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Insiders and Outsiders: A Chapter in the Sociology of Knowledge¹

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The sociology of knowledge has long been regarded as a complex and esoteric subject, remote from the urgent problems of contemporary social life. To some of us, it seems quite the other way.² Especially in times of great social change, precipitated by acute social conflict and attended by much cultural disorganization and reorganization, the perspectives provided by the various sociologies of knowledge bear directly upon problems agitating the society. It is then that differences in the values, commitments, and intellectual orientations of conflicting groups become deepened into basic cleavages, both social and cultural. As the society becomes polarized, so do the contending claims to truth. At the extreme, an active and reciprocal distrust between groups finds expression in intellectual perspectives that are no longer located within the same universe of discourse. The more deep-seated the mutual distrust, the more does the argument of the other appear so palpably implausible or absurd that one no longer inquires into its substance or logical structure to assess its truth claims. Instead, one confronts the other's argument with an entirely different sort of question: how does it happen to be advanced at all? Thought and its products thus become altogether functionalized, interpreted only in terms of their presumed social or economic or psychological sources and functions. In the political arena, where the rules of the game often condone and sometimes support the practice, this involves reciprocated attacks on the integrity of

¹ A first edition of this paper was read on November 6, 1969 to the seminar celebrating the 50th anniversary of the department of sociology at the University of Bombay, India. A second edition was read at the Centennial Symposium of Loyola University (of Chicago) on January 5, 1970 and at the annual meetings of the Southwestern Sociological Association in Dallas, Texas, on March 25, 1971. This third edition was presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association in Denver, Colorado, September 1, 1971. Any errors I have retained after the critical examinations of the paper by Walter Wallace and Harriet Zuckerman are of course entirely my own. Aid from the National Science Foundation is gratefully acknowledged, as is indispensable help of quite another kind provided by Hollon W. Farr, M.D.

² As witness the spate of recent writings in and on the sociology of knowledge, including far too many to be cited here. Some essential discussions and bibliography are provided by Berger and Luckmann (1966), Stark (1958), Wolff (1965), Curtis and Petras (1970). The application of the sociology of knowledge to the special case of sociology itself has also burgeoned since 1959 when the Fourth World Congress of Sociology held by the International Sociological Association focused on the social contexts of sociology. See, for prime examples, Gouldner (1970), Friedrichs (1970), Tiryakian (1971).

the opponent; in the academic forum, where normative expectations are somewhat more restraining, it leads to reciprocated ideological analyses (which often deteriorate into barely concealed *ad hominem* innuendos). In both, the process feeds upon and nourishes collective insecurities.³

SOCIAL CHANGE AND SOCIAL THOUGHT

This conception of the social sources of the intensified interest in the sociology of knowledge and some of the theoretical difficulties which they foster plainly has the character, understandably typical in the sociology of scientific knowledge, of a self-exemplifying idea. It posits reciprocal connections between thought and society, in particular the social conditions that make for or disrupt a common universe of intellectual discourse within which the most severe disagreements can take place. Michael Polanyi (1958, 1959, 1964, 1967) has noted, more perceptively than anyone else I know,⁴ how the growth of knowledge depends upon complex sets of social relations based on a largely institutionalized reciprocity of trust among scholars and scientists. In one of his many passages on this theme, he observes that

in an ideal free society each person would have perfect access to the truth: to the truth in science, in art, religion, and justice, both in public and private life. But this is not practicable; each person can know directly very little of truth and must trust others for the rest. Indeed, to assure this process of mutual reliance is one of the main functions of society. It follows that such freedom of the mind as can be possessed by men is due to the services of social institutions, which set narrow limits to man's freedom and tend to threaten it even within those limits. The relation is analogous to that between mind and body: to the way in which the performance of mental acts is restricted by limitations and distortions due to the medium which makes these performances possible. [1959, p. 68]

But as cleavages deepen between groups, social strata or collectivities of whatever kind, the social network of mutual reliance is at best

³ This passage on the conditions making for intensified interest in the sociology of knowledge and for derivative problems of theoretical analysis in the field has not been written for this occasion. It is largely drawn from my paper in Gurvitch and Moore (1945, but now out of print) and reprinted in Merton (1968, pp. 510–14). Since the cognitive orientations of group members and nonmembers has long been a problem of enduring interest to me, I shall have occasion to refer to my writings throughout this paper.

⁴ Polanyi's detailed development of this theme over the years represents a basic contribution to the sociology of science by providing a model of the various overlapping cognitive and social structures of intellectual disciplines. Ziman (1968) has useful observations along these lines and Campbell (1969) has contributed some typically Campbellian (i.e., imaginative and evocative) thinking on the subject, in developing his "fish-scale model" of overlapping disciplines.

strained and at worst broken. In place of the vigorous but intellectually disciplined mutual checking and rechecking that operates to a significant extent, though never of course totally, within the social institutions of science and scholarship, there develops a strain toward separatism, in the domain of the intellect as in the domain of society. Partly grounded mutual suspicion increasingly substitutes for partly grounded mutual trust. There emerge claims to group-based truth: Insider truths that counter Outsider untruths and Outsider truths that counter Insider untruths.

In our day, vastly evident social change is being initiated and funneled through a variety of social movements. These are formally alike in their objectives of achieving an intensified collective consciousness, a deepened solidarity and a new or renewed primary or total allegiance of their members to certain social identities, statuses, groups, or collectivities. Inspecting the familiar list of these movements centered on class, race, ethnicity, age, sex, religion, and sexual disposition, we note two other instructive similarities between them. First, the movements are for the most part formed principally on the basis of ascribed rather than acquired statuses and identities, with eligibility for inclusion being in terms of who you are rather than what you are (in the sense of status being contingent on role performance). And second, the movements largely involve the public affirmation of pride in statuses and solidarity with collectivities that have long been socially and culturally downgraded, stigmatized, or otherwise victimized in the social system. As with group affiliations generally, these newly reinforced social identities find expression in various affiliative symbols of distinctive speech, bodily appearance, dress, public behavior patterns and, not least, assumptions and foci of thought.

THE INSIDER DOCTRINE

Within this context of social change, we come upon the contemporary relevance of a long-standing problem in the sociology of knowledge: the problem of patterned differentials among social groups and strata in access to certain types of knowledge. In its strong form, the claim is put forward as a matter of epistemological principle that particular groups in each moment of history have *monopolistic access* to particular kinds of knowledge. In the weaker, more empirical form, the claim holds that some groups have *privileged access*, with other groups also being able to acquire that knowledge for themselves but at greater risk and cost.

Claims of this general sort have been periodically introduced. For one imposing and consequential example, Marx, a progenitor of the sociology of knowledge as of much else in social thought, advanced the claim that after capitalistic society had reached its ultimate phase of development,

the strategic location of one social class would enable it to achieve an understanding of the society that was exempt from false consciousness.⁵ For another, altogether unimposing but also consequential example involving ascribed rather than achieved status, the Nazi *Gauleiter* of science and learning, Ernest Kriek (1935), expressed an entire ideology in contrasting the access to authentic scientific knowledge by men of unimpeachable Aryan ancestry with the corrupt versions of knowledge accessible to non-Aryans. Kriek could refer without hesitation to "Protestant and Catholic science, German and Jewish science." And, in a special application of the Insider doctrine, the Nazi regime could introduce the new racial category of "white Jews" to refer to those Aryans who had defiled their race by actual or symbolic contact with non-Aryans. Thus, the Nobel Prize physicist, Werner Heisenberg, became the most eminent member of this new race by persisting in his declaration that Einstein's theory of relativity constituted "an obvious basis for further research." While another Nobel laureate in physics, Johannes Stark, could castigate not only Heisenberg but his other great scientific contemporaries—Planck, von Laue, and Schrödinger—for accepting what Stark described as "the Jewish physics of Einstein" (Merton 1968, pp. 538–41).

