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The Etiquette of Race Relations—Past, Present, and Future

BERTRAM W. DOYLE

Social control, it is generally admitted among sociologists, is a focal problem of sociology. Yet, to Herbert Spencer, writing his *Principles of Sociology,* government was the center, if not the basis, of social control. Said he:

> The earliest kind of government, the most general kind of government, and the government which is ever spontaneously recommencing, is the government of ceremonial observances. This kind of government, besides preceding all other kinds, and besides having in all places and times approached nearer to universality of influence, has ever had, and continues to have, the largest share in regulating men's lives.[1]

Ceremonial observances, he notes, comprises: (1) forms that express loyalty, respect, and worship, such as, obeisances, prostrations, bowing, salaams, uncoverings of the head; (2) forms that express subjection or, in many cases, prestige, such as, the use of titles, giving or receiving presents, extravagant compliments, exaggerated eulogies; (3) forms developing from emotional excitement, such as kissing, embracing, vocal expressions of joy or pleasure; (4) forms "not originating directly . . . but by natural sequence rather than intentional symbolization," such as making visits, the use of badges and costumes, and class distinctions that may be exhibited in differences in cut and quality of clothing, in the shape or ornamentation of houses, and in methods of transportation.[2]

William Graham Sumner, seeking controls more informal, and yet more binding than police, laws, courts, and formal government, has established the thesis that the *mores*[3] are of the former type of controls, and has indicated that etiquette—the equivalent of Spencer's "ceremonial government"—is "in the mores."[4]

Students of society, moreover, have shown that ceremonial observances are not confined to any one social group, but, differing in form and degree, are universal. They agree, generally, that fundamental patterns of life and behavior are everywhere the same, and they recognize that similarities of culture are due to the nature of man, which "is everywhere essentially the same and tends to express itself in similar sentiments and institutions."[5]

It has been widely noted that ceremonial observances, generally deemed proper to the association of white persons and Negroes, exist

[1] Herbert Spencer, *Principles of Sociology,* (London, 1882) Vol. II, p. 3.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13, 30-5.

[3] See: W. G. Sumner, *Folkways* (New York, 1910), pp. 34-35.

[4] *Ibid.* See especially the chapter on Social Codes.

[5] R. E. Park and H. A. Miller, *Old World Traits Transplanted* (Chicago, 1925), pp. 1-2.

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in the South. A survey of the literature of the period prior to the War between the states will confirm the observation that such observances were formulated into a code[6] which included, on the one hand ceremonial forms used by all persons, and on the other, forms resorted to white persons and Negroes—slave and free—associated. In addition, a cursory glance into the literature of relations between the races, for the period since 1865, will give the impression that a code still exists which, barring some exceptions, is a reminder, if not a heritage, of the antebellum period.[7] It is, however, doubtless true that small attempt has been made to analyze the etiquette of race relations from the standpoint of social control.

It might then be profitable to seek to discover: (1) the social usages or the etiquette[8] customarily employed in social contacts and relations of white persons and Negroes; (2) how these have operated to control those relations; and (3) what effect the success or failure of the control has had upon the ability of the two races to enter into, and to cooperate in, an effective corporate life. If these objectives were realized, it might again be profitable to discuss certain educational implications involved in the question of etiquette and race relations.

THE CODE OF INTERRACIAL ETIQUETTE

The Golden Age of etiquette in race relations might with a degree of accuracy be placed in the period of American Negro slavery. Politeness on the part of Negroes, especially, was during that period remarked by more than one traveller and generally attributed to innate disposition.[9] Where slaves met white persons publicly, the men touched or removed their hats—in those cases where they actually wore hats—or would nod and bow, and women slaves would curtsy. Shaking hands, regulated by local custom, might or might not be appropriate, but kissing, especially when indulged in by "Black

[6]The use of the term "code" does not here refer to any formal organization or formulation of rules to be observed, but to those codes whose value, according to Sir Henry Maine, "does not consist in any approach to any symmetrical classification, nor to terseness and clearness of expression, but in their publicity, and in the knowledge which they furnish to everybody as to what he was to do, and what not to do." *Ancient Law* (New York, 1888, 3rd American edition from the 5th London edition), p. 25.

[7]Within the last decade, the code has been made the subject of an occasional article. See, for example, G. S. Schuyler, "Keeping the Negro in His Place," *American Mercury*, XVII, 68 (August, 1929) pp. 469ff.

[8]We shall consider etiquette, or the code of social usages, to be the forms required by custom and tradition to be observed in contact and association of white persons and Negroes; as the ceremonial side of race relations; as the behavior that is expected and accepted when white and black associate.

[9]Nehemiah Adams, *A Southside View of Slavery*, (Boston, 1854) p. 18; and William Ferguson, *America by River and Rail*, (London, 1856), p. 128.

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mammy" was not entirely tabooed.[10]

Masters were addressed as "massa" or "marster", and mistresses as "missis" by slaves on the plantations and in the homes, but favorite slaves were occasionally granted the privilege of addressing the mistress as "Miss" with the Christian name, or of using "Missy" without the Christian name. The master's children were addressed as "Young Massa" or "Young Miss", perhaps from the cradle.

