SOCIAL THEORY AND RACE RELATIONS, II

AN ANALYSIS OF THE RACE RELATIONS THEORIES OF EDWARD BYRON REUTER

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE RISE OF RACE THEORIES

The concept race and the theories developed through, by and about it have undergone tremendous changes during the last century and a half.

Race as a concept had its origin not in the subject matter fields of social behavior, but in the field of biology. Initially, it was used to designate a segment of mankind whose characteristics are capable of being transmitted to successive generations through the mechanisms of heredity.\(^1\) To be sure, Herbert Spencer and Charles Darwin contributed largely to the perpetuation of the term as a social concept. Spencer made the correlation of physical and cultural evolution so logical that it determined the manner in which race concepts were to be used for well over a generation; and is at present the foundation of much of the attitude towards race.\(^2\)

Darwin's concept of universal competition, lethal selection, and species adaptation seemed to provide an adequate framework by which and within which social organization could be explained. They also seemed to provide the dominant groups throughout the world with assurance of continued and orderly evolution.

Social Darwinism got its first coherent statement in Bagehot's Physics and Politics in 1872. By application of the Darwinian principles of selection and inheritance, Bagehot attempted to describe

\(^1\)Jacques Barzun, Race, (third ed.; New York, 1937), p. 3.

the natural history of political society. Gumpowicz's Race Struggle, which appeared in 1883, portrayed the history of society as a continuous struggle between the races. Again certain Darwinians, notable Lapouge in his work, Les Selections Social, were outspoken proponents of the idea of Nordic superiority. This doctrine was further popularized by Houston Chamberlain's Foundations of the Nineteenth Century which made an attempt to show the innate superiority of the Germans. Finally, the idea of Nordic superiority had its complete vulgarization in such popular American books as Madison Grant's The Passing of a Great Race, and Lothrop Stoddard's The Rising Tide of Color Against White World Supremacy.

The biological point of view dominated the study of race and race relations well into the second decade of this century. As the field of sociology made approaches towards scientific procedure, its emphasis shifted from a description of structures to the study of processes. The problem of research was found to lie not in biological characters, but in the realm of social and human experiences. The development of racial theory followed closely and contributed greatly to the development of scientific sociology and general sociological theory.

Gumpowicz's conception of the polygenetic origin of the races

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4 Ibid., 456.
seemed to give impetus to an interpretation of race as a congeries of discrete realities — Negro, Oriental, and other divergent types. As sociology approached scientific empiricism, this conception gave way to more generalized conceptions, such as those which arose in the United States. Sociological theories in this country, particularly those concerned with race, were, at the outset, colored by the evolutionary point of view. Later, race relations were explained in terms of individual reactions. Accompanying this change were theories which attempted to explain race relations on the basis of the formation of group unity. That is to say, race relations were explained in terms of relations that existed between groups that were antagonistic towards each other because of the consciousness of kind spirit. In the last two decades, race and race relations have been approached empirically. To some extent, these studies have proceeded without the popular biases which were inherent in the biological and evolutionary points of view.

The works of the first generation of American sociologists, especially William Graham Sumner and Lester F. Ward, bore the imprint of this evolutionary approach to the study of society. The first serious attempt by an American at a theoretical conceptualization of society followed essentially the Spencerian tradition. Lester Ward's Dynamic Sociology (1883) marked the beginning of the transition of theoretical social science into sociology. In spite of the fact that Ward was

5Ibid.

influenced by the prevailing evolutionary approach, he added the idea of the possibility of improving society by the intelligent application and use of the mind. To Ward, the struggle of the races was very necessary for progress. In the clash of races, "the fit and wise survive; for as man has gained dominion over the animal world so the higher types of men will gain dominion over the lower types."8

William Graham Sumner was the first American to champion the laissez-faire doctrine of governmental control which grew out of Spencerian evolution. He believed that governmental control should be limited because the societal processes tend to work towards an equilibrium.9 He further believed that race subordination was a necessary step in the processes of evolution.10

Ward and Sumner seem to represent the attempts of American scholars to theorize and intellectualize the opinions of the superordinate racial group in this country prior to 1900. However, the subordinate racial group's point of view was not without its mirror during this period. W. E. B. Du Bois asserted that no assumption should be made concerning

7Emory S. Bogardus, Contemporary Sociology (Los Angeles, 1932), pp. 260-72.


9Emory S. Bogardus, op. cit., p. 352.

the Negro without scientific study.\textsuperscript{11}

The evolutionary point of view was used by the intellectuals in England to justify and give support to imperialism. In this country, this point of view was used, before and after 1900, to justify the crystallization of the race-status structure which was well entrenched in the South by the turn of the century. Between 1900 and 1920 the period was characterized by race friction and compensatory forms of group solidarity. Such is reflected in and by Stoddard's analysis.\textsuperscript{12}

Sociological theory in this country has undergone significant thought periods. Following the "evolutionary" period previously mentioned, there is the "thought" period characterized by interpretations, on the part of American scholars, that were similar to the general drift of social thought between 1900 and 1920. Charles Cooley, Franklin Giddings and W. I. Thomas are examples of the tendency in sociological theory to follow the general social drift. Thomas used the term \underline{instinct} to designate fear or anger built up by cultural conditioning. His interpretation is primarily a socio-psychological approach to the study of society. Thomas expanded upon suggestions found in Sumner's writings. He explained the conflict of races on the basis of instinctive behavior. He saw the feeling of antagonism as necessary for the survival of the