For our purposes, we need not review the array of elitist doctrines which have maintained that certain groups have, on biological or social grounds, monopolistic or privileged access to new knowledge. Differing in detail, the doctrines are alike in distinguishing between Insider access to knowledge and Outsider exclusion from it.

SOCIAL BASES OF INSIDER DOCTRINE

The ecumenical problem of the interaction between a rapidly changing social structure and the development of Insider and Outsider doctrines is examined here in a doubly parochial fashion. Not only are my observations largely limited to the United States in our time but they are further limited to the implications of doctrines advocated by spokesmen for certain black social movements, since these movements have often come to serve as prototypical for the others (women, youth, homosexuals, other ethnics, etc.).

Although Insider doctrines have been intermittently set forth by white elitists through the centuries, white male Insiderism in American sociology

⁵ Observations on the advantaged position of the proletariat for the perception of historical and social truth are threaded throughout Marx's writings. For some of the crucial passages, see his *Poverty of Philosophy* (1847, e.g., pp. 125–26). On Marx's thinking along these lines, Georg Lukács, in spite of his own disclaimers in the new introduction to his classic work, *History and Class Consciousness*, remains of fundamental importance (1971, esp. pp. 47–81, 181–209).

during the past generations has largely been of the tacit or de facto rather than doctrinal or principled variety. It has simply taken the form of patterned expectations about the appropriate selection of specialities and of problems for investigation. The handful of Negro sociologists were in large part expected, as a result of social selection and self-selection, to study problems of Negro life and relations between the races just as the handful of women sociologists were expected to study problems of women, principally as these related to marriage and the family.

In contrast to this de facto form of Insiderism, an explicitly doctrinal form has in recent years been put forward most clearly and emphatically by some black intellectuals. In its strong version, the argument holds that, as a matter of social epistemology, *only* black historians can truly understand black history, *only* black ethnologists can understand black culture, *only* black sociologists can understand the social life of blacks, and so on. In the weaker form of the doctrine, some practical concessions are made. With regard to programs of Black Studies, for example, it is proposed that some white professors of the relevant subjects might be brought in since there are not yet enough black scholars to staff all the proliferating programs of study. But as Nathan Hare, the founding publisher of the *Black Scholar*, stated several years ago, this is only on temporary and conditional sufferance: "Any white professors involved in the program would have to be black in spirit in order to last. The same is true for 'Negro' professors."⁶ Apart from this kind of limited concession, the Insider doctrine maintains that there is a body of black history, black psychology, black ethnology, and black sociology which can be significantly advanced only by black scholars and social scientists.

In its fundamental character, this represents a major claim in the sociology of knowledge that implies the balkanization of social science, with separate baronies kept exclusively in the hands of Insiders bearing their credentials in the shape of one or another ascribed status. Generalizing the specific claim, it would appear to follow that if only black scholars can understand blacks, then only white scholars can understand whites. Generalizing further from race to nation, it would then appear, for example, that only French scholars can understand French society and, of course, that only Americans, not their external critics, can truly understand American society. Once the basic principle is adopted, the list of Insider claims to a monopoly of knowledge becomes indefinitely expansible to all manner of social formations based on ascribed (and, by extension, on some achieved) statuses. It would thus seem to follow that only women can understand women—and men, men. On the same principle, youth alone is

⁶ Nathan Hare as quoted by Bunzel (1968, p. 32).

capable of understanding youth just as, presumably, only the middle aged are able to understand their age peers.⁷ Furthermore, as we shift to the hybrid cases of ascribed and acquired statuses in varying mix, on the Insider principle, proletarians alone can understand proletarians and presumably capitalists, capitalists; only Catholics, Catholics; Jews, Jews, and to halt the inventory of socially atomized claims to knowledge with a limiting case that on its face would seem to have some merit, it would then plainly follow that only sociologists are able to understand their fellow sociologists.⁸

In all these applications, the doctrine of extreme Insiderism represents a new credentialism.⁹ This is the credentialism of ascribed status, in which understanding becomes accessible only to the fortunate few or many who are to the manner born. In this respect, it contrasts with the credentialism of achieved status that is characteristic of meritocratic systems.¹⁰

Extreme Insiderism moves toward a doctrine of *group* methodological solipsism.¹¹ In this form of solipsism, each group must in the end have a monopoly of knowledge about itself just as according to the doctrine of

⁷ Actually, the case of age status is structurally different from that of other ascribed statuses. For although, even in this time of advanced biotechnology, a few men become transformed into women and vice versa, this remains a comparatively rare instance of the ordinarily ascribed status of sex becoming an achieved status. But in contrast to sex and other ascribed statuses, each successive age status has been experienced by suitably long-lived social scientists (within the limits of their own inexorably advancing age cohorts). On the basis of a dynamic Insider doctrine, then, it might even be argued that older social scientists are better able than very young ones to understand the various other age strata. As context, see the concept of the reenactment of complementary roles in the life cycle of scientists in Zuckerman and Merton (1972).

⁸ As we shall see, this is a limiting type of case that merges into quite another type, since as a fully acquired status, rather than an ascribed one, that of the sociologist (or physician or physicist) presumably presupposes functionally relevant expertise.

⁹ I am indebted to Harriet Zuckerman for these observations on the new credentialism of ascribed status. The classic source of meritocracy remains Young (1958); on the dysfunctions of educational credentialism, see Miller and Roby (1970, chap. 6).

¹⁰ But as we shall see, when the extreme Insider position is transformed from a doctrine of assumptions-treated-as-established-truth into a set of questions about the distinctive roles of Insiders and Outsiders in intellectual inquiry, there develops a convergence though not coincidence between the assumptions underlying credentials based on ascribed status and credentials based on achieved status. In the one, early socialization in the culture or subculture is taken to provide reader access to certain kinds of understanding; in the other, the component in adult socialization represented by disciplined training in one or another field of learning is taken to provide a higher probability of access to certain other kinds of understanding.

¹¹ As Agassi (1969, p. 421) reminds us, the term "methodological solipsism" was introduced by Rudolf Carnap to designate the theory of knowledge known as sensualism: "the doctrine that all knowledge—of the world and of one's own self—derives from sensation." The belief that all one *really* knows is one's subjective experience is sometimes described as the "egocentric predicament."

individual methodological solipsism each individual has absolute privacy of knowledge about him- or her-self. The Insider doctrine can be put in the vernacular with no great loss in meaning: you have to be one in order to understand one. In somewhat less idiomatic language, the doctrine holds that one has monopolistic or privileged access to knowledge, or is wholly excluded from it, by virtue of one's group membership or social position. For some, the notion appears in the form of a question-begging pun: Insider as Insider, one endowed with special insight into matters necessarily obscure to others, thus possessed of penetrating discernment. Once adopted, the pun provides a specious solution but the serious Insider doctrine has its own rationale.

We can quickly pass over the trivial version of that rationale: the argument that the Outsider may be incompetent, given to quick and superficial forays into the group or culture under study and even unschooled in its language. That this kind of incompetence can be found is beyond doubt but it holds no principled interest for us. Foolish men (and women) or badly trained men (and women) are to be found everywhere, and anthropologists and sociologists and psychologists and historians engaged in study of groups other than their own surely have their fair share of them.¹² But such cases of special ineptitude do not bear on the Insider *principle*. It is not merely that Insiders also have their share of incompetents. The Insider principle does not refer to stupidly designed and stupidly executed inquiries that happen to be made by stupid Outsiders; it maintains a more fundamental position. According to the doctrine of the Insider, the Outsider, no matter how careful and talented, is excluded in principle from gaining access to the social and cultural truth.