"Mistis", "Madam" or "Captain" and "Boss" were forms widely used by slaves to address white persons with whom they were not intimately acquainted, and whom they met publicly. "Buckra", or the variant, "Buckraman", were forms employed by slaves of the South Carolina Sea Islands to refer to non-slave-owning white men; and "poor white trash", or "mean white men", were widely used to refer to poorer white persons.

Ceremonial forms were also a part of the equipment of white persons used to address, and to refer to Negroes, slave and free. "Mammy" was perhaps the title of highest respect bestowed upon slaves, with "uncle" and "auntie" ranging respectively a shade lower[11] "Old man"—not referring to age—and "daddy" seemed to be a bit more respectful than just the Christian name, which was generally used, and "boy" or "girl" when used in terms of address seemed to border on familiarity, although they were also used as terms of reference. Legal records of the colonial period refer to "Negro Sam" or "Negro Mary" where slaves are mentioned at all, with the "N" widely capitalized until about the middle of the nineteenth century. Yet, the literature of the entire period is replete with "nigger" used as a form of address, as a term of reference, as a noun, and as an adjective.

If, having addressed one another in appropriate ways, a conversation were necessary between a white person and a slave, the latter either removed his hat, or touched it, as though he might remove it, at the end of every sentence. If he had no hat, he pulled at his forelock, kept his eyes on the ground while the conversation lasted, and uttered "sir" or "ma'am" at least once in every complete sentence.

On the plantation or farm, and

[10]T. D. Ozanne, *The South As It Is, or Twenty-one Years' Experience in the Southern States,* (London, 1863), pp. 75-76; Thomas N. Page, *The Old South; Essays Social and Political,* (New York, 1892), 165; F. L. Olmsted, *A Journey Through the Seaboard Slave States,* (New York, 1861), Vol. I, p. 150; F. D. Srygley, *Seventy Years in Dixie,* (Nashville, 1891), p. 48; Frances Anne Kemble, *Journal of Residence on a Georgia Plantation in 1838-1839,* (New York, 1863), p. 59; Frederick Bremer, *Homes of the New World,* (New York, 1853), Vol. II, p. 99.

[11]Not all old slaves were so addressed. The terms carried with them something of respect, of dignity, and frequently of responsibility. See: W. R. Vance, *Slavery in Kentucky,* (Lexington, Va., 1895), p. 62; R. R. Moton, *What the Negro Thinks,* (Garden City, New York, 1929), p. 190; Ingraham, *op. cit.,* p. 68; Hundley, *op. cit.,* p. 88; J. D. Long, *Pictures of Slavery in State Church,* (Philadelphia, 1857), p. 21.

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within the home, or "big house" other forms appeared. "No slave," says Steward, "was ever allowed to sit down in the presence of master or mistress."[12] If he were sitting when addressed, he would stand; and, if out of doors, would remove his hat. The errand-boy stood behind the master's chair; and the waiters or waitresses, of course, stood while serving meals.

Although intercourse was not prohibited between master and slave in the "big house" and though white persons might, in the presence of slaves, discuss their own or some particular slaves, yet, except infrequently, the good servant did not initiate a conversation, nor enter into one, unless first addressed.[13]

On the small farms, and perhaps in the case of house servants on the large plantation, slaves ate in the kitchen. On the large plantations, there was perhaps a cook-house for the field hands, or they might be expected to prepare their own meals in their cabins. On the larger estates, master and mistress visited the slave cabins or "quarters" on Sunday; while the children might visit some favored slave in the quarters at any time. The ceremonial character of the visit is attested to be a frequent giving, and an occasional interchanging of gifts, such as cakes, eggs, and the like.

The etiquette was apparently more precise when it came to matters of contact in the pastimes of hunting and fishing. At these times, status was indicated by who rode a horse, a colt, or a mule, and who walked; or who walked first and who walked last.[14]

When Christmas came to the plantation a set of forms, adequate for the occasion, were observed. The time for celebration, while not uniform, generally lasted "as long as the yule log burned". At any rate, on Christmas day, it was the custom to surprise another by calling "Christmas gift" before the other could say it. The one who first called must then receive a present. Holding this in mind, the slaves would lie in wait, in order to pounce upon the first white person and to call "Christmas gift." If they received small gifts, they would respond by bowing, by pulling at their hats, or by pulling the forelock. In some localities the slaves would line up to receive gifts of knives, tobacco, dolls, handkerchiefs, pieces of money, and occasionally such useful articles as shoes. As each slave received his present, he would call out, "Merry Christmas." After luncheon, a meal would be served for the slaves in the back yard, at which the master's family would be interested spectators. The latter, however, would stand while the slaves sat, or vice versa.

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[12]Austin Steward, *Twenty-Two Years a Slave and Forty Years a Freeman* (Rochester, 1857) p. 26. See also J. W. Loguen, *As a Slave and a Freeman* (Syracuse, 1859) p. 154.

[13]*Cf.* Harriet Martineau, *Society in America,* (New York, 1837), Vol. I, p. 123. Olmsted, *Seaboard States*, etc., Vol. I, 49-50; Ferguson, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

[14]See Ingraham, *op. cit.*, p. 26; and Hundley, *op. cit.*, pp. 33, 37.

