MINORITY GROUPS' VIEW OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

(An Interim Report)

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The Problem

The changing social condition of the American Negro can be characterized by two divergent trends--an increase in social integration and an increase in social protest. Social integration refers to the participation, attachments, and commitments that bind individuals and groups to a society.[1] And social protest is activity pursued to change some social ill as so defined by the protesting group.[2] The simultaneous increase of these two patterns of Negro life has been explained frequently by theories suggesting a "revolution of rising expectations." The prima facie utility of such interpretations is not sufficient, because most of them have not been based on the discipline of empirical research.[3] The general sociological problem, then, is (1) to systematically investigate the ways in which these two patterns are related, and (2) to develop a set of propositions that interpret these findings in relation to the more general body of social science knowledge. Furthermore, when one takes a closer look at the existing data, it becomes apparent that there is considerable controversy about the pattern of both social integration and protest. Some research has contended that the course of integration is increasing, while other analyses take an opposite view.[4] The reaction to such seemingly contradictory assertions by social researchers must be the clarification of how each of the many relevant indicators do or do not fit into a general trend. There is a similar problematic controversy about social protest, both in terms of quantity and kind.[5] Thus, while integration and protest in themselves merit more serious research efforts, the existence of contradictory evidence about their relatedness indicates a need for more sociological research.

This proposal will therefore employ a research strategy designed to examine the relationship between social integration and protest. Using one case of community protest activity, the strategy is to use the pattern of response to the mobilization for protest as the dependent variable. We will be concerned here with answers to three questions: 1) Did the respondent's child(ren) go to school or boycott? 2) Did the respondent support the boycott? and 3) How did the respondent make his decision? The social integration of Negroes in this community, as measured by a set of relevant indicators, will then be employed as the independent explanatory variable.

Negro social protest has been a salient factor in American society since World War II, being especially characterized by a sharp increase in scope and intensity during the last decade. More than in any other area of American society, inequality in educational opportunity has constituted the major target of organized protest, in the courts, at bargaining tables, and in the streets marching.[6]

During 1963, the school boycott was used as a form of protest by militant northern civil rights groups demanding "quality integrated education." In October, 1963, 225,000 Chicago school children stayed away from classes for one day. By early 1964 some of the more militant civil rights organizations felt that another boycott was necessary to more effectively dramatize their demands. While the first boycott had been supported by most Negro organizations in Chicago, the second--scheduled for February, 1964--met with considerable opposition. Organized opposition was encountered from established civil rights organizations, as well as from several Negro aldermen representing the political establishment. The division within the Negro community ran deep. Despite this division, 172,350 students stayed away from school on "Freedom Day II."

For at least two reasons the Chicago school boycott controversy is suitable as a paradigm for our problem. First, school problems have long been salient to the Negro community and the target of protest activity by civil rights groups. The school boycott controversy probably involved most members of the Negro community--especially parents who were involved in concrete decision-making situations about their children. One can reasonably suppose that the patterns of choice which emerged are not biased by the lack of information, but reflect something basic about the people confronted with making the decision.

Second, the two boycotts provided decidedly different conditions. The October boycott had the general approval of the Negro institutional and civil rights leadership, and evoked only minor censure from government officials and (white) civil leaders. The Negro community was united and on the move in October. However, by the second boycott in February, support had dwindled to a hard core of militant civil rights leaders. There can be little doubt that while the choices facing parents of public school children were nearly the same for both boycotts, their reactions to the second boycott were probably different, in response to the ambiguity and crisis of a split leadership. Two such divergent, though quite related, instances of social protest activity can therefore be fruitful to an understanding of the principles involved in social protest in general.

The gist of the rationale for using both boycotts is empirically demonstrable (as will be presented in the analysis) and represents the initial step in relating the propositional ideas (as presented later in this proposal) to the empirical analysis. In sum, the appropriateness of the dependent variable is contingent on three factors: (1) the saliency and importance of school problems for Negro parents; (2) the conditions diffe-

rentiating the boycotts; and (3) the pattern of decision-making in response to both boycotts. The argument of this analysis rests on considering these factors as definitive for our dependent variable.

The source of explanation for this analysis, i.e., the independent variable(s), can summarily be termed social integration. Social integration consists of at least the following components: (a) social position (i.e., social class and status), (b) social participation, and (c) commitments. The general problem as stated above, is made more specific in terms of these kinds of categories. In addition, it is useful to make a distinction between substantive areas, e.g., politics, civil rights, and education, because differences in social integration might be expected to varying by area.

Our problem can now be restated in terms of the above. We are investigating the social bases of Negro participation in social protest, i.e., the pattern and extent to which social position, social participation, and social beliefs and commitments explain patterns of participation in social protest.