In short, the doctrine holds that the Outsider has a structurally imposed incapacity to comprehend alien groups, statuses, cultures, and societies. Unlike the Insider, the Outsider has neither been socialized in the group nor has engaged in the run of experience that makes up its life, and therefore cannot have the direct, intuitive sensitivity that alone makes empathic understanding possible. Only through continued socialization in the life of a group can one become fully aware of its symbolisms and socially shared realities; only so can one understand the fine-grained meanings of behavior, feelings, and values; only so can one decipher the unwritten grammar of conduct and the nuances of cultural idiom. Or, to take a specific expression of this thesis by Ralph W. Conant (1968): "Whites are not and never will be as sensitive to the black community

¹² As I have noted in the first edition of this paper, the social scientists of India, for one example, have long suffered the slings and arrows of outrageously unprepared and altogether exogenous social scientists engaging in swift, superficial inquiries into matters Indian (Merton 1971, p. 456).

precisely because they are not part of that community." Correlatively, Abd-l Hakimu Ibn Alkalimat (Gerald McWorter) draws a sharp contrast between the concepts of "a black social science" and "a white social science" (1969, p. 35).

A somewhat less stringent version of the doctrine maintains only that Insider and Outsider scholars have significantly different foci of interest. The argument goes somewhat as follows. The Insiders, sharing the deepest concerns of the group or at the least being thoroughly aware of them, will so direct their inquiries as to have them be relevant to those concerns. So, too, the Outsiders will inquire into problems relevant to the distinctive values and interests which they share with members of *their* group. But these are bound to differ from those of the group under study if only because the Outsiders occupy different places in the social structure.

This is a hypothesis which has the not unattractive quality of being readily amenable to empirical investigation. It should be possible to compare the spectrum of research problems about, say, the black population in the country that have been investigated by black sociologists and by white ones, or say, the spectrum of problems about women that have been investigated by female sociologists and by male ones, in order to find out whether the foci of attention in fact differ and if so, to what degree and in which respects. The only inquiry of this kind I happen to know of was published more than a quarter-century ago. William Fontaine (1944) found that Negro scholars tended to adopt analytical rather than morphological categories in their study of behavior, that they emphasized environmental rather than biological determinants of that behavior, and tended to make use of strikingly dramatic rather than representative data. All this was ascribed to a caste-induced resentment among Negro scholars. But since this lone study failed to examine the frequency of subjects, types of interpretation, and uses of data among a comparable sample of white scholars at the time, the findings are somewhat less than compelling. All the same, the questions it addressed remain. For there is theoretical reason to suppose that the foci of research adopted by Insiders and Outsiders and perhaps their categories of analysis as well will tend to differ. At least, Max Weber's notion of *Wertbeziehung* suggests that differing social locations, with their distinctive interests and values, will affect the selection of problems for investigation (Weber 1922, pp. 146-214).

Unlike the stringent version of the doctrine which maintains that Insiders and Outsiders must arrive at different (and presumably incompatible) findings and interpretations even when they do examine the same problems, this weaker version argues only that they will not deal with the same questions and so will simply talk past one another. With the two versions combined, the extended version of the Insider doctrine can also be put in the vernacular: one must not only be one in order to understand

one; one must be one in order to understand what is most worth understanding.

Clearly, the social epistemological doctrine of the Insider links up with what Sumner (1907, p. 13) long ago defined as ethnocentrism: "the technical name for [the] view of things in which one's own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it." Sumner then goes on to include as a component of ethnocentrism, rather than as a frequent correlate of it (thus robbing his idea of some of its potential analytical power), the belief that one's group is superior to all cognate groups: "each group nourishes its own pride and vanity, boasts itself superior, exalts its own divinities, and looks with contempt on outsiders" (p. 13). For although the practice of seeing one's own group as the center of things is empirically correlated with a belief in its superiority, centrality and superiority need to be kept analytically distinct in order to deal with patterns of alienation from one's membership group and contempt for it.¹³

Supplementing the abundance of historical and ethnological evidence of the empirical tendency for belief in one's group or collectivity as superior to all cognate groups or collectivities—whether nation, class, race, region, or organization—is a recent batch of studies of what Theodore Caplow (1964, pp. 213–16) has called the aggrandizement effect: the distortion upward of the prestige of an organization by its members. Caplow examined 33 different kinds of organizations—ranging from dance studios to Protestant and Catholic churches, from skid row missions to big banks, and from advertising agencies to university departments—and found that members overestimated the prestige of their organization some "eight times as often as they underestimated it" (when compared with judgments by Outsiders). More in point for us, while members tended to disagree with Outsiders about the standing of their own organization, they tended to agree with them about the prestige of the other organizations in the same

¹³ By introducing their useful term "xenocentrism" to refer to both basic *and* favorable orientations to groups other than one's own, Kent and Burnight (1951) have retained Sumner's useless practice of prematurely combining centrality and evaluation in the one concept rather than keeping them analytically distinct. The analytical distinction can be captured terminologically by treating "xenocentrism" as the generic term, with the analytically distinct components of favorable orientation to nonmembership groups (as with the orientation of many white middle-class Americans toward blacks) being registered in the term "xenophilia" and the unfavorable orientation by Pareto's term "xenophobia." The growing theoretical interest in nonmembership reference groups (a concept implying a type of Outsider) (Hyman 1968; Merton and Rossi 1950) and the intensified spread of both ethnocentrism and xenocentrism in our times have given the term xenocentrism greater relevance than ever and yet, for obscure reasons, it has remained largely sequestered in the pages of the *American Journal of Sociology* where it first appeared 20 years ago. Caplow (1964, p. 216) and Horton (1965) are the only ones I know to have made good use of the term, but their unaccustomed behavior only emphasizes its more general neglect.

set. These findings can be taken as something of a sociological parable. In these matters at least, the judgments of "Insiders" are best trusted when they assess groups other than their own; that is, when members of groups judge as Outsiders rather than as Insiders.

Findings of this sort do not testify, of course, that ethnocentrism and its frequent spiritual correlate, xenophobia, fear and hatred of the alien, are incorrigible. They do, however, remind us of the widespread tendency to glorify the ingroup, sometimes to that degree in which it qualifies as chauvinism: the extreme, blind, and often bellicose extolling of one's group, status, or collectivity. We need not abandon "chauvinism" as a concept useful to us here merely because it has lately become adopted as a vogue word, blunted in meaning through indiscriminate use as a rhetorical weapon in intergroup conflict. Nor need we continue to confine the scope of the concept, as it was in its origins and later by Lasswell (1937, p. 361) in his short, incisive discussion of it, to the special case of the *state or nation*. The concept can be usefully, not tendentiously, extended to designate the extreme glorification of *any* social formation.

Chauvinism finds its fullest ideological expression when groups are subject to the stress of acute conflict. Under the stress of war, for example, scientists have been known to violate the values and norms of universalism in which they were socialized, allowing their status as nationals to dominate over their status as scientists. Thus, at the outset of World War I, almost a hundred German scholars and scientists—including many of the first rank, such as Brentano, Ehrlich, Haber, Eduard Meyer, Ostwald, Planck, and Schmoller—could bring themselves to issue a manifesto that impugned the contributions of the enemy to science, charging them with nationalistic bias, logrolling, intellectual dishonesty and, when you came right down to it, the absence of truly creative capacity. The English and French scientists were not far behind in advertising their own brand of chauvinism.¹⁴

Ethnocentrism, then, is not a historical constant. It becomes intensified under specifiable conditions of acute social conflict. When a nation, race, ethnic group, or any other powerful collectivity has long extolled its own admirable qualities and, expressly or by implication, deprecated the qualities of others, it invites and provides the potential for counterethnocentrism. And when a once largely powerless collectivity acquires a socially validated sense of growing power, its members experience an intensified need for self-affirmation. Under such circumstances, collective self-glorifi-

¹⁴ Current claims of Insiderism still have a distance to go, in the academic if not the political forum, to match the chauvinistic claims of those days. For collections of such documents, see Pettit and Leudet (1916), Duhem (1915), Kellermann (1915), Kherkhof (1933).

cation, found in some measure among all groups, becomes a predictable and intensified counterresponse to long-standing belittlement from without.¹⁵

So it is that, in the United States, the centuries-long institutionalized premise that "white (and for some, presumably only white) is true and good and beautiful" induces, under conditions of revolutionary change, the counterpremise that "black (and for some, presumably only black) is true and good and beautiful." And just as the social system has for centuries operated on the tacit or explicit premise that in cases of conflict between whites and blacks, the whites are presumptively right, so there now develops the counterpremise, finding easy confirmation in the long history of injustice visited upon American Negroes, that in cases of such conflict today, the blacks are presumptively right.