\textsuperscript{12} Lothrop Stoddard, The Rising Tide of Color Against White World Supremacy (New York, 1920).
group. Thus, the feeling of superiority becomes the basis of prejudice. To Thomas, this was the foundation upon which white supremacy rested.\(^\text{13}\)

Giddings' concept of the consciousness of kind seems to have derived its motivations from the growing solidarity of groups. Giddings used the concept to indicate the subjective factor in group life which gives rise to a "state of consciousness" in which any individual whether high or low on the social scale recognizes another being as of like mind with himself. Around this determining principle, all other human motives organize themselves.\(^\text{14}\) Again, Giddings saw the human race as one composed of three main divisions - the European whites, the Asiatic yellows, and the African blacks. To Giddings, the differentiation of races tended to sharpen the consciousness of kind. This made for segregation between the races - it also caused an increase in the intensity of the association within the race.\(^\text{15}\)

Charles H. Cooley's sociological theory is also identified with the subjective analysis school and period of thought. Cooley viewed the individual and society as parts of one and the same thing. He believed that race could not be dealt with as a separate and independent entity, but always in intimate combination with the historical and social conditions.\(^\text{16}\) Cooley viewed the race-status structure as the consequence


\(^{15}\) Ibid., 239.

of the contact of peoples of divergent races. The race-status structure, Cooley believed, is more sharply defined when divergent peoples live in the same community.\textsuperscript{17}

Robert E. Park saw race prejudice as a psychological defense. He believed that economic competition was in back of all rare conflicts. Race conflicts involving the Negro, Park believed, were due to the fact that the Negro's physical features, his visibility, made him the object of easy and rapid identification.\textsuperscript{18}

Following the first world war, racial tensions in the United States became more pronounced. However, this was only a function and reflection of general social unrest in this country. In those days, intolerance took many forms, usually against Negroes, Jews, and Catholics.\textsuperscript{19} American sociologists continued to show signs of the evolutionary influence in their interpretation of the racial events and situations, despite the fact that the school of subjective theory had become formidable in sociological circles. Nevertheless, this period became the era of applied sociology, when sociologists attempted to study society "as was" in an effort to offer advice on plans of action. In 1924, Du Bois published \textit{The Gift of Black Folk} in which he endeavored to show

\textsuperscript{17}Emory S. Borgardus, \textit{A History of Social Thought} (Los Angeles, 1938), pp. 176–9.


\textsuperscript{19}Frederick Lewis Allen, \textit{Only Yesterday} (New York, 1931).
that Negroes had made a significant contribution to the development of American life.\textsuperscript{20}

Applied sociology, it is believed, seeks only to show how sociological principles may be applied to concrete social situations. According to Bogardus, the most that it claims to do is to set up general principles as guides to social and political reform.\textsuperscript{21} The formulation of applied sociology is social research. Here more attention is given to finding what is than to validating a prioristic theories. Thus, sociology in the applied sense refers to use, while pure sociology deals with facts and principles.

Race relations and alien adjustment were the objectives of social research during this period. Research in these areas is clearly indicated in the writings of Thomas, Park, Znaniecki, and Johnson. Thomas and Znaniecki made a complete study of the problems inherent in the Polish adjustment problem here and in Poland. This analysis involved a thorough and painstaking study of the social structures in both countries.\textsuperscript{22} In addition, we have the researches of Charles S. Johnson in the Chicago race relations survey. Johnson later made attitude analyses.\textsuperscript{23} During this period certain phases of race relations were studied

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\textsuperscript{20} W. E. B. Du Bois, The Gift of Black Folk (Boston, 1924).
\textsuperscript{21} Emory S. Bogardus, A History of Social Thought (Los Angeles, 1938), p. 510.
\textsuperscript{22} W. I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, The Polish in Europe and America (2 vols.; Chicago, 1927).
\end{flushright}
in detail. In the later part of this period, John Dollard made a study to determine the effect of the caste system upon the life of a community. 24

During this same period, attempts were made to measure and study phenomena that had been in the area of the unforbidden, such as social distance, attitudes, mobility, etc. Scales were made in an attempt to measure social distance and assimilation. 25

It can be seen them, that American sociological theories have passed through perceptible eras. Prior to 1900, American sociologists were obviously influenced by the thinking and principles of Spencer and Darwin. These theories were derived from points of view that justified imperialism in Nineteenth Century England. Following the evolutionary era, we note the rise and formation of the school of subjective analyses. Here, Thomas, Znaniecki, Cooley and Giddings set in motion an approach to the study of societal relations that was primarily subjective in its points of departure. This thought period covers the span of years between 1900 and 1920. These writers have been chosen because they seem to have been most outstanding. Indeed, Charles A. Ellwood and E. A. Ross could have been herein included, for they too follow the subjective point of view. Finally, we have the period of applied sociology which is acceptable to today's thinking.

