DESEGREGATION: A PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS[1]

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I WANT to talk with you about a psychologist's view of a major social change which is taking place in this country. I am referring to the series of events in the South which have followed the Supreme Court's decisions against segregation in public schools.

As *citizens* we may consider the Court's rulings wise or unwise, we may applaud or condemn specific actions taken in the South, we may find the ferment and the turmoil and the apparently inconsistent reactions in the South fascinating or confusing, or both. But as *psychologists* our approach must be to consider, on the one hand, whether our available knowledge can contribute to an understanding of what is going on, and, on the other hand, to seek in the changing situation opportunities for research which will increase our understanding of the process of change in relations between social groups.

I believe that even in the present rather primitive state of social psychology, we do have knowledge which would suggest a different interpretation of events than everyday common sense provides. Take, for instance, the recent vote in Virginia, in which residents of that state, by a two-to-one majority, approved a plan which will make possible the transformation of public schools into what are technically private schools in order to evade the Supreme Court ruling. A correspondent of the *New York Times,* in commenting on the vote, drew the conclusion that much of the South will not accept racially integrated schools and that desegregation there will have to be a slow evolutionary process. I am doubtful that this is the correct interpretation; I will shortly suggest another possibility.

Or—what about the school strikes? During the first weeks of desegregation in Washington and in Baltimore white children went on strike. Does this bode ill for future relations between white and Negro students in desegregated schools in those communities? The obvious interpretation is that the students struck because of their antagonism to association with Negroes. But is this interpretation correct?

And, on a much larger scale—what are the long-range implications of the fact that schools are being desegregated in many communities, and probably sooner or later throughout the South? Many interpreters have seen in this event the beginning of the end of racial segregation in the South. How realistic an expectation is this?

I don't know, with any certainty, the answers to these questions. In fact, my main argument is going to be that the significance of the Supreme Court's decision, from the standpoint of a *science of psychology,* is that it provides a rare opportunity to acquire more of the kind of knowledge we need in order to make better interpretations of such matters than is now possible.

First, however, I want to indicate that I think we already know enough to suggest alternative—though not necessarily correct—interpretations for each of the points I have just mentioned.

Take the Virginia vote. My expectation would be that when school desegregation does take place in Virginia it will be with as little unpleasantness as there has been in places like Washington, Baltimore, and St. Louis, which have already undergone desegregation. I do not mean to say that I doubt that the people of Virginia are opposed to desegregation; on the contrary, I think the vote is a very clear expression of that opposition. But I do not think it provides a basis for predicting what their behavior will be when school desegregation is initiated. I would guess that, if similar votes had been taken in other communities before desegregation was started, the balloting would have been about the same.

I base my interpretation on a number of studies which suggest that, in the area of race relations, stated opinion is frequently not a reliable basis for prediction of behavior. The classic example, of course, is the study in which LaPiere (6), after traveling throughout the United States with a Chinese couple, wrote to the hotels and restaurants which they had visited, asking if the establishment

[1] Address of the President at the annual meeting of the New York State Psychological Association, New York, New York, January 28, 1956.

would accept Chinese as guests. What he found was that over 90 per cent of the respondents (all of whom actually had served the Chinese couple) said they would not do so. Saenger's (9) interviews with white women in New York City made the same point. Individuals who had been seen buying goods from Negro salesgirls denied that they would do so.

As it happens, we have *direct* evidence that stated opposition to school desegregation in Southern communities does not necessarily lead to hostile *action* once desegregation has been initiated.

For example, Bower and Walker (1) in interviews with a cross section of the population of Washington, D.C., in June, 1954, found that 52 per cent of the white respondents thought the Supreme Court decision was bad, only 24 per cent thought it was good, and another 24 per cent was neutral. In other words, among those who had definite opinions, feeling was two to one against the decision—the same proportion as the Virginia vote. Yet desegregation took place the following fall. According to Bower and Walker, the first gradual change-over worked so well that the school superintendent decided to speed the process a bit and authorized a large-scale transfer: at this point there was a brief strike by junior and senior high school students, which collapsed after a few days when it received little support from the adult community. Except for this brief strike, desegregation proceeded without incident. When the same sample of respondents were reinterviewed toward the end of the school year, even among those who had disapproved of the Supreme Court decision, 39 per cent conceded that desegregation was going "very well" or "fairly well," and only 29 per cent said it was going "not so well" or "badly."

Or take the story of Tucson, Arizona, as reported by Edward and Marianne Dozier in *Schools in Transition,* a series of community studies edited by Williams and Ryan (12). In the spring of 1950 a bill to make school desegregation compulsory was presented directly to the voters of the state, and was rejected. During this election the Tucson superintendent of schools publicly supported the bill; he received a number of anonymous letters and telephone calls condemning his stand. A year later the state legislature passed a bill permitting desegregation, but not requiring it. The Tucson schools were desegregated at the beginning of the next school term—and at this time there was no public protest from anyone in the community. Other examples of this same sort could be cited.