What is being proposed here is that the epistemological claims of the Insider to monopolistic or privileged access to social truth develop under particular social and historical conditions. Social groups or strata on the way up develop a revolutionary élan. The new thrust to a larger share of power and control over their social and political environment finds various expressions, among them claims to a unique access to knowledge about their history, culture, and social life.

On this interpretation, we can understand why this Insider doctrine does not argue for a Black Physics, Black Chemistry, Black Biology, or Black Technology. For the new will to control their fate deals with the social environment, not the environment of nature. There is, moreover, nothing in the segregated life experience of Negroes that is said to sensitize them to the subject matters and problematics of the physical and life sciences. An Insider doctrine would have to forge genetic assumptions about racial modes of thought in order to claim, as in the case of the Nazi version they did claim, monopolistic or privileged access to knowledge in these fields of science. But the black Insider doctrine adopts an essentially social-environmental rationale, not a biologically genetic one.

The social process underlying the emergence of Insider doctrine is reasonably clear. Polarization in the underlying social structure becomes reflected in the polarization of claims in the intellectual and ideological domain, as groups or collectivities seek to capture what Heidegger called the "public interpretation of reality."¹⁶ With varying degrees of intent, groups in conflict want to make their interpretation the prevailing one of how things were and are and will be. The critical measure of success occurs when the interpretation moves beyond the boundaries of the ingroup to be

¹⁵ This is not a prediction after the fact. E. Franklin Frazier (1949, 1957) repeatedly made the general point and Merton (1968, p. 485) examined this pattern in connection with the self-fulfilling prophecy.

¹⁶ Heidegger (1927) as cited and discussed by Mannheim (1952, pp. 196 ff.).

accepted by Outsiders. At the extreme, it then gives rise, through identifiable processes of reference-group behavior, to the familiar case of the converted Outsider validating himself, in his own eyes and in those of others, by becoming even more zealous than the Insiders in adhering to the doctrine of the group with which he wants to identify himself, if only symbolically (Merton 1968, pp. 405–6). He then becomes more royalist than the king, more papist than the pope. Some white social scientists, for example, vicariously and personally guilt ridden over centuries of white racism, are prepared to outdo the claims of the group they would symbolically join. They are ready even to surrender their hard-won expert knowledge if the Insider doctrine seems to require it. This type of response was perhaps epitomized in a televised educational program in which the white curator of African ethnology at a major museum engaged in discussion with a black who, as it happens, had had no prolonged ethnological training. All the same, at a crucial juncture in the public conversation, the distinguished ethnologist could be heard to say: “I realize, of course, that I cannot begin to understand the black experience, in Africa or America, as you can. Won’t you tell our audience about it?” Here, in the spontaneity of an unrehearsed public discussion, the Insider doctrine has indeed become the public interpretation of reality.

The black Insider doctrine links up with the historically developing social structure in still another way. The dominant social institutions in this country have long treated the racial identity of individuals as actually if not doctrinally relevant to all manner of situations in every sphere of life. For generations, neither blacks nor whites, though with notably differing consequences, were permitted to forget their race. *This treatment of a social status (or identity) as relevant when intrinsically it is functionally irrelevant constitutes the very core of social discrimination.* As the once firmly rooted systems of discriminatory institutions and prejudicial ideology began to lose their hold, this meant that increasingly many judged the worth of ideas on their merits, not in terms of their racial pedigree.

What the Insider doctrine of the most militant blacks proposes on the level of social structure is to adopt the salience of racial identity in every sort of role and situation, a pattern so long imposed upon the American Negro, and to make that identity a total commitment issuing from within the group rather than one imposed upon it from without. By thus affirming the universal saliency of race and by redefining race as an abiding source of pride rather than stigma, the Insider doctrine in effect models itself after doctrine long maintained by white racists.

Neither this component of the Insider doctrine nor the statement on its implications is at all new. Almost a century ago, Frederick Douglass (1966) hinged his observations along these lines on the distinction between collective and individual self-images based on ascribed and achieved status:

One of the few errors to which we are clinging most persistently and, as I think, most mischievously has come into great prominence of late. It is the cultivation and stimulation among us of a sentiment which we are pleased to call race pride. I find it in all our books, papers, and speeches. For my part I see no superiority or inferiority in race or color. Neither the one nor the other is a proper source of pride or complacency. Our race and color are not of our own choosing. We have no volition in the case one way or another. The only excuse for pride in individuals or races is in the fact of their own achievements. . . . I see no benefit to be derived from this everlasting exhortation of speakers and writers among us to the cultivation of race pride. On the contrary, I see in it a positive evil. It is building on a false foundation. Besides, what is the thing we are fighting against, and what are we fighting for in this country? What is the mountain devil, the lion in the way of our progress? What is it, but American race pride; an assumption of superiority upon the ground of race and color? Do we not know that every argument we make, and every pretension we set up in favor of race pride is giving the enemy a stick to break over our heads?

In rejecting the cause of racial chauvinism, Douglass addressed the normative rather than the cognitive aspect of Insiderism. The call to total commitment requiring one group loyalty to be unquestionably paramount is most apt to be heard when the particular group or collectivity is engaged in severe conflict with others. Just as conditions of war between nations have long produced a strain toward hyperpatriotism among national ethnocentrics, so current intergroup conflicts have produced a strain toward hyperloyalty among racial or sex or age or religious ethnocentrics. Total commitment easily slides from the solidarity doctrine of "our group, right or wrong" to the morally and intellectually preemptive doctrine of "our group, always right, never wrong."

Turning from the normative aspect, with its ideology exhorting prime loyalty to this or that group, to the cognitive, specifically epistemological aspect, we note that the Insider doctrine presupposes a particular imagery of social structure.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF INSIDERS AND OUTSIDERS

From the discussion thus far, it should be evident that I adopt a structural conception of Insiders and Outsiders. In this conception, Insiders are the members of specified groups and collectivities or occupants of specified social statuses; Outsiders are the nonmembers.¹⁷ This structural concept comes closer to Sumner's usage in his *Folkways* than to various meanings assigned the Outsider by Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Sartre, Camus (1946)

¹⁷ This is not the place to go into the theoretical problems of identifying the boundaries of groups, the criteria of group membership, and the consequent varieties of members and nonmembers. For an introduction to the complexities of these concepts, see Merton (1968, pp. 338-54, 405-7).

or, for that matter, by Colin Wilson (1956) just as, to come nearer home, it differs from the usages adopted by Riesman, Denny, and Glazer (1950), Price (1965, pp. 83–84), or Howard S. Becker (1963). That is to say, Insiders and Outsiders are here defined as categories in social structure, not as inside dopesters or the specially initiated possessors of esoteric information on the one hand and as social-psychological types marked by alienation, rootlessness, or rule breaking, on the other.

In structural terms, we are all, of course, both Insiders and Outsiders, members of some groups and, sometimes derivatively, not of others; occupants of certain statuses which thereby exclude us from occupying other cognate statuses. Obvious as this basic fact of social structure is, its implications for Insider and Outsider epistemological doctrines are apparently not nearly as obvious. Else, these doctrines would not presuppose, as they typically do, that human beings in socially differentiated societies can be sufficiently located in terms of a single social status, category, or group affiliation—black or white, men or women, under 30 or older—or of several such categories, taken seriatim rather than conjointly. This neglects the crucial fact of social structure that individuals have not a single status but a status set: a complement of variously interrelated statuses which interact to affect both their behavior and perspectives.