The leading personalities among the American sociologists in this

24 John Dollard, Caste and Class in a Southern Town (New York, 1937).

country have contributed a great deal to the color and tone of sociology. Ward was a Neo-Comtean who never ceased to identify himself with sociology as a science to be applied to human affairs in general. Sumner, having long sought methodological peace, finally found it to be rooted in ethnological and anthropological data. Sumner never deserted his Spencerian idols. Giddings, among the older group, covered the longest span of intellectual evolution. Thomas moved through an expansion from cultural sociology to behavioristic psychology, and Cooley worked brilliantly in the same field. These writers were followed by scholars who attempted to make monographic studies of particular aspects of the societal relations. Thus, it is evident that sociological theories in the United States have undergone discernible changes since the inception of sociology in the United States with Lester Ward's "dynamic sociology." These changes were reflections of the differences of the times in which the several sociologists wrote.

Edward Byron Reuter's writings in sociological theory, especially in the area of race and race relations, seem to have undergone comparable significant changes in a period ranging from twenty five to thirty years. An analysis will indicate that he seemed to have completely reversed his position in regard to the place and importance of biology in the field of race and race relations. In his first work in this area, Reuter seems to have believed that biology ranked supreme as the determinant of "process" and "position" in race relations. Here, Reuter advanced the theory that mulatto superiority was due to factors that were not sociological in nature, but to factors that were purely
biological in nature. A year later, in 1918, Reuter published a volume which, to him, substantiated the initial thesis which he advanced in his first work. Later, in 1927, Reuter attempted to treat the Negro as a population problem. In 1931, Reuter attempted to show that the Negro had no distinctive contribution to make to the development of this country. Again in 1934 and 1946, he wrote articles which seem to substantially contradict the premises advanced in 1918 with respect to the factor of causation in the "process" and "position" in race and race relations.

It is probable that the changes in Reuter's points of view are to a considerable degree but reflections of the basic changes which took place in general sociological theory in the United States. The central problem of this thesis is to examine in detail Reuter's writings in the area of race and race relations to determine if and to what extent they reflect the changes which have been indicated as characteristic of the development of American sociology.


27 E. B. Reuter, The Mulatto in the United States, (Boston, 1918).


For purposes of analysis, Reuter's writings have been divided into two periods: 1917 to 1931 and 1931 to 1946. This has been done because the literature indicates that around 1931 profound shifts occurred in Reuter's assumption and methods of analysis as they are related to his conclusions, fourteen years after his first publication in the area of race and race relations. This is not to say that all works in a given period will be treated as one and the same, for the very nature of Reuter's intellectual history seems to lend itself to an analysis on the basis of chronology. This analysis, therefore, will as far as possible give some attention to each of his works in chronological sequence.

For the purposes of this analysis, we shall define race as a group of people possessing established physical traits which are unique and are sufficiently pronounced to set it apart from other groups. Race theories will comprehend the general principles which posit an explanation of the sociological phenomena with which we are concerned (superordination, subordination, association, assimilation, etc.), phenomena which result from the contacts of groups whose physical traits are strikingly different.

The materials for this study are taken from The American Journal of Sociology, The Publications of the American Sociological Society, The Journal of Applied Sociology, The Journal of Negro Education, Phylon, The Atlanta University Review of Race and Culture, the books which Reuter wrote and edited, together with his reviews of other scholarly publications published in the professional journals of sociology. See Appendix for complete bibliography of Reuter's writings in this field.
CHAPTER II

THE BEGINNINGS: REUTER'S THEORIES, 1917-1931*

Reuter's first publication in the area of race and race relations was primarily concerned with explaining the position of the mulatto in the United States.31 He sought to explain the "intermediate position" which the mulatto occupied between the white and black parent groups. However, the concern of Reuter did not end here, for he attempted, at length, to give the causal factors which were responsible for the "intermediate position" which the mulattoes occupied between the "pure blood whites" and the "pure blood blacks." For Reuter's purposes, the term mulatto was used to designate any person who had a perceptible biracial ancestry.32

He proceeded on the basic assumption that while the bulk of the Negro population was not far removed from the "African standards," there

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32 Reuter did not define the term mulatto in this article, but he did indicate that the study was confined to a study of the mixed bloods in the United States. However, in his The Mulatto in the United States he did say specifically that he used the term to refer to any Negro with a visible admixture of white blood.
had arisen a considerable middle class which conferred in most essential respects to the conventional middle class standards of the American people, as well as a small intellectual group, some members of which had succeeded in coming within measurable distance of the "best models of European culture." He asserted that a careful examination would reveal that the "middle class" was composed of a great preponderance of mixed bloods. Reuter also stated that there was a dearth of Negroes of pure blood in the "middle class." In support of these theses, Reuter cited statistics which, to his own satisfaction, validated his conclusions.  

Reuter regarded the thesis that few Negroes of pure blood had ever been able to move from the "African standards" to the "standards of western European culture" to be a substantially valid one. After showing that the pure blood Negroes and pure blood whites were separated by an "intermediate group," the mulatto, Reuter turned to the task of explaining the why of this arrangement; that is, after assuming that

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33 The middle class to which Reuter referred was the mulatto group. In this article, he frequently used this term class as a synonym for race. To Reuter, the term race meant any group of people who by its physical traits was set apart from other groups. So the mulattoes were a race.

