomas and Robert E. Park, who did not study the Negro as a “social problem” but as a subject of sociological research. As early as 1904, Thomas presented an analysis of race prejudice and caste-feeling that has not been superseded by later analyses. Park studied race relations within the frame of reference of his general sociological theory. He became the chief figure in a more systematic formulation of a theory of race relations following World War I when the mass migration of Negroes to northern cities changed the entire character of Negro-white contacts in the United States. His theory of the emergence of the Negro as a racial minority provided a frame of reference in which to study the changing character of race relations. In this connection the appearance of the so-called new school of thought, utilizing the concept of “caste and class,” should be mentioned since it appeared at the time when sociologists were turning their attention to “the original interest of sociologists in the actual problems of man in society.”¹

¹ Louis Wirth, “American Sociology, 1915-47” in *The American Journal of Sociology Index to Volumes I-LII, 1895-1947*, p. 274.

The emergence of the so-called "caste and class" school of students of race relations offered a challenge to the sociologist from two angles. First, they opposed the conception of race relations since, they argued, the Negro was not a race in the biological sense; and, secondly, the pattern which Negro-white relations assumed in the United States was essentially a caste system. The sociologist has been able to defend his definition of Negro-white relations as race relations because Negroes are regarded as a race and are treated as if they were a race. Contrary to the prediction of Vacher de Lapouge in 1880 that in the twentieth century "millions will cut each other's throats because of one or two degrees more or less of cephalic index," racial conflict has never been based upon the refined racial indices of anthropologists. On the other hand, many features of Negro-white relations have resembled a caste system. But when one realizes that the pattern of Negro-white relations has not only lacked both religious sanctions and a political ideology, but has been resisted by Negroes, it is clear that such a conception may introduce confusion. The studies of the "caste and class" school have rendered a service by focusing attention upon the structural aspects of race relations. But the caste concept of race relations has been utilized in studies as a static concept. Consequently, while failing to provide any new insights into the attitudes and behavior of whites and Negroes, these studies have ignored the dynamic aspects of race relations, especially under the changing conditions of urban living.

Some day the growing interest of American sociologists in the sociology of knowledge will probably reveal the reason for the changes in the conception of the problem of Negro-white relations and the status of research in this field. Here are offered only some tentative hypotheses which may be tested by those who are interested in this branch of sociology. The emphasis upon the study of the Negro as a "social problem" rather than a problem for sociological analysis is understandable in the light of its prominence among American social problems.

But what needs further analysis from the standpoint of the sociology of knowledge is why the Negro was defined sociologically as essentially a racial problem involving an unassimilable group. The hypothesis that is offered here is that the sociological definition of the problem represented a rationalization of the social attitudes of the class in the white community from which sociologists were recruited. With the earlier sociologists, the founding fathers of the discipline, the Negro was remote, the majority being concentrated in the South. Moreover, the earlier sociologists based their generalizations upon knowledge acquired from books rather than empirical studies. Later, when the impact of the Negro upon the main stream of American life following World War I required a redefinition, the concepts of sociology and the techniques which sociologists were employing in empirical studies had achieved some maturity.

There remains another reflection on the status of studies of the Negro which is relevant at this point. There has been a rather widespread feeling or belief that studies of the Negroes did not have the same academic status or did not require the same intellectual maturity or discipline as the study of other sociological problems. It appears that there was a feeling, perhaps unconscious and therefore all the more significant, that since the Negro occupied a low status and did not play an important rôle in American society, studies of the Negro were of less significance from the standpoint of social science. As a consequence of this attitude, the study of vitally important sociological problems, for which the Negro provided incomparably valuable materials, was left to anyone who might occupy himself with such lowly sociological materials. It is only recently that the sociological study of the Negro has acquired the academic status of studies of other groups and has attracted the serious attention of sociologists.

Of course, the relegation of the sociological study of the Negro to a lower academic status has been involved with the essentially political aspects of the problem. By political

aspects of the problem, reference is made to the question of social control. Sociologists have practically ignored the system of social control which the white community has utilized to maintain a certain equilibrium between the Negro community and the more inclusive community. Here I do not refer to legal controls but to the invisible forms of social control which have been utilized by agencies outside of the governmental structure. Although this phase of Negro-white relations has been ignored, many studies of the Negro have been a reflection of a certain philosophy of race relations rather than an analysis of the social processes involved in race relations. Consequently, it is not surprising that what were essentially political programs for amicable race relations or diplomatic commentaries on race relations by so-called inter-racial statesmen have passed for scientific sociological analysis.