The structural fact of status sets, in contrast to statuses taken one at a time, introduces severe theoretical problems for total Insider (and Outsider) doctrines of social epistemology. The array of status sets in a population means that aggregates of individuals share some statuses and not others; or, to put this in context, that they typically confront one another simultaneously as Insiders and Outsiders. Thus, if only whites can understand whites and blacks, blacks, and only men can understand men, and women, women, this gives rise to the paradox which severely limits both premises: for it then turns out, by assumption, that some Insiders are excluded from understanding other Insiders with white women being condemned not to understand white men, and black men, not to understand black women,¹⁸ and so through the various combinations of status subsets.

Structural analysis in terms of shared and mutually exclusive status sets will surely not be mistaken either as advocating divisions within the ranks of collectivities defined by a single prime criterion or as predicting that such collectivities cannot unite on many issues, despite their internal

¹⁸ The conflicts periodically reported by black women—for example, the debate between Mary Mebane [Liza] and Margaret Sloan (in defense of Gloria Steinem)—between identification with black liberation and the women's liberation movement, reflect this sociological fact of crosscutting status sets. The problem of coping with these structurally induced conflicts is epitomized in Margaret Sloan's (1971) "realization that I was going to help the brothers realize that as black women we cannot allow black men to do [to] us what white men have been doing to their women all these years."

divisions. Such analysis only indicates the bases of social divisions that stand in the way of enduring unity of any of the collectivities and so must be coped with, divisions that are not easily overcome as new issues activate statuses with diverse and often conflicting interests. Thus, the obstacles to a union of women in England and North Ireland resulting from national, political, and religious differences between them are no less formidable than the obstacles, noted by Marx, confronting the union of English and Irish proletarians. So, too, women's liberation movements seeking unity in the United States find themselves periodically contending with the divisions between blacks and whites within their ranks, just as black liberation movements seeking unity find themselves periodically contending with the divisions between men and liberated women within their ranks (Chisholm 1970; LaRue 1970).

The problem of achieving unity in large social movements based on any one status when its members are differentiated by crosscutting status sets is epitomized in these words about women's liberation by a black woman where identification with race is dominant: "Of course there have been women who have been able to think better than they've been trained and have produced the canon of literature fondly referred to as 'feminist literature': Anais Nin, Simone de Beauvoir, Doris Lessing, Betty Friedan, etc. And the question for us arises: how relevant are the truths, the experiences, the findings of white women to Black women? Are women after all simply women? I don't know that our priorities are the same, that our concerns and methods are the same, or even similar enough so that we can afford to depend on this new field of experts (white, female). It is rather obvious that we do not. It is obvious that we are turning to each other" (Cade 1970, p. 9).

Correlatively, the following passage epitomizes the way in which internal differentiation works against unity of the black liberation movement where dominant identification with sex status is reinforced by further educational differentiation:

Seems to me the Brother does us all a great disservice by telling her to fight the man with the womb. Better to fight with the gun and the mind. . . . The all too breezy no-pill/have-kids/mess-up-the-man's-plan notion these comic-book-loving Sisters find so exciting is very seductive because it's a clear-cut and easy thing for her to do for the cause since it nourishes her sense of martyrdom. If the thing is numbers merely, what the hell. But if we are talking about revolution, creating an army for today and tomorrow, I think the Brothers who've been screaming these past years had better go do their homework. [Cade 1970, pp. 167-68]

The internal differentiation of collectivities based on a single status thus provides structural bases for diverse and often conflicting intellectual and moral perspectives within such collectivities. Differences of religion or

age or class or occupation work to divide what similarities of race or sex or nationality work to unite. That is why social movements of every variety that strive for unity—whether they are establishmentarian movements whipped up by chauvinistic nationals in time of war or antiestablishmentarian movements designed to undo institutionalized injustice—press for total commitments in which all other loyalties are to be subordinated, on demand, to the dominant one.

This symptomatic exercise in status-set analysis may be enough to indicate that the idiomatic expression of total Insider doctrine—one must be one in order to understand one—is deceptively simple and sociologically fallacious (just as we shall see is the case with the total Outsider doctrine). For, from the sociological perspective of the status set, “one” is not a man *or* a black *or* an adolescent *or* a Protestant, *or* self-defined and socially defined as middle class, and so on. Sociologically, “one” is, of course, all of these and, depending on the size of the status set, much more. Furthermore, as Simmel (1908, pp. 403–54; Coser 1965, pp. 18–20) taught us long ago, the individuality of human beings can be sociologically derived from social differentiation and not only psychologically derived from intrapsychic processes. Thus, the greater the number and variety of group affiliations and statuses distributed among individuals in a society, the smaller, on the average, the number of individuals having precisely the same social configuration.

Following out the implications of this structural observation, we note that, on its own assumptions, the total Insider doctrine should hold only for highly fragmented small aggregates sharing the same status sets. Even a truncated status set involving only three affiliations—WASPS, for example—would greatly reduce the number of people who, under the Insider principle, would be able to understand their fellows (WASPS). The numbers rapidly decline as we attend to more of the shared status sets by including such social categories as sex, age, class, occupation, and so on, toward the limiting case in which the unique occupant of a highly complex status set is alone qualified to achieve an understanding of self. The tendency toward such extreme social atomization is of course damped by differences in the significance of statuses which vary in degrees of dominance, saliency, and centrality.¹⁹ As a result, the fragmentation of the capacity for understanding that is implied in the total Insider doctrine will not empirically reach this extreme. The structural analysis in terms of status sets, rather than in the fictional terms of individuals being identi-

¹⁹ This is not the place to summarize an analysis of the dynamics of status sets that takes up variation in key statuses (dominant, central, salient) and the conditions under which various statuses tend to be activated, along lines developed in unpublished lectures by Merton (1955–71). For pertinent uses of these conceptions in the dynamics of status sets, particularly with regard to functionally irrelevant statuses, see Epstein (1970, esp. chap. 3).

fied in terms of single statuses, serves only to push the logic of Insiderism to its ultimate methodological solipsism.

The fact of structural and institutional differentiation has other kinds of implications for the effort to translate the Insider claim to solidarity into an Insider epistemology. Since we all occupy various statuses and have group affiliations of varying significance to us, since, in short, we individually link up with the differentiated society through our status sets, this runs counter to the abiding and exclusive primacy of any one group affiliation. Differing situations activate different statuses which then and there dominate over the rival claims of other statuses.

This aspect of the dynamics of status sets can also be examined from the standpoint of the differing margins of functional autonomy possessed by various social institutions and other social subsystems. Each significant affiliation exacts loyalty to values, standards, and norms governing the given institutional domain, whether religion, science, or economy. Sociological thinkers such as Marx and Sorokin, so wide apart in many of their other assumptions, agree in assigning a margin of autonomy to the sphere of knowledge²⁰ even as they posit their respective social, economic, or cultural determinants of it. The alter ego of Marx, for example, declares the partial autonomy of spheres of thought in a well-known passage that bears repetition here:

According to the materialist conception of history the determining element in history is *ultimately* the production and reproduction in real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. If therefore somebody twists this into the statement that the economic element is the *only* determining one, he transforms it into a meaningless, abstract and absurd phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure—political forms of the class struggle and its consequences, constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc.—forms of law—and then even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the combatants: political, legal, philosophical theories, religious ideas and their further development into systems of dogma—also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their *form*. There is an interaction of all these elements in which . . . the economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary. Otherwise the application of the theory to any period of history one chooses would be easier than the solution of a simple equation of the first degree. [Engels 1936, p. 381; see also p. 392]

We can see structural differentiation and institutional autonomy at work in current responses of scholars to the extreme Insider doctrine. They

²⁰ For a detailed discussion of the partial autonomy of subsystems in the conceptions of Marx and Sorokin, see Merton and Barber (1963, pp. 343–49; Merton 1968, pp. 521 ff.). On the general notion of functional autonomy as advanced by Gordon W. Allport in psychology, see the discussion and references in Merton (1968, pp. 15–16); on functional autonomy in sociology, see Gouldner (1958, 1959).