34 His statistics included a compilation of 139 of the supposedly best known American Negroes, only four of which were of "pure ancestry." These cases were taken from "Who's who in Colored America," The Crisis Calendar for 1916. He cited the 12 Negroes on whom reputable American universities had conferred the Doctor of Philosophy degree. A list of these men was given in the 1914-1915 Negro Yearbook. Reuter indicated the ratio of pure blood to mixed blood to be 13 to 1 in the field of medicine. Reuter also cited similar ratios that were found in business, literature, politics, music, and art. These facts were taken from the same sources. Reuter also attempted to show that in almost all cases Negroes who had been able to acquire status of a sort surviving slavery were mixed bloods.
the mixed bloods represented a caste above the "pure blood blacks" and below the "pure blood whites," Reuter sought to posit what he considered to be the most tenable reason for this status arrangement. In doing so, Reuter rejected all the explanations that had been put forward by such scholars as Boas and Thomas who had substantially denied that there existed a basic difference in mentality between Negroes and whites.

Reuter said that all of the explanations which attempted to account for the differential between Negroes and whites as it relates to the acquisition of western European culture were inadequate and dubious. Yet, he assumed the basic equality of races to be a fact.

In positing what he considered to be a tenable explanation of this situation, Reuter rejected the explanation advanced by W.I. Thomas which accounted for the "differential" in terms of the differences in run of attention which, in all cases where groups are different physically, have proceeded along different lines. Boas' theory, which held that the difference was due to the general course of historical events, was rejected as being unsatisfactory. Reuter also rejected the explanation which accounted for the superiority of the mulattoes on the basic grounds that the mulattoes had had opportunities which were superior to those which had been available to the bulk of the black population.

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35 Reuter uses the term caste to refer to a position in the social structure that is rigidly defined by the social order.


Reuter did admit that, in the cities, mulattoes had been given better opportunities that permitted them to observe and associate with whites, but he pointed to the fact that Negroes in the plantation South had had opportunities equally as advantageous as those of the mulattoes in the cities. Hence, Reuter held that the assumption of the inequality of one of the races to which the mulatto traced a part of his origin did not explain the "great superiority" of the mulattoes. So it must be concluded that neither superior opportunity nor inequality of races was an adequate explanation for mulatto superiority.

Reuter rejected the assumption of the inequality of races. However, he did say that all scientific investigations tended to make that assumption of valid one. To Reuter, there existed anti-podal degrees of culture. At one extreme were the "standards of western Europe"; at the other, the "standards of Africa." The mulattoes in this country represented a caste above the pure blood blacks because they had been able to more successfully acquire the culture of western Europe, the culture of the whites. He said the superior status of the mulatto does in no wise appear to be explainable on the single assumption of the superiority of opportunity, any more than it is explainable on the single assumption of the inequality of races to which they trace their origin.38

How then did Reuter seek to explain the superiority of the mulatto? He sought to do so by analyzing those factors that were independent of

and supplementary to those ordinarily posited to explain the prevailing facts. Reuter explained the superiority of the mulatto on premises that were biological.\textsuperscript{39} He posited "biological selection" or the combination of the best Negro mentality with the low, if not the lowest, of the white group. The inherent superiority of the whites was passed on to the mulatto offspring.

To Reuter, the mulatto was the product of the white male and the Negro female. Reuter posited "biological selection" as the most tenable factor of causation in determining the "intermediate position" of the mulatto in this manner:

Most of the association of Negro women and white males took place in the cities and most frequently was an association of a casual sort with males of the lower classes. On the whole, it must be admitted that in spite of exceptions, from the Caucasian side, the mulatto's ancestry has been, if not inferior, at least not above the average. But from the Negro side, the mulattoes are derived from the best of the race.

On the assumption of the equality of races, the mulatto would not stand superior to the average of the Negro group. Further analysis of the facts shows that the tendency of the black group is to select women of lighter color. As a result of this, the talent of mulattoes remain within the mulatto group, and is constantly reinforced by the best variant types in the smaller group.\textsuperscript{40}

As was previously pointed out, Reuter rejected the assumption of the inequality of races, but here, the theory which he posited caused him to reverse that stand to the extent that he finally concluded that

\textsuperscript{39}Ibid., 98.

\textsuperscript{40}Ibid., 98-100.
there are basic inequalities between the races.\textsuperscript{41} In this his work, a supplement to his first, Reuter held the same viewpoint on the nature of the mulatto's biological heritage. He said:

It is almost without exception that the black man of consequence marries into the mulatto caste. The mulatto, thus, on the single assumption of the transmission of superior mental quality, tends to become not only a culturally superior group, but a biologically superior group.\textsuperscript{42}

A goodly portion of this work discussed the nature of race mixture in the United States.\textsuperscript{43} Here Reuter accepted the generalizations of Hoffman concerning the nature of race intermixture in the United States.\textsuperscript{44} Hoffman concluded that the white men who had sexual intercourse with Negro women were generally of an "inferior type."

In discussing the role of the mulatto in the United States, Reuter found that members of this hybrid group were property owners, intellectuals, and "race leaders."\textsuperscript{45} This tendency toward cultural superiority would continue, he believed, because the mulattos were often reinforced by the "best" in the parent black group.

In this respect, it should be noted that Reuter believed that biology

\textsuperscript{41}E. B. Reuter, The Mulatto In the United States (Boston, 1918).