The Ideas

Since Negro social protest has not generated a substantial literature of empirical research, some useful insights can be gathered from a comparison of literature dealing with (a) participation in social movements, and (b) political participation.[7] The assumption is that a social movement attempts to do something outside of the normal channels, a pattern opposite that of legitimate political participation.[8] A brief comparison of theoretical propositions from these two bodies of literature will provide insight into the meaning of Negro social protest, and for our analysis we will focus this discussion around the components of social integration.

Erbe and Milbrath have presented useful summaries of the research on political participation.[9] The research indicates that political participation is a function of (a) higher social and economic position, (b) higher rates of participation in voluntary organizations and other activities, and (c) feeling secure, stable, and effective. One can conclude from this that social integration is directly related to political participation.

The mass movement literature provides a distinctly opposite picture. One model[10] rests on the notion that one's economic position is the key determinant, with those not in authority roles being most likely to develop a "class consciousness" and join (or form) a social movement. Or stated somewhat differently, the participants in a social movement are more likely to come from the lower social and economic positions, those who mobilize their feelings of economic insecurity into collective social action. Another model focuses on status as a social mechanism that maintains deference.[11] As presented by Lipset and others, this general proposition says that status oriented movements are generated when members of a status group feel their social standing and recognition is at stake. Both of these models combine membership in a group with the development of certain beliefs related to the nature of the group as keys to understanding participation in social protest.

A third model[12] employs group attachments and involvements as the basic notion, and maintains that the isolated person or group is more likely to participate in a mass movement. A summary of this position is contained in the "mass society" theory presented by Kornhauser. He states that people without social ties are more prone to participate in mass movements. While he concedes that a social stratification model has some

validity, he contends that "within all strata, those with the fewest social ties are the most receptive to mass appeals."[13]

In general, this brief summary of alternative models or theoretical proposition indicates that social integration is positively related to political participation and negatively related to participation in social movements. One explanation of this is that political participation, being legitimate institutional behavior, is normal and draws from the mainstream, whereas social movements are usually not normal and draw from disaffected, insecure, or unhappy people. There is at least one additional inference to be made: Any social action that is legitimate and routinized will solicit participation on much the same basis as political participation.

The above generalization serves as the basis for our central proposition: When social protest is legitimate, participation is a direct and positive function of social integration, but when the protest does not have the legitimacy of accepted behavior it will necessarily be supported by those least integrated. This position argues that the second boycott was qualitatively different from the first in much the same way as social protest activity is different from political participation. Therefore, the social bases of the first boycott will be opposite in trend from that of the second.

Another important issue might usefully be raised at this point, the concept of legitimacy as related to Negro social protest behavior. As a direct result of slavery and segregation, the Negro community has traditionally maintained a sub-community culture of its own. The growth of a stratified Negro population enabled social groups or classes to assume different patterns of accomodation and adjustment to their demeaning social position. Frazier held that "many middle class Negroes have acquired vested interests in segregation," based on the need to maintain prominent social

recognition not likely in an integrated society, and certain financial benefits, especially from the services industries.[14] Frazier, clarifying his position further, also thought that "middle class Negroes have been most inclined to wipe out segregation in those institutions which are based in the white community."[15] And by that he meant institutions like politics and public education.

Consistent with this analysis, many discussions of the civil rights movement have pointed to the historic middle class bases of the NAACP and the Urban League. In recent history, however, the central role of these organizations has changed with the rise of mass-based direct action protests.[16] These mass protests utilized a different group of people than the traditional activities of the older groups; the new activist was usually an upwardly mobile Negro college student.[17] These people did not begin with innovations in goals, but in the method and style of protest. For example, Searles and Williams, in a study of Negro college student sit-ins, conclude that "sit-in protests are less indicative of social alienation than of their identification with or positive reference to the white middle class."[18]

The proliferation of direct action during the 1950's and 1960's, while initially concentrated in the South, represents the gradual legitimation of protest. This process of legitimation can best be understood in terms of at least three factors: (1) scope of the social setting (national, regional, and local); (2) issues (e.g., integrated education, non-discriminatory public accomodations, and open occupancy); and (3) forms or styles of protest (sit-ins, freedom rides, school boycotts, etc.). These factors can be conceived of as interlocking social spheres that can be ranked on a scale of legitimacy. Both the comments on Frazier's analysis of the Negro middle class and the goals and methods of the sit-ins can easily be understood in terms of these categories.

An additional ingredient in these descriptive categories is the element of crisis. Several discussions have noted that unity in the Negro community (which is another way of saying legitimacy by consensus), is often a direct function of a crisis which involves the entire Negro community.[19] In other words strength in unity is sought proportionate to the intensity of a perceived or real threat. In sum, the legitimacy of social protest activity must be understood in terms of a set of categories delineating spheres of social action.