reject the monopolistic doctrine of the Insider that calls for total ideological loyalty in which efforts to achieve scholarly detachment and objectivity become redefined as renegadism just as ideological reinforcement of collective self-esteem becomes redefined as the higher objectivity. It is here, to continue with our case in point, that Negro scholars who retain their double loyalty—to the race and to the values and norms of scholarship—part company with the all-encompassing loyalty demanded by the Insider doctrine. Martin Kilson (1969), for example, repudiates certain aspects of the doctrine and expresses his commitment to both the institutionalized values of scholarship and to the black community in these words:

I am opposed to proposals to make Afro-American studies into a platform for a particular ideological group, and to restrict these studies to Negro *students and teachers*. For, and we must be frank about this, what this amounts to is racism in reverse—black racism. I am certainly convinced that it is important for the Negro to know of his past—of his ancestors, of their strengths and weaknesses—and they should respect this knowledge, when it warrants respect, and they should question it and criticize it, when it deserves criticism. But it is of no advantage to a mature and critical understanding or appreciation of one's heritage if you approach that heritage with the assumption that it is intrinsically good and noble, and intrinsically superior to the heritage of other peoples. That is, after all, what white racists have done; and none of my militant friends in the black studies movement have convinced me that racist thought is any less vulgar and degenerate because it is used by black men. . . . What I am suggesting here is that the serious study of the heritage of any people will produce a curious mixture of things to be proud of, things to criticize and even despise and things to be perpetually ambivalent toward. And this is as it should be: only an ideologically oriented Afro-American studies program, seeking to propagate a packaged view of the black heritage, would fail to evoke in a student the curious yet fascinating mixture of pride, criticism and ambivalence which I think *is, or ought to be the product of serious intellectual and academic activity*. [Pp. 329–30; italics added]

Along with the faults of neglecting the implications of structural differentiation, status sets, and institutional autonomy, the Insider (and comparable Outsider) doctrine has the further fault of assuming, in its claims of monopolistic or highly privileged status-based access to knowledge, that social position wholly determines intellectual perspectives. In doing so, it affords yet another example of the ease with which truths can decline into error merely by being extended well beyond the limits within which they have been found to hold. (There *can* be too much of a good thing.)

A long-standing conception shared by various “schools” of sociological thought holds that differences in the social location of individuals and groups tend to involve differences in their interests and value orientations

(as well as the sharing of some interests and values with others). Certain traditions in the sociology of knowledge have gone on to assume that these structurally patterned differences should involve, on the *average*, patterned differences in perceptions and perspectives. And these, so the convergent traditions hold—their convergence being often obscured by diversity in vocabulary rather than in basic concept—should make for discernible differences, on the average, in the definitions of problems for inquiry and in the types of hypotheses taken as points of departure. So far, so good. The evidence is far from in, since it has also been a tradition in the sociology of scientific knowledge during the greater part of the past century to prefer speculative theory to empirical inquiry. But the idea, which can be taken as a general orientation guiding such inquiry, is greatly transformed in Insider doctrine.

For one thing, that doctrine assumes total coincidence between social position and individual perspectives. It thus exaggerates into error the conception of structural analysis which maintains that there is a *tendency for, not a full determination of*, socially patterned differences in the perspectives, preferences, and behavior of people variously located in the social structure. The theoretical emphasis on tendency, as distinct from total uniformity, is basic, not casual or niggling. It provides for a range of variability in perspective and behavior among members of the same groups or occupants of the same status (differences which, as we have seen, are ascribable to social as well as psychological differentiation). At the same time, this structural conception also provides for patterned differences, *on the whole*, between the perspectives of members of different groups or occupants of different statuses. Structural analysis thus avoids what Dennis Wrong (1961) has aptly described as “the oversocialized conception of man in modern sociology.”²¹

²¹ Wrong's paper is an important formulation of the theoretical fault involved in identifying structural position with individual behavior. But, in some cases, he is preaching to the long since converted. It is a tenet in some forms of structural analysis that differences in social location *make for* patterned differences in perspectives and behavior *between* groups while still allowing for a range of variability *within* groups and thus, in structurally proximate groups, for considerably overlapping ranges of behavior and perspective. On the general orientation of structural analysis in sociology, see Barbano (1968); for some specific terminological clues to the fundamental distinction between social position and actual behavior or perspective as this is incorporated in structural analysis, see Merton (1968, *passim*) for the key theoretical expressions that “structures exert pressures” and structures “tend” to generate perspectives and behaviors. For specific examples: “people in the various occupations *tend* to take different parts in the society, to have different shares in the exercise of power, both acknowledged and unacknowledged, and to *see* the world differently” (p. 180). “Our primary aim is to discover how some *social structures exert a definite pressure upon certain persons in the society to engage in nonconforming rather than conforming conduct*. If we can locate groups peculiarly subject to such pressures, we should expect to find fairly high *rates* of deviant behavior in those groups” (p. 186). And for immediate rather than general theoretical bearing on the specific problems here under review, see Merton

Important as such allowance for individual variability is for general structural theory, it has particular significance for a sociological perspective on the life of the mind and the advancement of science and learning. For it is precisely the individual differences among scientists and scholars that are often central to the development of the discipline. They often involve the differences between good scholarship and bad; between imaginative contributions to science and pedestrian ones; between the consequential ideas and stillborn ones. In arguing for the monopolistic access to knowledge, Insider doctrine can make no provision for individual variability that extends beyond the boundaries of the ingroup which alone can develop sound and fruitful ideas.

Insofar as Insider doctrine treats ascribed rather than achieved statuses as central in forming perspectives, it tends to be static in orientation. For with the glaring exception of age status itself, ascribed statuses are generally retained throughout the life span. Yet sociologically, there is nothing fixed about the boundaries separating Insiders from Outsiders. As situations involving different values arise, different statuses are activated and the lines of separation shift. Thus, for a large number of white Americans, Joe Louis was a member of an outgroup. But when Louis defeated the Nazified Max Schmeling, many of the same white Americans promptly redefined him as a member of the (national) ingroup. National self-esteem took precedence over racial separatism. That this sort of drama in which changing situations activate differing statuses in the status set is played out in the domain of the intellect as well is the point of Einstein's ironic observation in an address at the Sorbonne: "If my theory of relativity is proven successful, Germany will claim me as a German and France will declare that I am a citizen of the world. Should my theory prove untrue, France will say that I am a German and Germany will declare that I am a Jew."²²

Like earlier conceptions in the sociology of knowledge, recent Insider

(1957): "In developing this view, I do not mean to imply that scientists, any more than other men [and women] are merely obedient puppets doing exactly what social institutions require of them. But I do mean to say that, like men [and women] in other institutional spheres, scientists tend to develop the values and to channel their motivations in directions the institution defines for them" (p. 640).

²² On the general point of shifting boundaries, see Merton (1968, pp. 338–42, 479–80). Einstein was evidently quite taken with the situational determination of shifts in group boundaries. In a statement written for the London *Times* at a time (November 28, 1919) when the animosities of World War I were still largely intact, he introduced slight variations on the theme: "The description of me and my circumstances in the *Times* shows an amusing flare of imagination on the part of the writer. By an application of the theory of relativity to the taste of the reader, today in Germany I am called a German man of science and in England I am represented as a Swiss Jew. If I come to be regarded as a '*bête noire*' the description will be reversed, and I shall become a Swiss Jew for the German and a German for the English" (Frank 1963, p. 144).

doctrines maintain that, in the end, it is a special category of Insider—a category that generally manages to include the proponent of the doctrine—that has sole or privileged access to knowledge. Mannheim (1936, pp. 10, 139, 232), for example, found a structural warranty for the validity of social thought in the “classless position” of the “socially unattached intellectuals” (*sozialfreischwebende Intelligenz*). In his view, these intellectuals can comprehend the conflicting tendencies of the time since, among other things, they are “recruited from constantly varying social strata and life-situations.” (This is more than a little reminiscent of the argument in the *Communist Manifesto* which emphasizes that “the proletariat is recruited from all classes of the population.”)²³ Without stretching this argument to the breaking point, it can be said that Mannheim in effect claims that there is a category of socially free-floating intellectuals who are both Insiders and Outsiders. Benefiting from their collectively diverse social origins and transcending group allegiances, they can observe the social universe with special insight and a synthesizing eye.