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If the slaves wished to hold either a picnic, or a barbecue, or to combine business with pleasure at a corn-husking, they first sought the master's permission. If the answer were favorable, they invited the master and his family to attend, and reserved seats for them at the grounds. Before the actual festivities began, the slaves would march by the master, perhaps for inspection, and during the procession or festivities, would find some occasion to extol the master's virtues, perhaps by an extemporaneous song. When the time came to dine the white persons present, who either stood while the slaves sat, or vice versa, were served first; visiting slaves were served next, house slaves next, and field hands last of all.

House-servants seemed generally to attend the weddings of their young masters and mistresses. Thus, when a young master, who had married away from home, returned with his bride, he was expected to present her first to his parents, then to his kinspeople, and finally to the house-servants.

Marriage ceremonies were occasionally observed for favored slaves of the household, although it appears that such unions were neither legally binding nor recognized. However, whether a slave married or was merely *joined*, the first step was to procure the master's permission. If the slave, bride or groom, were a house servant, the young men and women of the master's family would assume charge of the proceedings, frequently providing suitable finery for the groom, or making a trousseau for the bride, and occasionally bedecking her at the ceremony with the family jewels.[15] For the actual "ceremony" the slaves would appear at the Great House, where the ceremony might be said by a white minister, or a colored minister, or by the master, in the dining-room or hall. After the ceremony, a wedding supper might be held on the back porch, or in the kitchen, and occasionally there would be a dance, on the back porch.

Field hands seemed not to fare so well as house servants in this matter. They were *married* in the cabins or quarters, by the master, or by a colored preacher. One master in performing the ceremony used an "old copy of an English reader" for a prayer-book; another said:

> 'Come on in de house chillum.' . . . He set down an' look at us. 'Now,' he say, 'I don' want no fussin' ner fightin.' De way ter live happy is ter be forgivin' an' not start no ruckus. I hopes you have a long life togedder, an' if'n de Lawd send little niggers, dey'll be mos' welcome.'[16]

On the larger plantations, perhaps, even this latter procedure was neglected, and the slaves needed to resort to the "blanket-

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[15] See, on the point, James B. Avirett, *The Old Plantation; How We Lived in Great House and Cabin Before the War* (New York, 1901), p. 124; W. L. Flemming, Home Life in Alabama During the Civil War, *Southern History Association Publications*, VIII (1904), p. 99; Ingraham, *op. cit.*, 144; Page, *op. cit.*, p. 183; MacDonald, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

[16] O. K. Armstrong, *Old Massa's People* (Indianapolis, 1931), p. 164.

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wedding." This type of "marriage" was described by one slave as follows: "We come togedder in de same cabin an' she brings her blanket and lays it down sides mine, an' we gits married dat way."[17]

If, on the other plantations where there was more or less intimate relationship, the owner were perchance sick unto death, the slaves would be called to the bedside to receive a parting blessing and to bid the master, or perhaps the mistress, farewell. After death came, the slaves might attend the master's funeral, but favored places in the procession or at the service would be given to the house servants.

However, when a slave died, a colored or white minister might officiate at the services, and occasionally both racial groups might attend. The slave was then buried in a section reserved for slaves—on the plantation in the "plantation" cemetery," but in "slave cemeteries" in the cities.[18]

One interesting development of ceremonial observances came in the association of whites and blacks in matters of religion. From 1619 to about 1641, while indenture was becoming slavery, Negroes who were baptized and who thus became Christians were released from such slavery as then existed for the current belief was that Christians could not rightfully, nor righteously, be enslaved. Later, however, the notion developed that bondage was a small price for the Negro to pay for the benefits of Christianity. Baptism, formerly a means of mamumission, then became merely a preliminary to membership in the churches.

It thus happened, that, through the eighteenth century, though the development is difficult to trace, Negroes were generally attached to churches or denominations, in which might be also found white persons.[19] By the beginning of the nineteenth century, they were members of churches along with and frequently in greater numbers than white people, and were also found in separate organizations.[20]

Good form seemed to require separation of the racial groups in the church services proper. In the older and more established churches, perhaps, such as the Episcopalian, the Negroes sat in the galleries; while on the other hand, and until the insurrection of Nat Turner, about 1831, separation was generally not practiced in the churches affiliated with the Methodist and Baptist denominations. By 1835, race distinctions were clear, for slaves might be seen seated in galleries, or at the

[17]J. Redpath, *The Roving Editor, or Talks with Slaves in the Southern States*, (New York, 1859), p. 164.

[18]See Phillip A. Bruce, *An Economic History of Virginia in the 17th Century*, etc., (New York, 1896), Vol. II, pp. 38-39. Legislative provision to the effect that no slave should be buried in a private place, "but in public cemeteries provided for the purpose," for example, was found in Virginia as early as 1664.

[19]See W. M. Gewehr, *The Great Awakening in Virginia* (Durham, N.C., 1930) pp. 72, 237, 249.

[20]The literature on this point is voluminous, but see C. G. Woodson, *The History of the Negro Church* (Washington, 1921), *passim.*

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sides of churches, in separate sections, and occasionally even in separate churches.