The interest in recent years in the study of race relations as a problem of intergroup relations is an indication of the growing consciousness of the need to study such relations within a sociological frame of reference. Workers in the field of race relations who are concerned with programs of social action are becoming aware of the Negro community and its institutions or the social world of the Negro and its various relations to the social world of the more inclusive white community. But students who are engaged in formal or academic studies of race contacts are still inclined to employ tools of research which are designed to discover how individuals may act towards individuals of another racial group without reference to the social context in which this behavior occurs. An excellent example of this type of approach to racial contacts may be found in the numerous studies of racial attitudes. Attitude studies attempt to probe the behavior and mental processes of sociologically isolated individuals. Even when the attitudes of individuals are related to their occupational or educational status, they do not become sociologically significant. The sociologist is interested in discovering how people are likely to behave by virtue of the fact that they

are members of a certain group or are placed in a type of social situation.

In order to illustrate the frame of reference in which I am suggesting that race contacts should be studied, we might take the question of intermarriage. I should begin by saying that the definition of marriages between Negroes and whites contains a bias since it is assumed that the attitudes of recent immigrants and their descendants are the same as the attitudes of the older American stocks. But this is not the phase of the problem in which we are primarily interested. Intermarriage is a sociological problem which has been more or less tabooed or when it has been subjected to study, the so-called sociological analysis has been little more than a rationalization of current prejudices. There have been attempts to make objective analyses of available statistics on marriage between white and Negroes. In the statistical studies an attempt has been made to determine the volume and trend of intermarriage and an analysis has been made of the occupational status of whites and Negroes and the national origin of the whites who entered into marriage.

While all of these factors have had some relevance to the sociological problem, they have been related only inferentially to the social and economic structure of the white community and they have almost completely ignored the social reality which we have called the Negro community and its institutions. Not only have both whites and Negroes been treated as atomized individuals without family relations and social status, but such sociologically relevant factors as the effects of urbanization and mobility upon the character of racial contacts and social status have been left out of account. What I wish to emphasize is that if studies of intermarriage are to have sociological significance, they must analyze intermarriage within the frame of reference of two social worlds or the social organization of the white and Negro communities. Outside of this frame of reference, the extent and trend of intermarriage as measured by statistics becomes a meaningless abstraction and no extrapolation of

statistical trends on intermarriage will provide any key to the future course of this relationship. If intermarriage were studied within the frame of reference of the changing nature of the contacts which are occurring between the social world of the whites and the social world of the Negroes, both the extent and trend of intermarriage would acquire meaning and provide a basis for prediction. Although this prediction could not be presented in the form of graphs, it would nevertheless be based upon an analysis of intermarriage within the social context in which it occurs.

The study of racial contacts in relation to the social reality which we have designated as the social world of the Negro will make such concepts as communication and interaction more meaningful as tools for sociological research. As sociologists we have been interested in the means by which individuals and groups take over the culture and become identified inwardly as well as outwardly with other groups. We have devised techniques and tools such as the social distance scale in order to state in a quasi-quantitative form the degree of intimacy and identification existing between different racial, cultural and national groups. These techniques and tools have yielded much information on the attitudes and presumptive behavior of persons who have been treated as discrete individuals. But these questions may be asked, for example: What does the position of a person on a social distance scale indicate in regard to his behavior as a member of a labor union or a member of a baseball team? In view of the increasing integration of the Negro into various phases of American life, what do the various attitude studies tell us about this process? Have these scales not been employed without reference to the fact that sociologists are primarily interested in the behavior of people as members of society?

Since my aim is to show how the study of race contacts in the context of social relationships will increase our understanding of this aspect of human relations, it is necessary to give some attention to the social world of the Negro. Attention is directed almost en-

tirely to the social world of the Negro because it is still a vague or unknown quantity in sociological studies.