\textsuperscript{42}Ibid., pp. 396-7.

\textsuperscript{43}The term caste was used throughout as a synonym for race. Similarly, the terms group and class were used. So race became any group of people with perceptible physical traits which set it apart from other groups.

\textsuperscript{44}Frederick L. Hoffman, Race Traits and Tendencies of The American Negro (New York, 1896), p. 206.

\textsuperscript{45}E. B. Reuter, op. cit.
as such was relatively unimportant in the field of sociology. He contended that changes in the biological nature of the organism gave rise to phenomena that were in no sense biological, Reuter asserted that the contact and amalgamation of divergent races was a biological phenomenon, and the study of biological traits a subject of biological investigation. In this view he also held in two other articles which appeared in the Publications of The American Sociological Society. They were: "Should Biology be Taught in Introductory Sociology," (1927) and "The Hybrid as a Sociological Type," (1924). In the latter article, Reuter stated that when two groups meet there is the development of a hybrid group. The hybrid group is always superior to one of the parent groups. He further stated that this superiority could not be explained in terms of biological phenomena. The superiority of the hybrid, he stated, was amenable to explanation on the basis of mobility, isolation, etc. Here, the term race was used as a synonym for the previously used concept, mulatto. The hybrid was a person with a perceptible bi-racial ancestry. Again, Reuter maintained that the conditions which result from the contact of races were sociological phenomena.

The same contention was maintained throughout Reuter's writings on the place of biological ancestry in sociology. In other words, what he maintained in discussing the place of biological ancestry in the field of sociology per se, he contradicted in discussing race and race relations.

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Again, when Reuter developed a treatise that was not primarily concerned with race and race relations, he maintained that "inferiority" and "superiority" were not determined by race.\textsuperscript{47} Furthermore, Reuter took Lothrop Stoddard to task for what he called a pseudo-scientific definition for race.\textsuperscript{48} Stoddard classified races on the basis of skin pigmentation, dividing mankind into five races: White, Yellow, Red, Brown, and Black.

By 1927, Reuter's attention had shifted to a consideration of race and race relations from a different angle. He stated that since there were so many contradictory views on the whole matter of race, he would treat the Negro not as a race, but as a population problem. This is the central thought of The American Race Problem.\textsuperscript{49}

The first part of this work was given to a discussion of race and racial differences as they are related to the processes of "assimilation" and "amalgamation." Reuter maintained that the hypothesis of the equality of all peoples seems to be valid. He stated that there are "quantitative" excellencies in all races, therefore the problems of research was to be found in discovering the lines in which Negroes had peculiar abilities.\textsuperscript{50} The second part is concerned with the problems of describing the facts of Negro life. He estimated the contribution of the

\textsuperscript{47}E. B. Reuter, Population Problems (Philadelphia, 1923).

\textsuperscript{48}Ibid., p. 296.

\textsuperscript{49}(New York, 1927).

\textsuperscript{50}Ibid., p. 96.
Negro to be a negligible one.

This study concluded that a solution to the race problem in the United States could not be reached at that time, (1927). Reuter gave a lengthy discussion to the manner in which race adjustment could be sought. He rejected the idea that it could be done by administrative and legislative action. The idea that adjustment could be had by legislation carried with it the tacit assumption that the race problem was political in nature.\textsuperscript{51}

Here Reuter posited the complete isolation of the Negro as a solution to the race problem. Such a program would have the weight of tradition behind it; yet he believed that the problem was in no wise political. Can political and power systems be thought of apart from tradition except in cases of catastrophic innovations?\textsuperscript{51}

Between the years 1917 to 1931 the writings of E. B. Reuter had discernible characteristics. In his study of race and race relations, Reuter was primarily concerned with the problem of explaining the why of the "intermediate position" which the mulatto occupied. Again, he developed a treatise and wrote articles in the field of sociological theory which were on the whole concerned with the place of biology and biological ancestry in sociology. By 1927 Reuter had shifted his emphases from a preoccupation with the importance of biology in race relations to one which emphasized the place of tradition in the area of race relations.

CHAPTER III

NEW POSITION: REUTER’S THEORIES, 1931-1946*

In 1930,\(^{52}\) Reuter wrote that culture and the acquisition of culture are not functions of race, stating that such assumptions were untenable. Here, Reuter quoted Park\(^{53}\) at length. On the basic assumption that mixed bloods tend to acquire the culture of the whites because they trace a part of their origin to the whites, is to say that culture is a function of race. Writing on this specific subject, in 1931\(^{54}\) Reuter said that there was not a possibility of a distinctive contribution from the American Negro because the American Negro, by virtue of the fact that he was many generations removed his African heritage, was unable to give an interpretation to it.

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Moreover, Reuter asserted that the belief that the Negro could make such a contribution was predicated upon the assumption that the Negro has peculiar abilities. This is a direct refutation of the position he assumed in 1927. In the *American Race Problem*, in 1927, Reuter stated that he assumed the races to be equal; but he also believed that Negroes had peculiar abilities.\textsuperscript{55} Reuter contended that in so far as Negroes had made a contribution to the American culture, it had been due to their "culturally" isolated life and their peculiar social status. In his own words, "the possibility of further contributions that may be classed as Negro depends upon the development and perpetuation of racial and cultural isolations."\textsuperscript{56} He further indicated that "folk music" (spirituals, for example) was not a biological expression of race.\textsuperscript{57} The theses of this article were these: (1) The belief in the possibility of a distinctive contribution from the American Negro is predicated upon the assumption that there are innate differences between the races; (2) if a contribution that is to be classed as Negro is to be made, it will be because of "cultural isolation" which the dominant group imposes upon the Negro, and not because the Negro has an historical mission to accomplish.