As for the school strikes—my guess is that, far from being an omen of continuing trouble, they will leave almost no trace. I would predict that if after a few months you looked at interracial associations and attitudes within the schools in towns in which there had been strikes and others which desegregated at the same time without any student strikes, you would find few, if any, differences. I base this interpretation not only on the principle I mentioned in connection with the Virginia vote—that expressed opposition is not necessarily a reliable indicator of future behavior—but on a question as to whether strikes really do reflect widespread student opposition to desegregation. Two of the most widely publicized strikes have been in Washington and Baltimore. But in Washington only 2 per cent, and in Baltimore only 3 per cent, of the total student body stayed out of school. Bower, Walker, and Mendelsohn (1, 7) interviewed 100 student strikers in Washington and concluded, briefly, that "nothing specific seemed to have started the strike and students participated mostly because other students were in it." Although the strikers repeated rumors about attacks by Negroes on white students, when they were asked what made them stay out of school, the most frequent answer did not refer to the ostensible issues but to the influence of their friends and schoolmates. Many were carrying schoolbooks and lunch boxes, and had clearly set out for school as usual; they were drawn into the strike along the way, and one may speculate that they participated as much for the adventure as for reasons having to do with segregation or desegregation.

What about the expectation that the end of school segregation will lead to sweeping changes in the pattern of race relations in the South—and, specifically, that it will mean the end of all segregation? In expressing some reservations about this I do not mean for one moment to underestimate the importance of the Supreme Court decisions; I share the general judgment that they constitute a major historic event. But I think there is a tendency to overestimate the probable effects of the change in school patterns, both among liberals who *hope* that desegregation of schools will lead to desegregation in all aspects of life, and among many Southerners who *fear* that it will. One of the clearest findings of studies of the relation between intergroup contact and attitude change is that, while individuals rather

quickly come to accept and even approve of association with members of another social group in situations of the type where they have experienced such association, this approval is not likely to be generalized to other situations unless the individuals have quite close personal relationships with members of the other group. Thus, for example, Harding and Hogrefe (4) found that white salesgirls in Philadelphia department stores who worked in departments where there were Negro salesgirls were more likely than those in all-white departments to express willingness to work with Negroes, but were no more willing to have Negroes as neighbors or as friends. A particularly dramatic example of the extent to which behavior may be limited to a specific situation is Minard's description (8) of a mining community in West Virginia where white and Negro miners work amicably together in mixed teams, sometimes with a Negro supervising white workers, but separate at the mine shaft and lead their above-ground lives in complete segregation—living in separate neighborhoods, eating in separate restaurants, participating jointly in no activities save those in the union hall. And one need only look around any Northern community to see that unsegregated schools do not necessarily lead to unsegregated living.

That this kind of compartmentalization occurs also when schools are newly desegregated is evidenced by the descriptions of a number of border communities, in the Williams and Ryan book (12). In community after community they report that, although relations between white and Negro students within the schools are matter-of-fact and even friendly, the two groups go their separate ways outside of school. The example is given of a white mother, at first reluctant to send her children to a mixed school, who found that her children liked the school and their Negro teachers. She became perfectly tolerant about the classroom situation, but did not want her children to eat in the school cafeteria or play with Negro students off the school grounds. Time will tell, of course, whether over a period of years school desegregation will gradually extend to desegregation in other areas of living, but there seems no reason to expect an immediate sweeping change.

THE NEED FOR AN ANALYTICAL SCHEMA

These few examples are more than enough to show how our present understanding of social relations leads us to question the more obvious common sense interpretations which are usually offered. We look for meanings other than those which appear on the face of things and, by taking a more comprehensive view of the determinants of human action, less often assume direct correspondence between stated opinion and other kinds of behavior. Such an approach suggests alternative and probably more accurate interpretations of specific events. But, to be most useful, psychological science must go beyond explanations of specific phenomena, and provide a schema within which a range of events can be organized and understood. Can social psychology provide such a framework for viewing the present scene?

My answer—as you may guess—is "yes" and "no." To elaborate this, I must distinguish between two aspects of the events following on the Supreme Court decision: first, those having to do with the decision of policy makers whether to accept the Court's ruling and desegregate the schools; second, those having to do with what happens once desegregation has been initiated. On questions of the second sort—the process and the effects of desegregation—we have a considerable body of relevant information, and, I think, the beginnings of an organized analytical approach. Within this schema we have a basis for at least tentative predictions and for identifying with some certainty the kinds of situations in which research could provide answers to crucial questions. On the first aspect—that of the process of deciding whether to desegregate—we have much less to draw upon; I should say we are in a position of having to develop simultaneously both a systematic approach and ways of testing the hypotheses which grow out of this approach.

ATTITUDE CHANGES FOLLOWING INTERGROUP CONTACT

Let me start with the area in which I think our knowledge and our thinking are relatively far along. After the last war, a number of psychologists and sociologists interested in attitude change turned their attention to problems of intergroup relations. They developed a consensus that some of the most important determinants of attitude change toward other social groups were to be found in the experience of face-to-face contact with members of those groups. At first, they tended to the optimistic view that such personal contact with members of

another group was sure to be a powerful influence toward *favorable* attitude change.