Generally the whites and blacks partook of the Lord's Supper separately, and were also baptized separately, although in the latter ceremony, at least until Negro preachers were ordained, white ministers officiated. However, before a slave was baptized he needed to obtain permission from his master. Christening and naming of slave babies, by white persons, was not an unheard of phenomenon. In fact, some observers seem to believe that many classic, if not serio-comic, appellations of Negroes—such as Plato, Lily, Madame de Stael—were acquired in this manner.

How slaves were received as members into the churches of mixed membership is not clear. In the instance related by Frederick Douglass, of his conversion in a camp-meeting, he came from behind the minister—where the slaves *stood*—and stopped, *still standing,* half-way to the "mourners" pen, where white converts *sat.*

As slaves became members of the regularly established churches in increasing numbers, there grew up, in the cities especially, the practice of holding separate services for white and black members. At first special services for slaves were held by the white minister in the white church; but later, separate churches for slaves were established with white pastors. The latter development, however, tended to be an outgrowth of an organization of slaves within the general church, in which the slaves exercised much the same powers over their members as did the white persons over their members. Complete separation ensued when slaves were assigned to separate churches, over which Negro ministers officiated. This situation was generally, but not altogether, delayed until after 1865.

Negro ministers were perhaps not accepted in large numbers until after the beginning of the nineteenth century. In some instances, they were "graduates" of the plantation, where they had either been supervised or subject to the censorship of the master, or, in other instances were talented persons who had, in company with some white person, previously travelled about preaching to white and black alike; although in many instances they spoke only to white audiences. As a matter of fact, unless a Negro preacher had some white person to "speak for him," and to guarantee his orthodoxy, it appears that he might be whipped or otherwise punished.[20a]

Separate phases of this development appear, about 1858, in Macon, Georgia, where according to report there were three churches for Negroes—one of which had a white minister, the others Negro ministers. Moreover, the congregation with the white minister was pay-

[20a] F. L. Ilmsted, *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States; with Remarks on their Economy,* (New York, 1856), ii, 34-35.

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ing him a regular salary and had erected and paid for its building.

In formal and public relations, forms were sufficiently distinct to be noted. White persons and slaves seldom, almost never, walked in public together. Yet, it appears, free Negroes were not always required to observe the rule. Meeting a white person on the street, Negroes, as in Richmond, Virginia, were "required to give the wall," and if necessary to get off the walk into the street. However, even though Negroes did not get off the walk, white persons were not expected to push them off. Public conversation was also thought improper unless the relationship between white and black were known as that of master and slave. Moreover, the responsibility of beginning a conversation always rested with the white person.

On the other hand, evidence appears that Negroes frequently served as musicians for dances and balls given by white people. Others might even attend, and stand around on the floor, or at the windows. Body-servants occasionally attended their masters and mistresses to the theatres. Public funerals of local or national characters would witness a gathering of both whites and blacks.

Travel conditions of the period were not so complex as they were later. Moreover, slaves seldom had any occasion to travel, and practically none to travel alone. The private travelling arrangement of a large slaveowner throws some light on the general situation. In this case Negro outriders would come first, then the master, later the family carriage, and behind that slaves ranged in the order of their status, with the most lowly, of course, bringing up the rear.

On the stage-coaches, until about the fourth decade of the nineteenth century, Negroes rode inside unless the coach was overcrowded with white people. On the trains, body-servants and occasionally free Negroes rode in the "first-class", or "ladies' coach," but unattached slaves rode in the "second-class" car next to the engine, along with smokers from the ladies' car. The evidence, not precise and taken for what it is worth, indicates that there were no special accommodations in stations and depots for Negroes.

On the steamboats, of which there were many during the period of slavery, white persons of the wealthier classes commonly rode on the main deck, while slaves and poorer whites commonly rode "forward of the shaft" or on a lower deck. A body-servant could, however, remain on the main deck with his owner, and might sleep outside the owner's cabin door. Free Negroes rode on the main deck, but were apparently not given staterooms in which to sleep. In one instance, they seemed to sleep on the floor of the lounging room.

Meals on a steamboat brought all the matter of rank and precedence to the fore. At this time the captain and white passengers would dine first; after them came the white members of the crew,

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and then the Negro crew members and slaves. Free Negroes offered a problem in such circumstances. In one instance, since they could neither dine with free whites nor slave blacks, they took their meals in the pantry. In another instance, they dined after the white crew but before the Negro crew.

Clothing as a class distinction, and considered as a derived form of etiquette, showed inter-, and intra-group delineation. The slave's outer garments were commonly made of cotton osnaburg, known as "Negro cloth." In very few inventories of slave clothing was underclothing mentioned at all. Slave children, some thought, ran around naked until later they were given a "negro shirt,"—described as a "cross between a gent's undergarment and an ordinary potato-bag."

When dey big 'nough ter put on *anything*, it's a shirt. Boys and gals de same. Run 'roun in dat shirt-tail. Some de gals tie belt 'round de middle, and dat's de only diffrunce. . . . Dis hyar shu't wuh made jes like a sach. Got hole in de top fo' de haid, an' holes fo' de arms. Pull it ovah youah haid, push yo' arms t'rough de side holes, and dar yo' is.[21]

In the cities, however, slaves generally dressed in the cast-off clothing of white persons, or occasionally purchased clothing for themselves. Olmsted remarks that "the finest French clothes, embroidered waistcoats, patent leather shoes, brooches, silk hats, kid gloves, and *eau mille fleurs*"[22] were by no means absent. Livery, in the instances where it was used at all, was generally confined to the cities.