INSIDERS AS “OUTSIDERS”

In an adaptation of this same kind of idea, what some Insiders profess as Insiders they apparently reject as Outsiders. For example, when advocates of black Insider doctrine engage in analysis of “white society,” trying to assay its power structure or to detect its vulnerabilities, they seem to deny in practice what they affirm in doctrine. At any rate, their behavior testifies to the assumption that it is possible for self-described “Outsiders” to diagnose and to understand what they describe as an alien social structure and culture.

This involves the conception that there is a special category of people in the system of social stratification who have distinctive, if not exclusive, perceptions and understanding in their capacities as *both* Insiders and Outsiders. We need not review again the argument for special access to knowledge that derives from being an Insider. What is of interest here is the idea that special perspectives and insights are available to that category of Outsiders who have been systematically frustrated by the social system: the disinherited, deprived, disenfranchised, dominated, and exploited Outsiders. Their run of experience in trying to cope with these problems serves to sensitize them—and in a more disciplined way, the trained social scientists among them—to the workings of the culture and social structure that are more apt to be taken for granted by Insider social scientists drawn from social strata who have either benefited from the going social system or have not greatly suffered from it.

²³ For further discussion of the idea of social structural warranties of validity, see Merton (1968, pp. 560–62).

This reminder that Outsiders are not all of a kind and the derived hypothesis in the sociology of knowledge about socially patterned differences in perceptiveness is plausible and deserving of far more systematic investigation than it has received. That the white-dominated society has long imposed social barriers which excluded Negroes from anything remotely like full participation in that society is now known to even the more unobservant whites. But what many of them have evidently not noticed is that the high walls of segregation do not at all separate whites and blacks symmetrically from intimate observation of the social life of the other. As socially invisible men and women, blacks at work in white enclaves have for centuries moved through or around the walls of segregation to discover with little effort what was on the other side. This was tantamount to their having access to a one-way screen. In contrast, the highly visible whites characteristically did not want to find out about life in the black community and could not, even in those rare cases where they would. The structure of racial segregation meant that the whites who prided themselves on "understanding" Negroes knew little more than their stylized role behaviors in relation to whites and next to nothing of their private lives. As Arthur Lewis has noted, something of the same sort still obtains with the "integration" of many blacks into the larger society during the day coupled with segregation at night as blacks and whites return to their respective ghettos. In these ways, segregation can make for asymmetrical sensitivities across the divide.

Although there is a sociological tradition of reflection and research on marginality in relation to thought, sociologists have hardly begun the hard work of seriously investigating the family of hypotheses in the sociology of knowledge that derive from this conception of asymmetrical relations between diverse kinds of Insiders and Outsiders.

OUTSIDER DOCTRINE AND PERSPECTIVES

The strong version of the Insider doctrine, with its epistemological claim to a monopoly of certain kinds of knowledge, runs counter, of course, to a long history of thought. From the time of Francis Bacon, to reach back no further, students of the intellectual life have emphasized the corrupting influence of group loyalties upon the human understanding. Among Bacon's four Idols (or sources of false opinion), we need only recall the second, the Idol of the Cave. Drawing upon Plato's allegory of the cave in the *Republic*, Bacon undertakes to tell how the immediate social world in which we live seriously limits what we are prepared to perceive and how we perceive it. Dominated by the customs of our group, we maintain received opinions, distort our perceptions to have them accord with these opinions, and are thus held in ignorance and led into error which we

parochially mistake for the truth. Only when we escape from the cave and extend our visions do we provide for access to authentic knowledge. By implication, it is through the iconoclasm that comes with changing group affiliations that we can destroy the Idol of the Cave, abandon delusory doctrines of our own group, and enlarge our prospects for reaching the truth. For Bacon, the dedicated Insider is peculiarly subject to the myopia of the cave.

In this conception, Bacon characteristically attends only to the dysfunctions of group affiliation for knowledge. Since for him access to authentic knowledge requires that one abandon superstition and prejudice, and since these stem from groups, it would not occur to Bacon to consider the possible functions of social locations in society as providing for observability and access to particular kinds of knowledge.

In a far more subtle style, the founding fathers of sociology in effect also argued against the strong form of the Insider doctrine *without turning to the equal and opposite error of advocating the strong form of the Outsider doctrine* (which would hold that knowledge about groups, unprejudiced by membership in them, is accessible only to outsiders).

The ancient epistemological problem of subject and object was taken up in the discussion of historical *Verstehen*. Thus, first Simmel and then, repeatedly, Max Weber symptomatically adopted the memorable phrase: "one need not be Caesar in order to understand Caesar."²⁴ In making this claim, they rejected the extreme Insider thesis which asserts in effect that one *must* be Caesar in order to understand him just as they rejected the extreme Outsider thesis that one must *not* be Caesar in order to understand him.

The observations of Simmel and Weber bear directly upon implications of the Insider doctrine that reach beyond its currently emphasized scope.

²⁴ Thanks to Donald N. Levine (1971, p. xxiii), I learn that in often attributing the aphorism, with its many implications for social epistemology, to Weber, I had inadvertently contributed to a palimpsestic syndrome: assigning a striking idea or formulation to the author who first introduced us to it when in fact that author had simply adopted or revived a formulation that he (and others versed in the same tradition) knew to have been created by another. As it happens, I first came upon the aphorism in Weber's basic paper on the categories of a *verstehende* sociology published in 1913. In that passage, he treats the aphorism as common usage which he picks up for his own analytical purposes: "Man muss, wie oft gesagt worden ist, 'nicht Cäsar sein, um Cäsar zu verstehen.'" Alerted by Levine's note, I now find that Weber made earlier use of the aphorism back in 1903-6 (1951, pp. 100-101) as he drew admiringly upon Simmel's *Probleme der Geschichtsphilosophie* to which he attributes the most thoroughly developed beginnings of a theory of *Verstehen*. Properly enough, Weber devotes a long, long note to the general implications of Simmel's use of the aphorism, quoting it just as we have seen but omitting the rest of Simmel's embellished version: "Und kein zweiter Luther, um Luther zu begreifen." In his later work, Weber incorporated the aphorism whenever he examined the problem of the "understandability" of the actions of others.

The Insider argues that the authentic understanding of group life can be achieved only by those who are directly engaged as members in the life of the group. Taken seriously, the doctrine puts in question the validity of just about all historical writing, as Weber clearly saw ([1922] 1951, p. 428).²⁵ If direct engagement in the life of a group is essential to understanding it, then the only authentic history is contemporary history, written in fragments by those most fully involved in making inevitably limited portions of it. Rather than constituting only the raw materials of history, the documents prepared by engaged Insiders become all there is to history. But once the historian elects to write the history of a time other than his own, even the most dedicated Insider, of the national, sex, age, racial, ethnic, or religious variety, becomes the Outsider, condemned to error and misunderstanding.

Writing some 20 years ago in another connection, Claude Lévi-Strauss noted the parallelism between history and ethnography. Both subjects, he observed,

are concerned with societies *other* than the one in which we live. Whether this *otherness* is due to remoteness in time (however slight) or to remoteness in space, or even to cultural heterogeneity, is of secondary importance compared to the basic similarity of perspective. All that the historian or ethnographer can do, and all that we can expect of either of them, is to enlarge a specific experience to the dimensions of a more general one, which thereby becomes accessible *as experience* to men of another country or another epoch. And in order to succeed, both historian and ethnographer, must have the same qualities: skill, precision, a sympathetic approach and objectivity.²⁶

Our question is, of course, whether the qualities required by the historian and ethnographer as well as other social scientists are confined to or largely concentrated among Insiders or Outsiders. Simmel (1908), and after him, Schütz (1944), and others have pondered the roles of that incarnation of the Outsider, the stranger who moves on.²⁷ In a fashion oddly reminiscent of the anything-but-subtle Baconian doctrine, Simmel develops the thesis that the stranger, not caught up in commitments to the group, can more readily acquire the strategic role of the relatively objective inquirer. "He is freer, practically and theoretically," notes Simmel (1950), "he surveys conditions with less prejudice; his criteria for them

²⁵ Having quoted the Caesar aphorism, Weber goes on to draw the implication for historiography: "Sonst wäre alle Geschichtsschreibung sinnlos."