There is one additional comment to be made about the concept of legitimacy. This analysis is based on the assumption that the Negro community, "represents a little social world...."[20] So the legitimacy we are here concerned with is that which is sustained from within the Negro community. This kind of clarification is important, particularly in light of survey data like that presented in the study by Brink and Harris.[21] "A clear majority of 72 per cent of the Negroes queried made it clear that they personally felt they had been pushed around long enough and were prepared to 'go for broke.'" "When asked in detail about the methods of the Negro revolution, whites went on record as 2 to 1 in opposition to the lunch-counter sit-ins, 4 to 3 against Negro willingness to go to jail voluntarily for their cause, 5 to 3 against picketing of stores and over 10 to 1 against the 'lie-downs' in front of trucks on construction sites. However, by slim margins, whites do accept the general idea of demonstrating and think that the Negroes are justified in having conducted the march on Washington."[22]

Data

The survey data to be used in this analysis come from a study conducted at the National Opinion Research Center in February, 1964, just prior to the second school boycott. We collected 362 interviews with parents or guardians of elementary school children from seven all-Negro schools (See Table 1.) Utilizing 1960 census tract data within ward boundaries, four strata were developed by dichotomizing the socio-economic level of predominantly Negro wards and observing the position taken on the boycott by the alderman. Sampling was designed to include two middle-class and two lower-class groups, both divided according to the alderman's position. Another feature of this sampling procedure is that within the area chosen, most of the respondents' children attended the same school, thus holding that source of variance to a minimum.

TABLE 1

CASE BASES, BY SCHOOL AND SAMPLING CATEGORY, AND MEDIAN YEARS OF SCHOOLING IN TRACT (IN PARENTHESES), BY ALDERMAN'S POSITION ON OCTOBER BOYCOTT AND EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF SCHOOL DISTRICT

Alderman's Position on Second Boycott	Educational Status of School District	
	High	Low
Pro-boycott (or alderman had taken no public position)	(12.1), N = 37 (11.2), N = 49 Total N = 86	(9.0), N = 46 (9.0), N = 53 Total N = 99
Anti-boycott published claims (alderman had precinct workers gathering anti-boycott pledges)	(10.9), N = 87 Total N = 87	(8.8), N = 40 (9.1), N = 50 Total N = 90

Total N = 362

All interviewers were Negro, and the interviewing was completed in six days.

In addition to the survey data collected in the above manner, the following additional sources of documentary materials are available:

1. An extensive personal file of materials relating to both boycotts, from leaflets to newspaper clippings.

2. A complete scrapbook of clippings from the Chicago newspapers on both boycotts.

3. Personal access to files of organizations involved in the boycotts and many of the key protagonists of the boycott.

A tentative chapter outline of the report is presented below:

Chapter I Introduction. The introduction will contain:

(a) specification of the problem;

(b) the thesis and argument;

(c) description of the data.

Chapter II Negro Social Protest in Chicago. Use of documentary materials:

(a) to describe the development and organization of the civil rights movement with special reference to education;

(b) to describe the controversy as presented to the parents (our respondents);

(c) to develop the concept of legitimacy as related to the two boycotts.

Chapter III Negroes in Social Protest. Use of survey data:

(a) to describe the pattern of how people formulated and made decisions;

(b) to describe the actual decisions;

(c) to develop possibly an "index of participation" from the decision-making items.

Chapter IV Social Bases of Protest: 1. Social Position.

This chapter will test the hypothesized relationship between social position and participation in both boycotts.

Chapter V Social Bases of Protest: 2. Social Participation.

Chapter VI Social Bases of Protest: 3. Social Beliefs and Commitments.

Chapter VII Social Bases of Protest: An Empirical Summary.

This chapter will present a summary of the analysis in chapters II-VI; the thesis will be discussed in terms of the empirical findings.

Chapter VIII Some Concluding Notes.

This chapter will include a reformulation of the original argument taking into account the results presented in the summary chapter, an overview statement of how this analysis fits into the literature, and what directions future research might profitably take.

Footnotes

[1]Robin Williams presents a useful set of statements on the concepts of social integration. See American Society (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1951), pp. 541-75; and Strangers Next Door (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964), especially Chapter 10 "Structure and Processes in Multigroup Society."

[2]Two positions exemplary of this conception are Rudolf Herberle, "Observations on the Sociology of Social Movements," American Sociological Review, vol. 14, June 1949, 346-57; and Neil Smelser, Theory of Collective Behavior (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), pp. 109-11.

[3]For examples of how sociologists acknowledge this relative paucity of research, see Everett C. Hughes, "Race Relations and the Sociological Imagination," American Sociological Review, vol. 28, no. 6, December 1963, 879-90; and Peter H. Rossi, "New Directions for Race Relations Research in the Sixties," Review of Religious Research, vol. 5, no. 3, Spring 1964, 125-32.