The city slave also enjoyed a degree of association with white persons quite different from the field hand. Masters, in the cities and towns, frequently owned more servants than they could profitably employ at household tasks. These latter were often allowed to "hire themselves" to persons who either needed more help, or to persons who, unable to purchase their own slaves, nevertheless sought the status of slave-owners. When persons are mobile, as in the city, relations are more impersonal. Again, attempts to maintain social distance and to preserve the superficial signs of status evoke newer and more multiplied forms. These reasons, among others perhaps, explain why the etiquette of the city and among city slaves was more complex and more formal than that common to the plantation and field hands.

There is reason to believe that cities and towns, during the slave period, contributed more than their share of the free Negro population, and certainly more independent Negroes than the rural sections. Some city slaves learned trades, others engaged in small businesses, or became self-supporting, or accumulated money sufficient to purchase their own freedom or that of some kins-person. These conditions also developed "exceptional slaves"; that is to say, slaves who had achieved independence, if not freedom. From among many in-

[21] Armstrong, *op. cit.* 72-73.

[22] Olmsted, *The Cotton Kingdom*, Vol. I, p. 46 (New York 1861).

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stances, we might mention that one Cato, of Darien, Georgia, was allowed to carry a gun, in violation of the law; C. G. Hall saw a slave, travelling from Montgomery to New Orleans, who "was frequently entrusted with large sums of money and business of importance." One Frank, of Macon, Georgia, "had become rich, was the owner of considerable town property, carried on a mercantile business with great success, and was respected and esteemed by everyone who knew him."[23]

Slaves practiced distinctions and observed an etiquette among themselves. "Uncle" and "Auntie" were, among them, terms of respect, and "de nigger" was a term of contempt. In their own gatherings, they adopted the customary salutations of "sir" and "madam" and referred to themselves as "ladies" and "gentlemen." House servants looked down on field hands, and considered field labor a disgrace. The field hand responded with a defense mechanism of pretending to hate house servants, but considered an assignment to the household as a distinct promotion. Slaves, of whatever rank, considered their lot more perfect in proportion to the wealth and influence of their owners. The status-complex, indicated among the white people where it was said that a judge owned a house with two chimneys, and a colonel owned one with three, was reflected on the plantation where the washerwoman, the cook, the butler and the carriage-driver all had understudies, "to do the dirty work." At White Sulphus Springs, for example, a resort for upper class planters, precedence and rank were seen in the morning airing of babies, where nurses and "mammies" sat on the hotel veranda in order of the social consequence attached to their own owners. At Beaver Dam Springs, in Tennessee, Ingraham observed that:

> After the masters and mistresses have left the dining room, the long table is relaid, and they who whilom served are now feasted. I have been twice to look at them. Not less than one hundred Ethiopian and Nubian ladies and gentlemen were seated in the places occupied an hour before by their masters and mistresses. There were servants of "de lower class,"—scullions, ostlers, and bootblacks,—to wait on them.[24]

Evidence points to the fact that, with the possible exception of certain exceptional slaves who had had contact with abolitionists, or with anti-slavery agitators, the majority of the slaves were thoroughly accommodated to their status as inferiors. Older slaves would show the child "a nigger's place," perhaps through slaps and whipping, but most likely through their own accommodations. In due time the etiquette and status common to slaves would then become entirely accepted.

Yet, the slave was not entirely without controls of his own, nor was he altogether a passive factor in the process of adjustment. Etiquette is in fact a reciprocal act.

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[23]Mrs. A. Royall, The Black Book, Vol. I, p. 110 (Washington, 1830).

[24]J. H. Ingraham, *The Sunny South*, pp. 209-210 (New York, 1854.)

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That is to say, a gesture or an observance on the part of one person calls out the complement of that observance or gesture on the part of the other person. Slaves early learned this, and would either laugh, or grin, when they committed breaches of etiquette, or when they did not know precisely how to act. As a consequence the laugh and grin came to be known as signs of "right attitudes." Likewise, the slave occasionally quoted Scripture to emphasize a point that otherwise would be considered impudent. But, it is in his interest in imitating the manners of white persons, in the incorporation of these forms into his own life, especially in the cities and among the houseservants, that we discern the extent of the assimilation of the slave to the institution of slavery.

Generalizing at this point upon some of the statements and materials hitherto presented, it would seem accurate to state that: (1) There was a code of etiquette in slavery that covered practically the whole of relations existing between persons of the white and Negro groups; (2) The code was different in different places and at different times, and reflected the changes that occurred in the social organization; (3) the forms had become inculcated into the attitudes of both white and black, free and slave, and were generally accepted and expected. To the extent that it was thus universally accepted and universally practiced, we may say that the code exercised a form of social control over interracial relations, and one that Spencer and Sumner were wont to call elementary.

Testing the Control of Etiquette

A test of the foregoing generalizations could be obtained if instances were discovered where etiquette was neglected, was unobserved, or had not developed, between whites and blacks. A situation, where etiquette did not control, is in fact found in the relation of free Negroes with white persons.