These are polar to the theses which Reuter advanced and posited to explain the intermediate position which the mulattoes occupied between

\textsuperscript{55}See page 20 for an elaboration of this point.

\textsuperscript{56}E. B. Reuter, *op. cit.*, p. 355.

\textsuperscript{57}"Folk music," he indicated, was peculiar only in so far as it expressed the yearning of a culturally isolated people. Park had made a similar observation in 1924 in *Introduction To the Science of Sociology*, pp. 619-26.
the black and white parent groups. These theses are also in striking contradiction to those advanced in 1927 concerning the peculiar abilities of the Negroes. The theses advanced now are elaborated upon in Race and Culture Contacts.\textsuperscript{58}

In 1934, Reuter elaborated upon the position which he took in 1931 in Race and Culture Contacts of which he was editor.\textsuperscript{59} Here he asserted that, in the contact of races and culture groups, there were presented in mere outlines what he labeled as "universals."\textsuperscript{60} They were universal in so far as they occurred all over the world when divergent peoples and cultures meet.

The universals to which Reuter referred were: (1) racial miscegenation, (2) personal disorganization, (3) mixture of culture elements, and (4) equilibrium. In other words the sociologist's position shifted from an attempt to set up one factor for causation to a description of what has come to be called "the natural history of race relations." The universals were presented in what he considered to be a sequential order. It appears that a mixture of culture elements or plain assimilation of the superordinate's culture by the subordinate group precedes, in time, racial miscegenation ... cultural assimilation precedes racial miscegenation. The fourth universal, "equilibrium" means the same as "fusion" in other writers' schemes - authors such as Bogardus and Park. These

\textsuperscript{58}(New York, 1934). See the introduction, pp. 1-18.

\textsuperscript{59}\textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{60}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 3.
two authors believed that racial miscegenation is the dominant feature of the equilibrium stage. This they believed was true especially in cases where groups with divergent physical traits competed in a common area.

In a shift from a preoccupation with causation in race relations, Reuter showed little if any concern about the why of the race-status arrangement called race relations; he turned to the problem of finding and describing the universal uniformities in that arrangement. Here, Reuter no longer thought, as he did in 1927, the position of the Negro in America to be unique. Reuter took the same position when he reviewed E. Franklin Frazier's The Negro Family in the U. S. Briefly stated, Reuter in Race and Culture Contacts became concerned with finding "universal uniformities." This necessitated a change in his conception of the place of the Negro as a group in the contacts of "peoples" and "cultures." In 1939, Reuter explained in some detail what he had posited as the fruitful area of research in race relations in 1934.

However, it cannot be said that he completely divorced himself from

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61 Ibid., pp. 1-18.


63 Here, Reuter did not use the words "peoples" and "cultures" synonymously. He used them to designate two separate and independent orders of reality. The term "peoples" he used to designate large groups of human beings who were strikingly different in physical appearances. Reuter used the term "cultures" to designate two types of living that were strikingly different from one another. He made neither a function of the other. It should be noted that this is consistent with his contention of 1931.

the problem of causation in race relations during this period; for he gave a lengthy discussion to this specific problem in 1939;\(^\text{65}\) but it can be said that he had completely reversed the position taken in 1917 and 1913. Reuter summarized his own position in 1939 thus:

The Negro is a problem in the American social order because his aspirations and behavior are oriented towards a goal which the dominant group does not want realized. The American race problem dates from the breakdown of the slave status. It is the consequence of emancipation and racial freedom.

During this period, 1931 to 1946, Reuter was consistent in his belief that race does not determine cultural phenomena. Although Reuter did not himself develop a sociological system, he did, as has been pointed out, occupy definite positions in such sociological theory as was concerned with the relation of sociology to other branches of science, especially biology. It must be concluded that, during this period, Reuter's positions in the area of race theory and race relations did not contradict the basic tenets of his sociological theory.\(^\text{67}\) In 1941, Reuter asserted that there was no immediate causal relation between race and culture.\(^\text{68}\) He explained that


\(^{66}\)Ibid., p. 294. This article contains an unorganized detailed discussion which purports to explain why the Negro was no social problem prior to emancipation. Briefly stated, the reason is this: During the slave era, the Negro, by virtue of the fact that he was property, was in no position to offer the whites any consequential competition. An abbreviated form of this argument is found in "Southern Scholars," Phylon, VIII (No. 3, 1946), 221-35.

\(^{67}\)Handbook of Sociology (New York, 1941), p. 59.