However, in spite of the considerable number of studies which found such a relationship, some did not. A much earlier study by Horowitz (5)—and one of the most interesting in the present context—had already reported that attitudes toward Negroes of white boys in racially mixed schools in New York City differed little from attitudes of white boys in segregated schools in Tennessee and in Georgia.

Additional research on the relationship between intergroup contact and changes in attitude gave rise to a variation of the old chicken-and-egg question: A number of studies had found contact with members of an ethnic group other than one's own associated with favorable attitudes toward that ethnic group. But which came first—the contact or the favorable attitude? This methodological difficulty led to an interest in situations of so-called involuntary contact—on the job, in public housing, in the armed forces, etc.—that is, in situations where the individual is in a setting where there are members of another social group, but he is there not because of a desire to associate with that group but because of a strong push or pull from some other source.

Also, it proved helpful to distinguish between mere physical presence of members of different ethnic groups in a common situation, on the one hand, and the occurrence of interaction between them, on the other. We are now thinking in terms of the following schema: Individuals from two ethnic groups encounter one another involuntarily in some situation. This encounter may or may not lead to interaction, depending on the characteristics of the individuals involved and on the nature of the situation. When it does, the interaction may vary in amount and quality and this variation, in turn, influences the type of attitude change which takes place.

The influence of conditions under which contact occurs. When we raise the question, "What does the nature of the contact situation have to do with the outcome of the experience?", the need to identify the dimensions in terms of which contact situations can be described becomes apparent.

Here are three examples of what I mean. One of the characteristics of a contact situation is the extent to which it offers the opportunity for the participants to get to know one another—labeled, for short, its *acquaintance potential.* There is great variation in the extent to which the characteristics of individuals are revealed during contact. You may encounter an elevator operator, for example, twice a day for years, without communication about anything other than the weather. A contrasting situation—that of living as neighbors—does not impose comparable limitations on the areas over which communication may take place and individuality emerge.

A second characteristic of contact situations has to do with the way in which they define the *relative status* of participants belonging to the two ethnic groups. For example, in a given work situation, Negroes may have only menial jobs while white persons are in skilled or supervisory positions; in another work situation, Negroes and whites may be doing the same kinds of jobs.

My third example of a dimension along which contact situations differ involves the nature of the *social norm* toward contact of one ethnic group with another. In some situations, the general expectation of persons in authority and of most of the participants may be that friendly association between members of the two groups is appropriate; in other situations, even though for some reason members of the two groups are present, the general feeling on the part of at least one of the groups may be that any unnecessary mingling should be avoided.

I have time this afternoon to examine the implications of only one of these three concepts for our thinking about the outcomes of desegregation in the public schools of the South—the social norm regarding interaction with the other group. Several studies have pointed to the significance of this variable.

Thus, Minard (8), in the study I have already mentioned of the behavior of white workers in coal mines where they worked with Negroes on an unsegregated basis, and of the same workers in the segregated communities where the mines were located, estimated that about three-fifths of the men adapted their behavior, without apparent conflict, to the generally accepted practices in the specific situation—even to the extent of sitting next to Negroes in the mine bus but sitting in the white section when they transfer to the public bus.

The perceived norm with regard to contact also has wider effects. In a study of relationships within biracial public housing projects (13), we found that white housewives differed not only in the extent

of their association with Negroes in the project but in their views as to whether other white women in the project approved of associating with Negroes. We found that those who believed that the other white women in the project approved of such association showed much more favorable attitudes toward Negroes than did those who believed that the other white women disapproved of such association. With minor exceptions, this influence of the perceived social norm showed up regardless of whether the women lived in integrated or in building-segregated projects, or of whether they had much or little contact with Negroes: those who believed the other white women in the project approved of interracial association were more favorable in their attitudes toward Negroes than were the comparable white housewives who thought such association was not approved.

The question may, of course, be raised whether perception of the social climate is not itself a function of one's own attitude. The investigators in this study concluded that, while the white housewife's own attitude might color to some extent her interpretation of the views of other women in the project, on the whole the perceptions of social climate were based on more or less objective evidence.

The cumulative weight of these and other studies highlights the effect of what is generally referred to as the social climate or social atmosphere. What they tell us is that interracial contacts take place in a social context in which the individual is responding not only to persons from another ethnic group but also to what he believes would be judged proper in such relationships by those whose social approval he needs and seeks. This, of course, is a familiar and pervasive characteristic of human behavior. The fact that it operates generally below the level of conscious awareness and is often accompanied by the production of beliefs and feelings which rationalize otherwise incomprehensible behavior gives it a prominent place in the study of social relations.