The free Negro class had developed from several sources. There were those who had originally served their terms of indenture, and who had left a heritage of freedom to their descendents; others who had acquired freedom by becoming Christians before restrictions were placed upon this course and method; still others who had been manumitted individually or in groups by masters who believed slavery incompatible with the theory of democracy, or with the principles of Christianity. Still others, and perhaps the greatest number, had been manumitted by masters for personal or sentimental reasons,—among which we might mention cohabitation, blood relationship, a feeling that certain individual Negroes were above a slave status, or even a conviction that long and faithful service deserved some reward. As a consequence of these, and other factors, the free Negro class increased constantly in total numbers, if not

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in rate, from 1790 to 1860, and amounted to approximately one-tenth of the Negroes in America at the Emancipation.

When a slave was manumitted, his legal status was fixed, so far as the ex-master was concerned. There remained, however, the definition of his social status, both by himself and by others. Having acquired a new *legal* status, it was natural for the free Negro to see his condition in a new light, and to conceive his adjustments in terms of attitudes adopted by white freemen. On the other hand, it was difficult for white persons to treat him as free; moreover the hostility which ensued was not submerged in any discovered social ritual. "Indeed," says Wright, "if any change at all resulted from the rise of the new class, it caused a more strict definition of class boundaries, a more firm repulsion of the Negro, and an outcasting of any white man who went across to the Negroes."[25]

On the legal side, the restrictions on free Negroes passed by the several state legislatures over the entire period of slavery, and the movements designed to colonize them in Africa or in some separate section of the United States, all attest to the problem created by the rise of the class. The first half of the nineteenth century witnessed a rather continual debasement of the free Negro's legal status to that of the slave. By the later fifties, indeed, the almost universal sentiment was that the class constituted a distinct menace, as criminals, as possible inciters of insurrection, and as object lessons of the benefits, and sometimes of the disadvantages, of freedom for slaves. By indirection, then, we arrive at the conclusion that something was lacking in the relations of free Negroes and white persons that was present in the relations of slaves and white persons. Shall we then assume that the social ritual was the missing factor?

What, then, were the adjustments made by the free Negroes to their anomalous situation? On the one hand, they entered occupations requiring personal service, or became tradesmen, or semi-skilled and, in some instances, even skilled workers. This occupational specialization doubtless relieved the friction that would have resulted had they entered more widely into competitive relations, even provided they had had either means or opportunity. On the other hand, there were the "exceptional" free Negroes who were occasionally teachers, some planters, a physician or so, and several inn-keepers. Some among them, accumulated slaves, and were known as slaveholders, not of kinsmen, but for commercial purposes.

Since however, relations between white and black were largely personal with an etiquette based upon personal relations, free Negroes tended, on the one hand, to settle in communities where white people seldom intruded; or to go, on the other hand, into the cities, where

[25]James M. Wright, *The Free Negro in Maryland,* (New York, 1921) pp. 346-347.

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contacts were more impersonal, and where they could move as symbols, rather than as persons. They could never completely cut off communication and contact with white people. Their presence in the cities, while reducing personal relations to a minimum, nevertheless implied some intimate contacts. The adjustment that was expected of them under such circumstances is expressed in the Black Code of Louisiana as follows:

"Free people of color ought never to presume to conceive themselves equal to the white; but, on the contrary, they ought to yield to them in every occasion, and never speak or answer to them, except with respect."[26]

An analysis of the attitudes of free Negroes, who attained places of respect and influence in communities where they dwelt with white persons, forces upon us the conclusion that they conformed, in spirit, to this code, and that they attained their positions not because they were free, but because they either reverted to, or never departed from, the etiquette considered proper to the association of all white persons with all Negroes, slave or free.[27]

In other words, the free Negro could adjust himself to his new status, either by betaking himself to a place where no white persons were present, or by adopting the etiquette common to slavery, if and when he associated with white persons at all. If he did neither, the only outcome of association with white persons would be friction, disharmony, conflict.

Summarizing, we see the relations and the etiquette commonly accepted between slaves and whites reflected among the free Negroes. We also see further evidence of a caste system sustained by legislation. But, perhaps, what appears most significant is that the Negro was able to adjust himself to circumstances, and to gain a modicum of security and recognition even in the face of excessively restrictive formal regulations. The adjustment—or if you wish, the accommodation—was facilitated when, as, and if, the free Negro retained a conception of himself, and the white man's conception of him, as subordinate in the social scale. The adjustment, generally present when the etiquette of race relations was resorted to, or absent when it was not utilized, might then be understood as a function of that etiquette.

But, perhaps in view of the purposes at hand, and considering the confusion that resulted from attempts of white persons and free Negroes to accommodate themselves to the anomalous situation, what is more significant is that we begin to arrive at a conception of the problem that arose later, when, by emancipation, all Negroes had become free; and when *presumably*, the moral controls of the

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[26] G. McD. Stroud, *A Sketch of the Laws Relating to Slavery in the Several States* (Philadelphia, 1827), p. 68. The original is found in *Martin's Digest*, I, 640-642.

[27] The evidence, while not cited here, for reasons of brevity, is sufficiently general to warrant the conclusion, and will perhaps be published in another form soon.

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slave had been superseded by legal and political enactments.