\(^{68}\)Ibid., pp. 59-61
since a people's culture was not determined by race, it must be explained in other terms. On the matter of the acquisition of culture by one group when two cultures meet, his belief was this: When two cultures meet, there is an ensuing struggle for power. The victor in this struggle becomes the dominant group and complete equilibrium cannot be had until the subordinate group is completely subjugated or assimilated into the culture of the dominant group. The dominant group, not desiring the latter, tends to work towards the former. This is why the subordinates are slow to acquire the culture which the dominant group considers to be superior by virtue of the status arrangement which it has imposed. Where the two groups concerned are strikingly different, physical traits become tokens or badges by which differential treatment is accorded; they become the stigmata of inferiority and superiority. So it can be concluded that race determines the acquisition of culture only in so far as the social order comes to assign values of superiority and inferiority to racial symbols.

In "Racial Theory," Reuter sets down the history of the study of race relations and race differences. He said that the study of race differences can be dated back to the mid-eighteenth century; but the study of race relations, he dated back to the mid-twenties of this century. To Reuter, the study of race relations began with the outlining of the stages in the "natural history of race relations." Here Reuter strongly:

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69 E. B. Reuter, op. cit., 452-64.

70 It is interesting to note that the element of causation became unimportant to him when he moved over to the "natural history" scheme. Park is the father of this scheme in this country.
contended that the hybrid was not a race, but a combination of heritable traits from divergent groups.

In spite of the fact that, with few exceptions, the writings of Reuter have been treated in chronological sequence, it can be concluded that each of the major periods into which the writings have been divided has dominant and perceptible structural and ideological characteristics which tend to fuse into singular and definable theoretical patterns.

What then are the dominant characteristics of the first period? To begin with, Reuter had two preoccupations. One was, a preoccupation with the task of positing what he considered to be tenable explanations for the status arrangement which, in his scheme, found the blacks to be on the bottom, the whites on top, and the mulattoes in an "intermediate position" between the two parent groups on the human scale. His second preoccupation was one of pointing out what he regarded as a sensible solution to the race problem - the complete cultural isolation of the Negro.

How does his first period differ from the second? In the latter stage, the attention of Reuter was focused on the problem of describing and explaining what he called the "universal uniformities in race relations." In this period, the causation factor was relatively unimportant for Reuter's analysis. However, he said that cultural isolation was the causative factor in determining the position of the Negro in this country. It now becomes clear that the two periods differ from each other in their basic conceptions of the dominant causation factor in human relationships.
CHAPTER IV

THE THEORIES IN SYNTHESIS

In the analysis of social theory, it is not enough to accept without examination the statements of the sociologists which, in essence, purport to point out the assumptions upon which their investigations rest. An examination of these assumptions may indicate that in and of themselves such assumptions may vitiate the very hypotheses upon which the investigations rest.

For a thorough and meaningful understanding of a sociological theory, a searching analysis of the underlying assumptions becomes necessary in order to determine if and to what extent they are operative in: (1) the definition of the unit of investigation, (2) the selection of data after the unit has been selected, defined and delimited, and (3) the conclusion at which one arrives, as these criteria relate to the stated assumptions upon which the initial hypothesis rests. An examination of Reuter's theories clearly indicates the importance and necessity of this type of analysis.

For a period of more than twenty-five years, Edward B. Reuter sought the what of human relations within the category of races by analyzing the why and how of the race-status structure. In so doing, he left a mass of eclectic materials which seem to contribute little to an understanding of human relations within this category. However, he did emphasize the importance of structure as a conceptual point of departure in the study of human relations within the category of race. Despite this fact, one is
inclined to doubt the validity of the structure which he used.

The initial arrangement which Reuter established as the status structure within which to examine human relations, in the category of race, placed the whites on the top, the blacks on the bottom, and the mulattoes in an intermediate position between the two parent groups. He considered the positions to which he assigned the parent groups to be sufficiently valid to require neither proof nor verification. However, it was the position to which Reuter assigned the mulattoes that indicated the need of scientific validation for his theory.

In an analysis of Reuter's theory of the mulatto it is significant to note that he, by his own definition of the unit of investigation, did not study mulattoes. His study was restricted to limits which permitted a study of only the exceptional persons of mixed parentage. His study should have included a cross section of all persons with perceptible bi-racial ancestries. However, it included only a study of the roles of the "most successful" and "best known" mulattoes. Reuter believed these persons to be the only ones with partial Negro ancestries who had been able to move "upward" from the "African standards" towards the "best European standards."

After discarding as untenable all prior explanations which were concerned with explaining the why of the race-status structure, Reuter, to his own satisfaction, showed that the mulatto was the product of best Negro female and worst white male. He concluded that the movement away from the African standards which resulted in the superiority of the mulat-
toes was attributable to the fact that the mulattoes traced a part of their origin to the white group. Furthermore, he concluded that the mulattoes were developing "not only into a culturally superior group, but also into a superior race;" yet, he stated that his initial hypothesis rested upon the assumption of the equality of races. On the basic postulate that races are equal, the mulattoes who were the products of the worst white males and best Negro females would not, and could not, stand superior to the average in the Negro group, culturally or biologically. Moreover, the "cultural superiority" of the mulatto could not be explained by the single causative factor of biological superiority, since biological superiority cannot in and of itself insure cultural superiority. Culture is an acquired phenomenon, and the acquisition thereof depends as much upon the individual's observation of and participation in it, as upon his ability to be receptive to it. Thus, we find that Reuter inferred that culture and the acquisition thereof are functions of race without regard for the circumstances by which and in which culture and race become meaningful.