Nevertheless not enough progress has been made with the task of studying analytically the effect of social climate on the outcomes of intergroup contact. Some effort has been made to identify factors contributing to it. It seems possible to distinguish several components: first, positions taken publicly by individuals or groups who carry an aura of moral authority or of extremely high prestige (for example, the Supreme Court, the President of the United States, church figures); second, the attitudes and behavior of the general population of the community or the region; third, the statements and practices of persons in authority in the particular situation such as the employer or the school superintendent; and fourth, the behavior, expectations, beliefs, etc., of other members of one's own group with whom one is in direct personal association.

It would be of great interest to know, for instance, the relative weight of a position taken by a powerful but distant authority such as the Supreme Court as compared with the norms of the face-to-face group in influencing an individual's reaction to new experiences of interracial contact. And it would be of interest to know what effect a face-to-face group norm that is in conflict with the position taken by the powerful but distant authority has on the interpretation of the latter's action and how this bears on the individual's reaction to novel contact experiences. Do Southerners, for instance, more than others, perceive the anti-segregation decisions as a political—in the low sense of the term—act rather than as a truly juridical one? And do individuals who so perceive the decisions react differently to contact experiences than do those who believe the Supreme Court justices were honestly and faithfully attempting to abide by strictly constitutional considerations?

In cases where the norm of the immediate group differs from that held by the larger population, we need to know which one is more likely to be followed. And, since the other members of one's immediate group in a situation of intergroup contact are themselves subject to the influences of the contact experience, we need to study changes in the face-to-face group norm itself.

The Supreme Court decisions, and the events which have followed them, provide a rare opportunity for studying questions of this sort. We are, in effect, presented with a ready-made laboratory in which, on the one hand, the position of national figures—notably, of course, of the Court itself—has become prominent and is a constant, but where individual communities present a wide range of variation in terms of the position taken by state and city political leaders, local school authorities, and the residents. Studies of border communities in which school desegregation has already taken place, as reported by Williams and Ryan (12), show an enormous range in this respect. In Cairo, Illinois, for instance, desegregation was initiated reluctantly,

as the result of threats that the state would withhold financial aid and of legal action by the NAACP; the local school authorities, apparently the entire white population, and much of the Negro population, appeared to be opposed to desegregation. At the other extreme, Carlsbad, New Mexico, operating under a permissive state law, began to desegregate its schools two years before the Supreme Court decision was actually handed down. All important segments of the community seemed to support the move. The superintendent of schools advocated it; the board of education favored the change on the basis of monetary savings; teachers and principals, on the whole, were not opposed; the Ministerial Alliance cooperated; community leaders in general took the position that times were changing, and "we might as well go along with it since we can't stop it"; the white high school students voted for integration at the high school level. There are still other communities—such as Hoxie, Arkansas—where the school authorities favor desegregation on economic grounds but general community opinion is strongly opposed.

This wide variation among communities provides a striking opportunity—one which it is probably not possible to create under laboratory conditions, and which is not likely to be again duplicated on such a scale in our lifetime—for studying the effects on social change of differences in social norms, and the relative influence of different sources of norms.

Were we able to utilize this real-life laboratory, I would find of especial interest the community which desegregates its schools while all the sources of social climate save those at the national level oppose the step and, where possible, act to limit its effect. It is in such communities that I suspect we may see the really dramatic developments. Under the influence of the social norms which prevail at the outset, the schoolroom contact may seem for some time to be without effect. Then at some later period—and I could not guess how much later—there will be a time during which change in the relationships between white and Negro students proceeds at what will seem an unexpectedly rapid pace. Behind this, if I am right, will lurk unrecognized the influence of a changed social norm among the students themselves. It seems to be often the case that the basis for a shift in norms develops well in advance of the shift itself. When, for some reason, the new norm crystallizes in the perceptions of members of a group they may show very suddenly behavior for which in fact they had been individually ready for some time. A factor which may help encourage such a development in school desegregation is the general readiness of adolescents to rebel against adult authority.

The influence of characteristics of individuals who are in contact. So much for this illustration of the need to think in terms of characteristics of the contact situation when analyzing the outcomes of involuntary presence in intergroup contact situations. Let me mention more briefly another class of variables which seem important: namely, characteristics of the individuals who are in contact. They are of interest from two quite different points of view. First, each group constitutes part of the contact situation for the other group. Characteristics which are relevant from this point of view may be thought of as "characteristics of the individual as object" or "characteristics of the object-group." Second, each group may be looked at as potential changers as a result of the contact. Characteristics which are relevant from this point of view I shall refer to as "characteristics of the individual as subject" or "characteristics of the subject-group."

To the extent that learning about the other group takes place in intergroup contact, it follows that the characteristics of the individuals with whom contact takes place may have an effect on the outcome. With specific reference to the interethnic character of the contact, two aspects of the characteristics of object individuals seem likely to be of particular importance: the extent to which the individuals differ from the commonly held stereotypes about the object group; and the extent to which they resemble the subject individuals in terms of background characteristics, interests, etc.