The last generalization may be further elaborated. We might, to the already numerous and confusing interpretations of the period of Reconstruction, add another to the effect that the period, stripped of its legal and political implications, was one in which adjustment between the races could, and did, not proceed for the reason that (1) the controls, characteristic of ceremonial government, had been overthrown and (2) that no basic controls had replaced them. Negroes seemed to believe that change in legal or political status was synonymous with, and equivalent to, change in social status. Southern white people, on the other hand, generally denied the assumption. No basis of agreement was reached until the Negro, disillusioned with his freedom, began to revert to the attitudes and the etiquette that had been characteristic of slavery; and that seem to be characteristic of social relations wherever social superior and social inferior meet.

Thenceforward, to compress a period of history into one sentence, interracial friction has been relieved by the simple process of reverting to the etiquette of the period of slavery. Where this adjustment has been accomplished relative harmony prevails. In those instances where etiquette has not developed, or where for whatever reason it is neglected, friction, and occasionally conflict, arises.

Interrelation of Etiquette and Education

Considering the facts and interpretations so far advanced, the question arises whether or not formal education, recognizing a code of interracial etiquette that is based upon the assumption of the inferiority of the Negro, should attempt to offer substitutes. The question becomes important in proportion as the notion of innate inferiority of races is rejected,[28] or as it is recognized that increasingly large numbers of Negroes become restive when social inferiority is assumed. Stated, for example, as a phase of the "cardinal principles of secondary education" the question would be: should education seek to undermine, or to strengthen the etiquette of race relations in order to develop high citizenship and ethical character? Efforts to answer the question must inevitably seek to rationalize values, may lead to prophecy, and undoubtedly will arouse controversy.

However, among the arguments advanced to support the question, there is the thesis which regards education as a means of providing techniques with which to meet the conditions of life. Those who accept this philosophy seem also to admit that the present code offers a definite handicap to Negroes who would improve their social status. Moreover, they point out that Negroes should be prepared for the good life, and should be taught

[28]See: Otto Klineberg, *Race Differences*. (New York, 1935), pp. 341-349.

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racial self respect and race consciousness. In no way, they say, might these objectives be attained more quickly than in a complete overthrow of any system that proposed to keep Negroes in a permanently inferior position.

Education from this point of view, should evaluate the *status quo* and should indicate the positively hurtful, or dangerous, social tendencies. Social planning, as an outgrowth of education, could then develop a rational statesmanship for race problems that confront us. Since appreciation of the worth of the individual is a cardinal principle of education and a value of American society, education should then seek to obliterate artificial differences among men, and to change the attitudes that have arisen to fortify the belief in differences. Recognizing these goals education will go far toward realizing the democratic social order to which we already lay claim.

A more militant stand holds that recognition of Negroes as equals of all other racial groups should be forced. If then in the social organization inequality of the Negro is assumed, Negro students should read Negro history, should study and interpret the Constitution, and should acquire in these ways a sense of race pride, and a familiarity with the devices that may be used to force equality before the law. Although this philosophy takes no direct stand on etiquette, it seems to hold that, along with all other assumptions of inferiority, the interracial code should be changed, if not actually overthrown.

Advocates remind us that etiquette is taught in the "finishing" schools. Then they ask: "If etiquette can be taught in one type of institution, why not in another? Why then should not all schools seek to teach a new code of manners, especially when it may be admitted that such a code would effect more amicable interracial relations?"

There is some disagreement among the proponents of this latter point of view. However, Negroes seem generally to expect the reorganization of etiquette to begin in the colleges—those institutions that propose, and are expected, to furnish leadership for the Negro group. Since college-trained persons are those from whom complaints on the score generally come, and if those who would be free must themselves strike the blow, there seems to be ground for the contention that colleges, so far as educational institutions attempt such at all, should make the first assault upon inferior status.

In this regard, however, it must be noted that Negroes exhibit mutually antagonistic attitudes. When and if college students show any desire or tendency to break away from custom, it is quickly charged that colleges are radical and that students are irresponsible. On the other hand, those same people who make these charges, also presume to believe that only through the efforts of the intelligentsia—college students and graduates—will

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there come any assault upon the customs that bind them to an inferior status. Occasional complaints decry the conformist tendency in Negro colleges. The objection is offered that these latter teach the same subjects in the same way as the white colleges when, as a matter of racial necessity, they should be preparing Negroes to break the chains of social thralldom.

Taking the opposite view, however, there are those who point out that the etiquette of race relations is "in the mores"; that the mores change slowly; and that they perhaps cannot be changed at all by taking thought.[29] The implication of this point of view, occasionally coming by actual declaration, seems to be that there is little that education can do to answer the question of etiquette in interracial relations. Some advocates go so far as to show that with all the schools in America, the code of etiquette and relations of the races are about what they would be if there were no schools at all.

Still others have indicated that the mores, when they change at all, do so as a result of some change already inaugurated in the field of material culture. Indeed, Ogburn points out that change in the material culture precedes change in the non-material culture, of which latter etiquette is a part. Moreover, he shows that a "cultural lag" exists since industrial and economic development not only precede, but also outstrip, development in the social attitudes and organization.[30] If then, as indicated by this theory, a change of status for groups might result from invention more frequently than from education and legislation, it could readily be conceded that the invention of a new machine—say the cottonpicker—might effect greater changes in the status of the Negro than college degrees, or even a congressional enactment.