[4]While this proposition can be supported by a myriad of varied articles, the volume published by Daedalus, The Negro American (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1966), edited by Talcott Parsons and Kenneth B. Clark, contains a sufficient treatment. See especially the articles by St. Clair Drake, John Hope Franklin, Philip M. Hauser, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Lee Rainwater, and Oscar Handlin.

[5]Contrast the positions of James H. Laue, "The Changing Character of Negro Protest," The Annals, vol. 357, January 1965, 119-26; and Charles E. Silberman, "Beware the Day They Change Their Minds," Fortune, November 1965.

[6]Herbert Hill and Jack Greenberg, Citizens' Guide to Desegregation (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955); Benjamin Muse, Ten Years of Prelude: The Story of Integration since the Supreme Court's 1954 Decision (New York: Viking, 1964); and Anthony Lewis, Portrait of a Decade: The Second American Revolution (New York: Random House, 1964).

[7]Gerald A. McWorter,"The Political Sociology of the Negro: A Selective Review of the Literature," Chicago, National Opinion Research Center, 1967, unpublished manuscript.

[8]This notion is contained in most conceptual models of social movements: e.g., Neil J. Smelser, Theory of Collective Behavior (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964); and Herbert Blumer "Social Movements," in Alfred M. Lee, ed., Principles of Sociology (New York: Barnes and Noble College Outline Series, 1955), pp. 202ff.

[9]William Erbe,"Social Involvement and Political Activity: A Replication and Elaboration," American Sociological Review, vol. 29, no. 2, April 1964, 198-215; Lester Milbrath, Political Participation (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1965).

[10]This model, though presented in a somewhat simplified form, represents a theoretical tradition grounded in Marxism. See Reinhard Bendix,"Social Stratification and Political Power," pp. 596-609; and Reinhard Bendix and Seymour M. Lipset,"Karl Marx' Theory of Social Classes," in Bendix and Lipset, eds., Class, Status, and Power (Glencoe: Free Press, 1957). Also see Ralf Dahrendorf, Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959); John C. Leggett,"Uprootedness and Working-Class Consciousness," American Journal of Sociology, vol. 68, no. 6, May 1963, 682-92; and

David Street and John C. Leggett, "Economic Deprivation and Extremism," American Journal of Sociology, vol. 67, July 1961, 53-7.

[11] Joseph Gusfield, Symbolic Crusade: Status Politics and the American Temperance Movement (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1963); Richard Hofstadter, "The Psuedo-Conservative Revolt," and "Psuedo-Conservatism Revisited," and Seymour M. Lipset, "The Sources of The Radical Right," in Daniel Bell, ed., The Radical Right (Garden City: Doubleday and Co., 1963).

[12] A useful summary to this position is contained in William Kornhauser, The Politics of Mass Society (Glencoe: Free Press, 1959).

[13] Ibid., p. 223.

[14] E. Franklin Frazier, "The Negro Middle Class and Desegregation," Social Problems, vol. 4, no. 4, April 1957, 291-301. Also see The Negro Family in the United States (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966); and Black Bourgeoise (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1957).

[15] Frazier, "The Negro Middle Class and Desegregation," p.297.

[16] W. Haywood Burns, The Voices of Negro Protest in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963); Louis E. Lomax, The Negro Revolt (New York: Signet, 1963); and August Meier, "The Revolution against the NAACP: A Critical Appraisal of Louis E. Lomax's The Negro Revolt," Journal of Negro Education, Spring 1963, 146-52; "Negro Protest Movements and Organizations," Journal of Negro Education, Fall 1963, 437-50; "New Currents in the Civil Rights Movement," New Politics, Summer 1963, 7-31.

[17]Howard Zinn, SNCC: The New Abolitionists (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964); August Meier "Who Are the 'True Believers'?--A Tentative Typology of the Motivations of Civil Rights Activists," (A paper given at the 42nd annual meeting of the American Orthopsychiatric Association, March 18, 1965.); and Mathew H. Ahmann, ed., The New Negro (Notre Dame, Indiana: Fides Publishers, Inc., 1961).

[18]Ruth Searles and J. Allen Williams, "Negro College Students' Participation in Sit-ins," Social Forces, vol. 40, March 1962, 215-20.

[19]See Jacquelyne J. Clarke, "Standard Operating Procedures in Tragic Situations," Phylon, vol. 22, Winter 1961, 318-28; Tilman C. Cothran and William Phillips, Jr., "Negro Leadership in a Crisis Situation," Phylon, vol. 22, no. 2, Summer 1961, 107-18; and Bayard Rustin, "The Meaning of Birmingham," Liberation, vol. 8, June 1963, 7-9, 31.

[20]E. Franklin Frazier, "The Negro Community: A Cultural Phenomenon," Social Forces, vol. 7, 415-20.

[21]William Brink and Louis Harris, The Negro Revolution in America (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1964).

[22]Ibid., p. 69 and p. 145.