It seems likely that the great variety of patterns which are appearing in the course of the shift to desegregated schools may give rise to situations which differ in this respect. For example, Valien's report on the process of desegregation in Cairo, Illinois (12), notes that, because of a variety of community pressures, middle- and upper-class Negro children remained in segregated schools, and only children of the lowest socioeconomic group enrolled in the formerly white schools. Many of these children were below average in intellectual ability, had had poor records in the Negro schools, and did not do well in their new schools; according

to the report, they tended, because of this selective process, to confirm the white stereotypes that Negroes are stupid and lazy. On the other hand, there will certainly be other communities where the children of the better-educated Negro families will enter mixed schools. While it will admittedly be difficult to identify in advance situations where the Negro children in a mixed school will tend to conform to the derogatory stereotypes and others where they will not, examination of the characteristics of residential neighborhoods should make it possible to identify schools where each of these situations is likely to occur. Comparisons of attitudes and behavior of white children in the two types of schools should throw considerable light on the importance of characteristics of the object individuals in determining attitudes.

When we consider the individuals in the contact situation as *subjects,* we regard them from a somewhat different point of view. Focusing now upon the attitude changes they may undergo, we would like to know why some change more and others less; some in one direction, others in another. Two classes of personal variables may be thought of as likely to influence the individual's reaction to intergroup contact: the nature and intensity of initial attitudes toward the object group, and aspects of personality or character structure which may predispose one to hostile reactions toward members of outgroups.

The few studies which have attempted to take account of initial attitudes have emerged with a striking diversity of conclusions. Two studies in public housing projects (3, 13) found that white housewives who said they were initially unfavorable to Negroes were *more* likely to report favorable attitude changes than were those who reported themselves as being originally favorable. Another study (11), of white residents of a block into which Negroes had moved, reported exactly the opposite finding: those who were relatively favorable toward Negroes at the time the first Negro family was about to move in became more favorable after the Negroes had been living there a few weeks; those who were initially unfavorable had become still more unfavorable.

All of these studies took into account simply differences in the degree of favorableness or unfavorableness of the attitudes rather than the particular constellation of beliefs and feelings. It may be, however, that there are other differences in attitudes which make them more or less resistant to change. It has sometimes been stated, for example, that there are at least two distinct constellations of attitudes in the South. According to one, Negroes are gentle, fun-loving, jolly, but childlike and irresponsible; this attitude is said to have a warm, affectionate component; one is fond of Negroes, but just doesn't consider them intellectually and socially the same class of human being as oneself. The second, apparently quite different, attitude constellation is dominated by apprehension of the Negro as potentially dangerous, animal-like, and sexually uncontrolled. It is likely, of course, that the two constellations may often exist simultaneously in the same individual.

If these observations of differences in *kinds* of attitude are correct, it is reasonable to ask whether they differ in the extent to which they can be changed by experience with Negroes. For example, if there is really an attitude which is made up of friendly feelings in combination with unrealistic beliefs about Negroes and a caste feeling that they are a different order of being (and from my personal experience, I believe there is), is it possible that experience with Negroes in a situation where at least officially they are defined as equals might correct the beliefs and gradually eradicate the caste feelings, without destroying the friendliness? Or would the disappearance of the caste distinction result in a threat to self-esteem which would generate hostility? To my knowledge, there are no studies on attitude constellations of this sort, and the outcome should be quite instructive.

The research potential in school desegregation. Many of these questions can be studied as well in situations of involuntary contact in the North as in desegregated schools in the South. Why then do I emphasize the importance of research in Southern schools? Partly, it is because of the scale on which desegregation is taking place in the South. It is estimated that more than 150,000 Negro children who formerly attended segregated schools are now in mixed classes for the first time. Since in most of the newly mixed schools Negro children are in the minority, it seems safe to estimate that about half a million white children are for the first time having contact with Negroes in school.

From the point of view of research, the significance of change on such a scale is the probability

that contact between Negro and white children will occur under a great variety of conditions and that this would make it possible to find contrasts which highlight the variable one is interested in studying. Moreover, the fact that the change is occurring in so many schools and so many communities means that similar combinations of variables will be repeated, thus making it possible to replicate studies and so check the findings.

The situation also presents a second advantage. Because of the gradualness of the increase in the number of situations of involuntary contact in the North, it is difficult to find comparable or contrasting situations in which interracial contact is about to occur for the first time. Almost all studies have been carried out in situations where whites and Negroes were already in contact at the time of the investigation; initial attitudes had to be recalled by the respondents or inferred by the investigators on the basis of indirect evidence. In contrast, the fact that thousands of children in hundreds of southern communities will be attending mixed schools for the first time offers an unprecedented opportunity for research which can get direct evidence of initial attitude and in which the process of attitude change can be traced rather than inferred.

There is still another advantage—namely, the possibility of checking findings which seem fairly well substantiated in Northern studies, in settings where the over-all milieu is quite different. For example, it seems quite well established that, under certain combinations of circumstances—such as those obtaining in interracial public housing projects in the North—actual physical proximity of residence of whites to Negroes is an important determinant of favorableness of attitudes toward them. Would this finding hold in the quite different setting of a mixed school in a Southern town: will the white children who happen to be seated close to Negro children associate with them more, and become more friendly with them, than those who are seated farther away? Here I predict rather confidently that the answer will be yes.