A corollary of this hypothesis is that conscious attempts to change the mores generally result in revolution.[31] There then remain two possible courses of action: (1) to expect inventions, when and as they come, to effect changes in the social order; or (2) to seek to change conditions immediately, and thus bring about revolution.

The social psychologists insist, however, that education brings new status. Moreover, when a person attains a new status, he experiences changes in attitudes. In consequence he expects no longer to be bound by an old code of social relationships, but adopts newer forms toward others, and expects them to use different forms toward him. Hence, this theory goes: when a Negro has become educated, and has attained a new status, old forms reminiscent of an inferior status will neither be used by, nor toward, him; and his status will be a function of his change in attitude, or vice versa.

[29]See a particularly illuminating statement to this effect in Sumner's *Folkways* (New York, 1910), pp. 77-78.

[30]W. F. Ogburn, *Social Change* (New York, 1922) passim.

[31]L. P. Edwards, *The Natural History of Revolution* (Chicago, 1927) p. 8.

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The explanation is, however, too simple. Says Park:

> As far as the South is concerned, it is where racial prejudices and the social order which they perpetuated, are breaking down that racial animosities are most intense. It is when the Negro invades a new region that a race riot occurs; it is when he seeks a new place in a new profession or new occupation that he meets the most vigorous opposition; it is when he seeks to assume a new dignity that he ceases to be quaint and becomes ridiculous.[32]

Wrenched from its background, this statement may be taken to mean that, to the extent that it breaks down the social order, or gives Negroes new conceptions of themselves, or stimulates competition, or changes the status of Negroes, education will result in widespread racial animosity, and perhaps in racial conflict.

The effect is occasionally noted when Negroes take only a normal interest in changing their social status. But when education does cause a Negro to become "bumptious," "arrogant," or "contentious," it is confidently expected that race conflict will result. If then both a non-assertive, and a "bumptious" Negro may stimulate race friction, by seeking a changed status, and even though neither is *taught* to neglect the interracial etiquette, friction may be expected to be increased by teaching them to neglect the expected and accepted forms. Those who hold this latter view occasionally suggest that the lesson of the Reconstruction Period and race relations has been lost.

Finally, it is shown, etiquette is a form of social control. Developing unconsciously, it comes to be accepted and expected in the association of social beings, and eventually exerts a very effective control over the relations of groups and individuals. Persons who behave in entirely undetermined ways, are considered insane and are institutionalized; children who have not learned what is expected are tolerated; boors, who neglect the etiquette, are shunned; and rebels who disparge the code, are suppressed. These are normal results and expectations in the world of men, for when persons act in ways that cannot be understood, communication is broken, adjustment is hampered, and confusion results. Considering these hypotheses, then, conscious disregard of the etiquette of racial relations may generally be expected to bring confusion, and perhaps conflict, between the two groups in America.

Moreover, men become free by observing the forms of behavior expected of them. Having done what is expected, they may think what they please, and they may, in fact, use the etiquette as a mask to hide what they are thinking. It then becomes no longer necessary to know what to think, but only what to do. Hence, having learned what to do through long drill, men may apply their minds to other problems even while they are associating together.

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[32] R. E. Park, Bases of Race Prejudice, *Annals*, CXXX (Nov. 1929) p. 15.

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Lastly, no person who is party to an interchange of social gestures has less control than any other, for the association is reciprocal, and effects adjustment in the interest both of peace and of harmony. Again, the forms of behavior expected of, and exhibited with regard to, a person are a function of his status. If then he has control; if securing of status precedes change in forms, the man who wishes to change the forms will consider the loss of control that he will suffer when and if he seeks to change these before he gains a new status. In other words, if through education, the status of the Negro were changed, a change in the etiquette of race relations would be expected to follow. We may not expect a change in the status of the Negro from a change in etiquette.

Conclusion

A solution of the difficulty encountered in postulating a philosophy of the relation of education and etiquette, especially with regard to the Negro in America, seems then to be impossible. A summary of the phases of the code, and a study of the development, show (1) that, over a period of over three hundred years, an etiquette of race relations has governed the association of Negroes and white persons; and (2) that the etiquette has, in some respects, changed but that in many other respects it remains practically intact. The basis of the code is admittedly the inferiority of the Negro, and the superiority of the white group. A change would in many ways be acceptable, and in many other ways would be desirable. However, if one advocates conscious change in the etiquette, one looks down a road that bristles with friction, conflict, perhaps revolution. If one accept the situation, expecting that, as always, it will take a change for the better, one seems to adopt too fatalistic an attitude. One certainly does in that way deny the claims of Negroes, who, having become both race conscious and self-conscious, chafe under the status of inferiority in a land of democracy. The weight of evidence seems to be with Sumner and Spencer, but the claim of humanity seems to be with the Negroes. The solution of the matter is doubtless a matter of social philosophy, and one that must be rationalized in terms of circumstance, necessity, and social progress. Until this is done, and in the presence of the two opposing views, one can only emulate the farmer who sought to select the shell under which there was a pea. He was invited to "pay your money, and take your choice."

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