Actually, Reuter has assumed a sexual and racial inequality in this hypothesis. The only possible assumption from which his derivation of mulatto superiority to the black parent, and of mulatto inferiority to the white parent is that all males are superior to all females; all whites are superior to all blacks; all white males are superior to all black males; and, all white females are superior to all black females. In other words, Reuter invalidates the very assumption he posits.
To be sure, in positing what he deemed to be the proper task of social research, Reuter stated that he was operating upon one assumption, while he actually was operating upon another, the antithesis of the stated one. For example, Reuter stated that he accepted the assumption of the equality of races to be valid; yet he found the task of social research to lie in discovering the area in which the Negro could excel. On his assumption, abilities in all races would tend to follow the normal curve of distribution.

When Reuter turned his attention to the task of describing and explaining the how of race relations, causation had no place in his analysis. For purposes of analysis, the sociologist seeks the facts of common incidence, the facts of common recurrence. That is to say, Reuter sought to discover, describe, and explain the facets of race relations that are common in comparable situations throughout the world, rather than those of limited and local application. During the latter stage, Reuter sought to define a race-relations cycle. He sought to describe an invariable sequence of relations that emerges whenever and wherever diverse peoples meet, compete, and struggle for existence and status within a common area. On the basis of this knowledge, Reuter believed that a sociologist would be in a position to know the succeeding stages of the race relations cycle. This, he reasoned, would enable him to predict, within the limits which any reasonable science defines, the folly or wisdom of any proposed program of action.

Such a conclusion is a far cry from the generalizations which Reuter deduced from his initial study. Reuter is not now concerned with select
and unique data, but with data of common incidence throughout the world.

Scientific sociology and the study of race relations were parts of one and the same body of verified theoretical knowledge — sociological theory. So the study of race relations became only a source of concrete data. Reuter now no longer confused the science with the data employed for purposes of analytical research. He clearly recognized the fact that generalizing from select and biased data gives no basis for valid prediction and control.

An analysis of the second period of Reuter's intellectual history suggests that sociological theories are of two kinds: (1) theories having local and personal application, and (2) those with universal and impersonal application. Theories which are of universal and impersonal application tend to move towards scientific empiricism. However, the "universal uniformities" to which Reuter referred enabled one to only point out the wisdom or folly of any proposed plan of action in time and space during a given stage in the cycle. The control which is the end product of science did not enable one to change or re-direct human relations within the category of race, according to Reuter's scheme. It appears that control is the function of the element of prediction in science, a function which inherently implies the ability to change. If this cannot follow, scientific knowledge in the area of human relations is of neither moment nor matter, for human relations within the category of race are destined to follow an inevitable and unalterable sequential pattern. So the race relations cycle becomes not the basis upon which scientific prediction and control rest, but the inevitable pattern over which the human mind
has neither the power of control nor the knowledge with which to initiate changes.

This conclusion raises two important questions for an analysis of human relations: "If man can predict, can he control?" "If man can control, can he alter?" On the basic postulate that prediction is a valid basis of control, it follows that the knowledge which enables one to control human relations enables one to initiate changes within them, if necessary; for change inheres in control. The race relations cycle becomes therefore, a determinism of expediency. This being true, Reuter's theory offers no knowledge upon which to act, since all actions of necessity must conform to the stages in the cycle.

Theories of race relations cannot be thought of apart from a general theory of society. Reuter's theories of race and race relations included and drew heavily upon a congeries of points of view, ideas, and schools of thought that ran the whole gamut of social and sociological theory in this country. Oftentimes, Reuter would include schools of thought and points of view that were discordant, incompatible, and diametrically opposed to the thesis he was then advancing. His race theories became theories of eclecticism which attempted to explain human relations within a self-defined, ivory-tower-determined category of race. This method suggests the futility of comprehending theories of race relations on a theoretical level without a conscious knowledge, recognition, and utilization of general theories of human association. For example, Reuter, in his first period, drew heavily upon Sumner, Ward, and, to some extent, E. A. Ross, while accepting and operating upon assumptions which were antithetical to the
assumptions upon which these writers operated. In the second period Reuter
drew heavily upon W. I. Thomas, Charles Cooley, Franklin Giddings and
Robert E. Park.

In the final analysis, Reuter seems to have contributed little that
was new or novel to an understanding of race as a social, cultural and
functioning associational phenomenon of society. He did, however, provide
points of departure for the analysis and discussion of the modern world
phenomenon of race. These points of departure may, in time, become the
foundation of fruitful research in the field of human relations. However,
only time, experience, and clearer thinking can provide the ultimate eval-
uation of Reuter's theories of race and race relations. It may very well
be that a sound case can be made in support and defense of these theories.
If so, they must be validated by methods of science and the techniques of
logic. In any case, if theories of race and race relations are to carry
conviction and command the respect of competent students of man in society,
they must demonstrate some regard for logic and the rules of evidence, and
less concern for the political and social expediencies of a dynamic so-
ciety that seeks to make static the symbols and processes that inhere in
"race" and "race relations."
APPENDIX
APPENDIX A

THE WRITINGS OF E. B. REUTER, 1917-1931

Books


Articles


APPENDIX B

THE WRITINGS OF E. B. REUTER, 1931-1946

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Articles


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