PUBLIC POSITION-TAKING ON CONSEQUENTIAL ISSUES

You will recall that I said earlier that we could think of the events following the Supreme Court's decision partly in terms of the process of desegregation as I have been discussing it and partly in terms of decisions to desegregate or not to desegregate the schools in a given locality. Let me turn now to this latter aspect.

First we should note that we are involved here in an area of decision-making which is in many respects quite different from those that have been studied by social psychologists up to now. Most of the available studies have dealt with the effect of the conditions under which decisions are made on the subsequent behaviors of the people who decide. Considerable interest has focused on the process of decision-making in situations where the decisions do not have wider reverberations than the small groups in which they are made. Another focus has been upon decisions where the final act is completely private, as in voting behavior. In the present context, by contrast, we are concerned with the act of arriving at a public decision on consequential issues which inevitably involve large-scale public interest.

In relation to desegregation, it is developments in connection with these public decisions which make the headlines, although in my own opinion the real drama is played out in the schools and PTA's once desegregation gets under way. The daily papers bring us reports of reactions which run the gamut from decisions to desegregate immediately to statements that desegregation will never be accepted. For example, within twelve months after the Supreme Court's *first* ruling—that is, even before the Court had issued any directives as to how and when desegregation was to be initiated—scattered communities in eight states, plus the District of Columbia, had undertaken to desegregate their schools. On the other hand, seven states—Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana—after the Court's second ruling, have passed legislation designed to preserve segregation. The Governor of Maryland announced immediately that his state was prepared to accept the Court's decision as the law of the land; by contrast, the Governor-elect of Mississippi has proposed legislation which would make the advocacy of desegregation a criminal offense and disbar any lawyer handling a desegregation case. Within Virginia, where the citizens were voting two to one against integration in the public schools, the Catholic schools have already desegregated. Within Georgia, while the Governor was proclaiming that no white child in his state would ever have to attend school with a

Negro child, the Mayor of Atlanta was announcing that the city would abide by a Court ruling that golf courses must be open to all. While "white citizens' councils" to "defend states' rights and preserve racial purity" were being formed, such groups as the Southern Methodist Conference were passing resolutions favoring desegregation.

What are we to make of this bewildering variety of reactions? Do we have in psychology an approach to such events which would help us to see some order underlying the apparent confusion?

Before I try to suggest the direction which such an approach might take, let me outline tentatively some trends which I think can be observed in recent events in the South. It appears that, other things being equal, desegregation tends to proceed faster in cities than in rural areas, in border regions than in the deep South, in areas where the proportion of Negroes is small, and in areas where there has been a sizable influx of people from outside the South. Persons opposing desegregation seem to be older and less well-educated. Persons who support desegregation do so primarily on the basis of moral and religious allegiance, on the one hand, and on law-abiding grounds on the other. Desegregation seems to be accepted relatively easily within organizations, such as the Army and the Catholic Church, which have strong and enforceable sanctions. Segregation is abandoned more easily when it conflicts with some other need than where there is no such opposing force; for example, a white person who, in a relatively empty train, will not sit next to a Negro may do so when the only vacant seat happens to be next to a Negro. And individuals' views about segregation or integration tend to be brought into line with the position of important reference groups.

While these trends, if they are correctly observed, suggest some orderliness in the apparent confusion of events, they do not in themselves give us a basis for a psychological organization of our thinking in relation to an individual instance of decision making—such as, for example, might be represented by the vote of a member of the School Board of Knox County, Tennessee, on a proposal to desegregate the public schools of the county.

I think that most, if not all, of the complex phenomena that have been observed can be comprehended within the framework of two groups of concepts: one having to do with variables which may be related to the direction the decision takes, the other dealing with factors influencing the extent to which any given one of these possible variables becomes a weighty determinant of the position taken.

Some developments in the town of Hoxie, Arkansas, will illustrate what I mean. At the time of the Supreme Court's decision, the Hoxie School Board was in debt and discouraged about the possibility of improving the financial situation. One of the heavier drains on the school district's budget was the cost of transporting a number of Negro students of high school age to a Negro high school in a nearby community and paying that community for their tuition. The Hoxie School Board interpreted the first Supreme Court decision as invalidating the Arkansas law requiring racial segregation. They saw the possibility of solving their financial crisis by enrolling the Negro high school students in their own high school, and decided to do this. To the outside observer this decision might well appear to be based upon a favorable reaction to racially mixed public schools, and it *was* widely interpreted in this way. Actually, it probably had no such implication whatsoever. Although the Board's public statement of reasons included reference to religious and constitutional values, I understand from observers on the scene that the major factor in their decision was the financial one, that they took the step with great reluctance, and that their personal attitudes, like those of most of the other white residents of the community, favored separation of the races.