I shall begin by considering the effects of the spatial segregation of the Negro community on race contacts. The studies in the field of human ecology have revealed that the location of people and institutions in the modern urban environment is not a haphazard or adventitious phenomenon. As the result of the competition for land or space, there is a process of selection and segregation of persons on the basis of education, occupation, wealth, and racial or cultural background and of institutions on the basis of function. Where there are no legal barriers or resistance on the part of organized white groups to the expansion of the Negro population, the location of the Negro community and persons and institutions within the community can be explained on the basis of the findings in human ecology. Of course, these studies are concerned with the modern urban community where competition for space determines the location of people and institutions. If one studies the location of Negro communities in the older cities of the South, one finds that their original pattern has not been determined so much by impersonal economic factors involved in competition as by historical factors. The Negro population in these cities is widely scattered because the whites settled their slaves close to their residence and later generations of Negro tenants and owners have occupied the homes or the same land. Consequently, one finds that from the standpoint of spatial relations the Negro communities which have emerged in northern cities since the migrations beginning with World War I are more segregated than the Negro communities in older southern cities. In the border cities, it appears that the location of Negro communities has not been influenced decidedly either by impersonal economic and social forces as in the North or by historic factors as in the older southern cities. Moreover, it is important to note that in the newer cities of the South, and as the older southern cities acquire a more industrial and commercial character,

the Negro community is becoming more segregated.

I shall refer to only the more important effects of the spatial segregation of Negro communities on racial contacts. In the South the spatial proximity of the races has not led to the integration of the Negro into the more inclusive community. Yet the relations between whites and Negroes living in the same neighborhoods have not been symbiotic relationships except in the case of the white owners of grocery stores who cater to the Negro community. This can even be said of the relationship of the two races where Negroes live close to whites for whom they work. Their relationships have been similar to some extent to the traditional patterns of Negro-white relationships evolving out of the slave status. Where this relationship has been broken or there is no traditional basis for race relations where, for example, white neighbors are descendants of the non-slaveholding class, then race relations will depend upon various types of personal relationships which may develop between individuals. In any case the life of the Negro outside his economic relationships with whites revolves chiefly about the organized social life of the Negro community. On the other hand, in northern cities where there is greater concentration of Negroes, the members of the two races have more frequent contacts of an impersonal nature. For example, there are more contacts in the field of employment and because of the greater mobility of the population there are many more opportunities for casual contacts between individual members of the two races. Another difference which needs to be emphasized is that although the Negro population may be more segregated from the standpoint of residence, there is greater opportunity for Negroes and whites to be members of the same functional groups which characterize modern civilization. At the same time, the existence of two social worlds results in the tendency for each group to see the other through the press and other media of mass communication in the city. The Negro press provides a mirror in which the Negro sees himself in a different rôle

from that presented in the white press and gives a picture of the white world quite different from that which the white press reports. Only in the mixed areas on the fringe of the Negro and white communities where some approach to neighborly relations may develop, do members of the two races see each other more or less as individual human beings. It is noteworthy that such areas in southern as well as northern cities have been free from violence when race riots have raged in other parts of the city.

In a number of studies of race relations in cities, there has been an uncritical use of such concepts as mores and caste. For example, it was claimed by a social scientist that Negroes could not be employed on the buses and streetcars in the District of Columbia because their employment in this capacity was opposed to the mores of the community. It should be clear to any sociologist that the term mores as used by Sumner has only a limited application to behavior in the modern urban community. The opposition to the employment of Negroes in the District of Columbia was due to the opposition of an organized group of workers who desired to defend their interests in this field of employment. Likewise, the segregation of the Negro population in our cities is not a reflection of the mores of the community nor is it always the result of the operation of impersonal social and economic forces which are responsible for the ecological pattern of our cities. In the recent study of segregation in the nation's capital it was clearly shown that the restriction of the Negro population to certain areas of the city has been accomplished by the activities of the organized real estate, commercial, and financial interests. Unless one includes in a study of race relations the influence of this aspect of the social organization of the white world, studies of racial contacts in the urban community will have little validity.