This example points to two variables which are potential determinants of the desegregation decision: one, individual attitudes toward Negroes and toward segregation; the other, the incentive represented by financial benefits to be gained by desegregating. The school board made its decision in terms of the latter consideration; the community reacted in terms of its attitude toward segregation. What made the financial consideration the determining one for the school board, who were in other respects not different from other members of the community? It seems clear that what is reflected here is the influence of role requirements. As members of the board of education, they were responsible for the school budget; it was this role requirement which made the economy of integrated schools the dominant consideration for them.

Some determinants of the direction of position-taking. A parallel to what we have found in Hoxie will be found in other situations. Some of the potential determinants of the decision, such as racial attitudes, are of the sort which recur regardless of the specific situation, that is, they have an inherent psychological relation to the desegregation issue. Others, like the financial incentive, are not so related but are made relevant through the operation of some other factor.

Let me mention first some of the first type of variables—those which are inherently relevant to the desegregation decision. I have already referred, in the Hoxie example, to the variables of attitudes toward Negroes and toward racial separation. These attitudes involve both apprehensions and values directly relevant to the segregation issue. You will remember that one of the trends I thought I had noted is that less well-educated persons are likely to be more opposed to desegregation. A possible inference from this might be that underlying one's decision to support or oppose desegregation is a need for social status. For the less well-educated, being white and therefore upper caste, may be the only way in which this need is satisfied. If this is true, apprehension of a possible loss of status if Negro children attend schools on a basis of equality with white children might be expected to run higher for this segment of the population. Another apprehension relating directly to the possible effects of desegregation may be the fear of loss of political and economic power, particularly where Negroes are in the majority.

On the *values* side, the one most directly related to beliefs about the desirability of desegregation would seem to be the political or philosophical creed of the basic equality of individuals. In considering this value as a factor entering into the decision whether or not to desegregate, one would need to know not only its strength for a given individual but the extent to which it is compartmentalized and out of contact with segregation practices.

Factors influencing the relevance and strength of various determinants. I shall not attempt to list the variables which are not inherently related to the question of desegregation but which may become relevant through the operation of other factors; potentially they cover the whole range of human motivation. Rather, I should like to consider some of the major factors which can operate, first, to bring these otherwise irrelevant variables into connection with the desegregation issue and second, to influence the strength of any given variable—whether or not it is inherently related to desegregation—in the decision.

One of these factors has been illustrated in the Hoxie example—that of the requirements of the role which the individual occupies. In that instance, the role requirements brought into prominence the financial incentive to desegregation. In other instances, role requirements may make community opinion the decisive variable. A local political leader, for example, is likely to be especially sensitive to community attitudes, since his continued occupation of his position is dependent on community approval.

Another factor which may bring seemingly unrelated variables into the segregation decision and which may also influence the relative strength of variables is the position taken by reference groups which are important to the individual. Let us say, for example, that an individual places great stress on respect for law. Before the Court's decision, this value exerted no force toward desegregation; in fact, in the South, the value of law-abidingness would operate in support of segregation. But the Court's ruling may bring the value of law-abidingness into play as a force toward desegregation, regardless of the individual's attitudes toward racial mingling. Thus, statements by officials in the border states have frequently had the following tone, "However we as individuals feel about desegregation, as loyal citizens we will of course respect the authority of the nation's highest judicial body."

One can see a similar process with respect to face-to-face reference groups. Consider, for example, the fact that soon after the Court's decision school boards in a number of communities set up plans for studying means of desegregating, with every indication that they were inclined toward a decision to desegregate. As time went on there was a shift. In some cases little more was heard of the plan; in others the plan was explicitly postponed or abandoned. Or take such communities as Milford, Delaware, where the decision to desegregate was officially made, but reconsidered as a result of strong community protests. In such situations, one may suppose that there was to begin with only one effective reference group—namely, the Supreme

Court. But as community opinion was mobilized, a new force entered into the situation—the position taken by a reference group which was closer not only physically but probably also psychologically. This force brought into the complex of variables influencing the desegregation decision the desire for approval by persons who are important to the individual. This desire for social approval can be assumed to have existed in the board members all along, but it did not become an important variable in the desegregation decision until the expression of community opinion made it clear that a decision for desegregation would lead to disapproval.

A third factor which may connect otherwise irrelevant variables with the desegregation decision is that of the ability of individuals or groups which have some authority over the individual to invoke sanctions which have objective consequences for him. Even if a group is not a reference group for a given individual, it may objectively have power over him which it can exert in order to bring him into line with its position. Thus, for a school board member who faces the possibility of prosecution for contempt of court, the desire to avoid the unpleasantness of legal proceedings and a possible fine becomes relevant to the question of whether the community's schools are to be desegregated, and may outweigh his own attitudes and beliefs about segregation. The possibility of such sanctions is not limited to persons whose roles carry responsibility for the decision. For the man who faces loss of his job if he signs a petition urging desegregation, or the lawyer threatened with disbarment if he represents a plaintiff in a desegregation suit, the need to earn a living becomes linked with his position on the desegregation issue. The weight which the variable thus invoked has in the decision is likely to bear a direct relation to the seriousness of the objective consequences for the individual's life. It is important to note that not everybody is equally vulnerable to such sanctions. Some individuals may be relatively immune, perhaps because of support from a subgroup, or because of some unique aspects of their position, such as having an independent income.

I want to mention one last factor which may influence the weight of a given variable in the decision; this is an over-all change in the average strength of the variable wherever its influence is felt. We sometimes think of variables in the sense that they have different strengths for different individuals at a given time, but many of the variables which are likely to enter into the desegregation decision are of interest also in the sense that their average strength may be expected to change over time.

To illustrate, a variable whose strength throughout the country is likely to change over the next few years is the financial cost of continued segregation—or, conversely, the financial rewards of desegregation. The South, together with the rest of the country, will experience an intensification of the already serious problem of overcrowded schools. Where the need for additional school buildings is already an emergency, it will soon assume the nature of a crisis. As you know, the Federal government is about to embark upon a major program of financial aid to states for school construction. I believe it is unlikely that Federal aid will be given to states which are openly defying the Supreme Court, and it seems impossible that such aid could go to those which have shifted from public to private schools. This will mean that continued school segregation will cost more and more for increasingly less adequate schooling for white children. It is not impossible to imagine that this development, in itself, may become a basis for school desegregation, overriding beliefs and fears about the dangers of racial integration.

Another variable whose strength may be expected to change has to do with one aspect of the social norm toward desegregation. Recently a Columbia, South Carolina, newspaper complained in an editorial of the fact that some of the previously segregated states had gone ahead with plans for desegregation. The writer indicated that this would make it harder for other states to hold out for segregation. As I have mentioned, desegregation is already under way in 8 of the 17 states which were segregated prior to the Court's decision. It is not unlikely that it will get under way in several additional states in the not too distant future. As this happens, the social norms regarding segregation to which the decision-makers of the remaining states respond will become increasingly heterogeneous—some favoring and some opposing a change. One can guess that the effect of this will be to greatly weaken the social support for opposing the Court's decision, which is now one of the major factors at work in the still segregated states.

The last considerations I shall mention in relation to the desegregation decision—and on occasion they may be the most important—are those we traditionally encompass under the heading of personality. Perhaps this is only a crude way of saying that when we have taken into account all of the factors that I have discussed up to now, there will remain striking variations in individual behavior still unaccounted for. When, for example, you consider the actions of a man like Governor Folsom of Alabama, situational determinants of behavior seem suddenly insignificant. Imagine a man—a politician we might say under other circumstances—situated in the very heart of the deep South, refusing to sign the legislature's pro-segregation bills and warning the Alabama Education Association against "the excessive noise being made by those who are guided by blind prejudice and bigotry" (10, Sept. 1955). Some such quality as that which Riesman has called inner-directedness—the extent of one's independence from social approval—must be invoked to make sense of the decisions of such a person.

Let me make it clear, finally, that in identifying these various determinants of desegregation decisions and suggesting some ways in which they may operate, I am not implying that such considerations put us in a position to predict and anticipate the decisions about desegregation which are yet to be made. The most I would claim for them is that they organize the available experience sufficiently to tell us where to look for some of the more crucial determinants of such decisions.

WILL THE NEEDED RESEARCH BE DONE?

I should like to be able to conclude my comments with the statement that the type of research I have been describing was being done or might soon get under way. Social scientists are agreed on the unparalleled opportunity which the situation presents. It seems inconceivable in the face of this that we should not make a major effort to utilize the opportunity. But as yet, with minor exceptions, we have available only a collection of case histories of school systems where desegregation has been initiated. Without detracting from their obvious value, it is clear that they can not give us the evidence in the form we need it if our understanding of social change is to be advanced. Nevertheless, with the exception of research on some aspects of desegregation in Washington carried out by Bower of American University and Walker of Howard University, and a few small-scale and isolated investigations supported by funds from the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (2, 7), I know of no systematic work in progress or in prospect. And, worse yet, I am afraid the die has been cast and that little or no research is to be done.

Wherein lies the trouble? In view of the interest among social scientists, why do they not go ahead? The answer is that field research of the sort required necessitates funds for research expenses and these are not available. Government agencies which sponsor research have felt they could not incur the enmity of congressmen who might reduce support for their research as a whole. But what about foundations? To my knowledge, the major foundations having interests in this area have all been asked for assistance and the answer has been uniformly negative. Why this is so I, of course, do not know. I trust it may be only a coincidence that the recent congressional investigations of foundations were chaired by a southern congressman quite opposed to social change. If it is not, it is quite understandable, although regrettable, that such investigations should have led to a more cautious appraisal of the wisdom of supporting research on controversial subjects.

It is a small consolation, but comforting, nevertheless, to feel that we understand the events of this dramatic period in American history well enough to be able to conceive a fruitful research attack upon their meaning for social relations in general. That this attack is not to be prosecuted is a scientific tragedy of the first order. Being possessed of a great faith in the determination and ingenuity of my scientific colleagues, I can only hope that the tragedy may yet be averted.

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