In considering the relation of the social organization of the Negro community to racial contacts, one must begin of course with the family. The changes in race relations following Emancipation affected the internal organ-

ization and function of this most sacred and exclusive form of human association. The transfer of authority in the Negro family from the white master to the Negro father or mother was one of the primary factors in the estrangement of the two races. Where formerly the intrusion of the white master was accepted, the interference of the white employer or landlord was resented. The claim of family loyalty superseded loyalty to the white employer. As the family has acquired an institutional character, it has increasingly become a barrier to close contacts between the two races. At the same time the culture of the Negro family has had a decided influence on the manner in which contacts with the white world have affected individual Negroes.

For example, the influence of the culture of the family is evident in the case of the children of southern migrants in the public schools of northern cities. The standard American education to which these children are exposed represents a world of ideas and beliefs which are markedly different from the beliefs and ideas which are received through family training. The response of the children to new ideas and beliefs is dependent upon the manner in which they are defined in the family. The apathetic attitudes of the children of southern migrants toward education may be understood when one is acquainted with their family training and experience. In fact, the same could be said today of the large body of Negro students who are entering the colleges at the present time. These students are being drawn from a stratum in the Negro population with a folk and plantation background that has been transmitted through the family. Consequently, the response of these students to a liberal education is quite different from that of the small body of Negro students who attended college in the past. The latter students were drawn largely from the descendants of Negroes who were free before the Civil War and the descendants of those house-servants and artisans among whom a tradition of literate culture had become established.

The family also plays a rôle in racial con-

tacts that is more patently related to this discussion, in that it defines the attitudes and reactions of Negroes toward whites. This was revealed in the studies of the effect of minority status upon the development of the personality of Negro youth sponsored by the American Council on Education. The character of the influence exercised by the family on the response of Negro youth to racial contacts was related to the class position of the family. Lower-class families tended on the whole to accept the white man's conception of the Negro, and parents in lower-class families taught their children techniques—often involving lying and clowning and other forms of deception—for getting along with whites. On the other hand, middle-class families rejected the white man's conception of the Negro but accepted his culture as the means of enhancing their own personal dignity. The children in upper-class families with traditions representing a blend of upper-class and middle-class American pattern of behavior revealed an ambivalent attitude toward the Negro world. While they sought to escape from the Negro masses, they were inclined to resist the breaking down of racial barriers in those areas of contacts which offered a threat to their privileged position behind the walls of segregation.

The relation of cultural institutions in the Negro community to racial contacts has generally been ignored. I shall consider only one of these institutions, the church, not only because of its long history and importance in Negro life but more especially because it will show most clearly the crucial rôle of the social structure in racial contacts. The Negro church arose as an institution among free Negroes in the North as a protest against segregation and a subordinate status in the white church organizations. After Emancipation the Negro church organizations absorbed what Woodson has aptly called "the invisible church" which had grown up among the slaves. Consequently, the Negro church came to embody more than any other institution the traditional culture of the Negro with its roots in these two sources of racial experience. In fact, before the migrations of

Negroes to the metropolitan areas of the North which resulted in an upsurge of race consciousness, for the masses of southern rural Negroes identification with the large church denominations represented their widest group identification. In other words, to be a Baptist or Methodist had more meaning for them than the fact that they were Americans or even Negroes. Although the importance of the Negro church in the social organization and culture of the Negro community has declined, it remains the chief repository of the cultural traditions of the Negro masses and embodies some of their most deeply rooted vested interests. The Negro church has provided a field for the development of leadership and self-expression, and in those sections of the country where Negroes have been excluded from political participation it has been the area of social life in which their talents for politics could be developed. Then it is important to add that the church has provided patterns of behavior which have left their imprint on other phases of the social life of the Negro community.

These facts are important not only when one undertakes to study the phenomenon of race contacts but also if one is engaged in a program for the integration of the Negro into the larger American community. There are widespread efforts on the part of Protestants and Catholics to break down the racial barrier in the field of religion. The church, it is claimed, should set the example for other associations and institutions in the American community. While this may be a praiseworthy goal from the standpoint of Christian ethics and democratic ideals and if carried out would undoubtedly have some influence on racial attitudes and public opinion, this type of thinking involves a misunderstanding of the nature of social institutions and their rôle in the culture of a group, and their relation to the changing pattern of race contacts. There is the failure to differentiate between a church organization and a theater or some other place of public entertainment and recreation. If evidence were lacking, it should be clear to

sociologists why it is easier to integrate the Negro or any other outgroup into a secular institution characterized by casual and impersonal contacts than into a sacred institution based upon families and the peculiar cultural traditions of the group. Therefore, the admission of Negroes to theaters and restaurants will not depend upon their integration into white churches. Moreover, and this is the fact which I want to emphasize, even if white churches should welcome Negro communicants, the vast majority of Negroes will continue to maintain their own church organizations since these institutions embody the cultural traditions of the Negro as well as other vested interests. On the other hand, organizations in the Negro community which represent the more secular interests which Negroes have in common with whites will dissolve more quickly into the functional organizations of the more inclusive community.

I shall turn now to the social norms and values in the Negro community which have an influence on racial contacts and contribute to the isolation of the Negro world. Many years ago W. I. Thomas undertook to show the effects of isolation on the intellectual development of Negroes, peasants, women and savages. Thomas' attention was directed to the manner in which the absence of contacts restricted the communication of ideas to Negroes. At the same time he pointed out that, unlike the Negro, the oppressed Jew in Russia and Roumania had been able to overcome the effects of isolation because he possessed resources, traditions, and techniques upon which he could draw. My purpose here is to direct attention to the manner in which the isolation of the Negro results from such social factors as the traditional patterns of behavior and values which are associated with the institutional life of the community and its class structure. The social organization of Negro life and its dominant values act as a social prism through which ideas, patterns of behavior, and values current in the larger American community are refracted or distorted. I would even suggest the hypothesis, which might be tested by

empirical studies of racial contacts, that the degree of refraction or distortion is in inverse ratio to the extent that Negroes participate in the larger American society. Or stated otherwise, the degree of refraction or distortion is proportional to the extent that Negroes are integrated into the institutions and culture of the Negro community.

What I am referring to here is, of course, what Thomas called the definition of the situation provided by the culture or other persons. A few examples will enable us to understand how certain patterns of behavior and prestige values which are found among different classes in the Negro community affect racial contacts or tend to isolate the Negro. The most mobile elements in the Negro population are likely, because of their incomes and education, to have upper-class status within the Negro world. This means that they are drawn into a social world with certain values and style of life. These upper-class values generally involve conspicuous consumption and forms of leisure and recreation which are characteristic of upper-class white Americans. Therefore, a Negro with the same income and occupational and educational status as a middle-class white person is likely to have a different conception of his status and to live according to a different style of life. This creates a barrier between the two races that is not broken down even when whites and Negroes are employed in the same institutions in the community. For the Negro is still bound by the traditions and expectations of the class in the Negro community with which he and his family and friends are identified. There may even be a resistance to the style of life of his white associates when the latter attempt to establish friendly and intimate relations with him. Moreover, it is likely that the impact of ideas and other influences originating in the more inclusive community will have a different meaning for him.

The vested interests of the members of a class in the Negro community influence their attitudes toward race contacts. As the result of segregation, the professional Negro has enjoyed a monopoly in regard to some serv-

ices in the Negro community. Because of these vested interests the professional Negro is often not inclined to welcome the lowering of racial barriers in the interest of abstract democratic ideals when it will result in the loss of his monopoly. It should be noted, however, that the interests of this class are opposed to those of the great mass of Negro workers who gain by the breakdown of segregation because they are thus able to compete in the American labor market. Therefore, in the study of race contacts it is necessary to understand how the conflicting interests of these two classes affect their attitudes toward race contacts.

The influence of certain prestige values may be seen in the contrast between the tradition of the book or learning in the Jewish community and the absence of such a tradition in the Negro community. Because of the dominating position of the church and its influence on the general orientation of the Negro toward the world, there is no deeply rooted intellectual tradition in the Negro community. Some observers have noted a certain anti-intellectual bias as one of the features of Negro culture. Although this has not been established by empirical study, there can be no question concerning the absence of a distinct class in the Negro community which has become the bearer of an intellectual tradition. Increasingly, individual Negroes are acquiring the best intellectual culture that America offers in the institutions of the country. But when such persons return to the Negro community, they generally become identified with a class in the community that has no appreciation of intellectual values. Even when they become identified with educational institutions, intellectual achievements may not count for much except as symbols of status which is associated with power relations within the Negro community. This is not a phenomenon peculiar to the Negro community, but it becomes important because of the difference in the definition of intellectual attainments and the almost complete absence of a class to give support to intellectual values. For example, when a Negro professional man was

recently appointed to a white institution, the Negro newspapers did not mention a single fact concerning his profession, but identified him by noting his various activities in social and fraternal organizations in the Negro community.

I have referred briefly to the extra-legal control exercised by agencies in the white community over the Negro community. I wish to refer more specifically to the manner in which this type of control has influenced the thinking of Negroes, especially those who have occupied strategic positions in educational institutions. It is common knowledge that the selection of the leadership and personnel of the separate educational institutions in the South has been based upon the philosophy of race relations of the ruling group in the white community. But the influence of the white community has not been so obvious in the case of private institutions. Because of the poverty of Negroes and the failure of the southern states to provide for their higher education, the support of the private institutions has depended upon philanthropic individuals and foundations and church organizations in the North. At one time a few of the Negro institutions were supported by philanthropic whites who represented the abolitionist tradition. But with the gradual disappearance of this group, the support of the private institutions passed into the hands of foundations and church organizations with a conservative philosophy of race relations. The extent to which these organizations have deliberately selected a certain type of educational leader has varied. Whatever the policy the foundations have followed in the selection of Negro leaders, the leaders themselves have not been unaware of the philosophy of race relations of their supporters.

Since the social structure of both the Negro community and white community has been undergoing rapid changes, the analysis of race contacts should be related to a changing structure of social relationships. The most important factor which has been responsible for the change in race contacts has been the urbanization of the Negro popu-

lation. To some extent the urbanization of the Negro population has limited the rôle of the family in defining race contacts. On the other hand, urbanization has created a substantial group of middle-class families whose position in the class structure of the Negro community has erected barriers to intimate contacts between the races. From the standpoint of secondary contacts the development of middle-class standards of behavior has decreased the social visibility of the Negro in the general community. Urbanization has changed the structure and function of every institution and association in the Negro community and their rôle in race relations. For example, as the Negro church has acquired a more intelligent leadership and has become concerned with secular matters, it has increasingly played a rôle in mass movements for civil rights and wider opportunities for employment.

As the bi-racial organization has been breaking down in the metropolitan community, even more important changes have occurred in the nature of race contacts. The growth in the size and importance of the Negro professional class has brought members of this class into closer association with white members of this class in the wider community. The integration of Negroes into industry and labor organizations has reduced the social distance between the races even to the extent of breaking down the barriers to intimate association between individuals of the two races. Moreover, as the result of urbanization, the control formerly exercised by various philanthropic and other organizations over the leadership of the Negro is disappearing. The educated Negro is no longer dependent for employment exclusively upon segregated schools and social welfare organizations which derive their support from agencies representing a conservative philosophy of race relations. They are finding employment either in organizations supported by Negroes or in institutions and organizations in the more inclusive American community.

In this discussion my purpose has been to call the attention of sociologists, who are

concerned with the nature and changing character of race contacts, to the necessity of studying this phenomenon within the context of the social relationships wherein race contacts occur. Whether the sociologist employs case studies as a tool for analysis or utilizes statistics or attitude and social distance scales, the significance of his results for sociology will depend upon the extent to which they throw light upon the behavior of men in society. There are indications that sociologists are becoming increasingly aware of the necessity to redefine their problems of research in terms of the study of men in their social relationships. In this connection I might refer only to a recent article by Blumer on the polling of public opinion. Negro-white relations were chosen as the

basis of the present discussion not only because it is the field in which I have worked but more especially because it is an area in which sociologists have labored long, and there are no signs of their diminishing interest in the subject. If our concern with race contacts over a long period has not yielded the results for sociological theory which should have been expected from so much labor, it is because we have failed to study race contacts as a phase of men's behavior as members of groups. With this orientation toward race contacts, we can sharpen our research tools and become better prepared to study race contacts not only in this country but in other parts of the world where the problem of race contacts is assuming increasing importance.