²⁶ The essay from which this is drawn was first published in 1949 and is reprinted in Lévi-Strauss (1963, p. 16).

²⁷ It is symbolically appropriate that Simmel should have been attuned to the role of the stranger as outsider. For as Lewis Coser (1965, pp. 29–39) has shown, Simmel's style of sociological work was significantly influenced by his role as "The Stranger in the Academy."

are more general and more objective ideals; he is not tied down in his action by habit, piety, and precedent" (pp. 404–5). Above all, and here Simmel departs from the simple Baconian conception, the objectivity of the stranger "does not simply involve passivity and detachment; it is a particular structure composed of distance and nearness, indifference and involvement." It is the stranger, too, who finds what is familiar to the group significantly unfamiliar and so is prompted to raise questions for inquiry less apt to be raised at all by Insiders.

As was so often the case with Simmel's seminal mind, he thus raised a variety of significant questions about the role of the stranger in acquiring sound and new knowledge, questions that especially in recent years have begun to be seriously investigated. A great variety of inquiries into the roles of anthropological and sociological fieldworkers have explored the advantages and limitations of the Outsider as observer.²⁸ Even now, it appears that the balance sheet for Outsider observers resembles that for Insider observers, both having their distinctive assets and liabilities.

Apart from the theoretical and empirical work examining the possibly distinctive role of the Outsider in social and historical inquiry, significant episodes in the development of such inquiry can be examined as "clinical cases" in point. Thus, it has been argued that in matters historical and sociological the prospects for achieving certain kinds of insights may actually be somewhat better for the Outsider. Soon after it appeared in 1835, Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* was acclaimed as a masterly work by "an accomplished foreigner." Tocqueville himself expressed the opinion that "there are certain truths which Americans can only learn from strangers." These included what he described as the tyranny of majority opinion and the particular system of stratification which even in that time involved a widespread preoccupation with relative status in the community that left "Americans so restless in the midst of their prosperity." (This *is* Tocqueville, not Galbraith, writing.) All the same, this most perceptive Outsider did not manage to transcend many of the deep-seated racial beliefs and myths he encountered in the United States of the time.

²⁸ Many of these inquiries explicitly take off from Simmel's imagery of the roles and functions of the stranger. From the large and fast-growing mass of publications on fieldwork in social science, I cite only a few that variously try to analyze the roles of the Outsider as observer and interpreter. From an earlier day dealing with "stranger value," see Oeser (1939), Nadel (1939), Merton (1947), and Paul (1953). For more recent work on the parameters of adaptation by strangers as observers, see especially the imaginative analysis by Nash (1963) and the array of papers detailing how the sex role of women anthropologists affected their access to field data (Golde 1970). On comparable problems of the roles of Insiders and Outsiders in the understanding of complex public bureaucracies, see the short, general interpretation by Merton (1945) and the comprehensive, detailed one by Frankel (1969).

Having condemned the Anglo-Americans whose "oppression has at one stroke deprived the descendants of the Africans of almost all the privileges of humanity" (Tocqueville [1858] 1945, 1:332);

having described slavery as mankind's greatest calamity and having argued that the abolition of slavery in the North was "not for the good of the Negroes, but for that of the whites" (ibid., 1:360-61);

having identified the marks of "oppression" upon both the oppressed Indians and blacks *and* upon their white oppressors (ibid., vol. 1, chap. 18, *passim*);

having noted "the tyranny of the laws" designed to suppress the "unhappy blacks" in the states that had abolished slavery (ibid., 1:368);

having approximately noted the operation of the self-fulfilling prophecy in the remark that "to induce the whites to abandon the opinion they have conceived of the moral and intellectual inferiority of their former slaves, the Negroes must change; but as long as this opinion subsists, to change is impossible" (ibid., 1:358, n.);

having also approximated the idea of relative deprivation in the statement that "there exists a singular principle of relative justice which is very firmly implanted in the human heart. Men are much more forcibly struck by those inequalities which exist within the circle of the same class, than with those which may be remarked between different classes" (ibid., 1:373-74);

having made these observations and judgments, this talented Outsider nevertheless accepts the doctrine, relevant in his time, that racial inequalities "seem to be founded upon the immutable laws of nature herself" (ibid., 1:358-59); and, to stop the list of particulars here, assumes, as an understandable and inevitable rather than disturbing fact that "the Negro, who earnestly desires to mingle his race with that of the European, cannot effect it" (ibid., 1:335).²⁹

Without anachronistically asking, as a Whig historian might, for altogether prescient judgments from this Outsider who was, after all, recording his observations in the early 19th century, we can nevertheless note that the role of Outsider apparently no more guarantees emancipation from the myths of a collectivity than the role of the Insider guarantees full insight into its social life and beliefs.

What was in the case of Tocqueville an unplanned circumstance has since often become a matter of deliberate decision. Outsiders are sought out to observe social institutions and cultures on the premise that they are more apt to do so with detachment. Thus, in the first decade of this century, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, in

²⁹ Tocqueville also assumes that "fatal oppression" has resulted in the enslaved blacks becoming "devoid of wants," and that "plunged in this abyss of evils, [he] scarcely feels his own calamitous situation," coming to believe that "even the power of thought . . . [is] a useless gift of Providence" (1:333). Such observations on the dehumanizing consequences of oppression are remarkable for the time. As Oliver Cromwell Cox (1948) observes about part of this same passage, Tocqueville's point "still has a modicum of validity" (p. 369, n.).

its search for someone to investigate the condition of medical schools, reached out to appoint Abraham Flexner, after he had admitted never before having been inside a medical school. It was a matter of policy to select a total Outsider who, as it happened, produced the uncompromising Report which did much to transform the state of American medical education at the time.

Later, casting about for a scholar who might do a thoroughgoing study of the Negro in the United States, the Carnegie Corporation searched for an Outsider, preferably one, as they put it, drawn from a country of "high intellectual and scholarly standards but with no background or traditions of imperialism." These twin conditions of course swiftly narrowed the scope of the search. Switzerland and the Scandinavian countries alone seemed to qualify, with the quest ending, as we know, with the selection of Gunnar Myrdal. In the preface to *An American Dilemma*, Myrdal (1944, pp. xviii-xiv) reflected on his status as an Outsider who, in his words, "had never been subject to the strains involved in living in a black-white society" and who "as a stranger to the problem . . . has had perhaps a greater awareness of the extent to which human valuations everywhere enter into our scientific discussion of the Negro problem."

Reviews of the book repeatedly alluded to the degree of detachment from entangling loyalties that seemed to come from Myrdal's being an Outsider. J. S. Redding (1944), for one, observed that "as a European, Myrdal had no American sensibilities to protect. He hits hard with fact and interpretation." Robert S. Lynd (1944), for another, saw it as a prime merit of this Outsider that he was free to find out for himself "without any side glances as to what was politically expedient." And for a third, Frank Tannenbaum (1944) noted that Myrdal brought "objectivity in regard to the special foibles and shortcomings in American life. As an outsider, he showed the kind of objectivity which would seem impossible for one reared within the American scene." Even later criticism of Myrdal's work—for example, the comprehensive critique by Cox (1948, chap. 23)—does not attribute imputed errors in interpretation to his having been an Outsider.

Two observations should be made on the Myrdal episode. First, in the judgment of critical minds, the Outsider, far from being excluded from the understanding of an alien society, was able to bring needed perspectives to it. And second, that Myrdal, wanting to have both Insider and Outsider perspectives, expressly drew into his circle of associates in the study such Insiders, engaged in the study of Negro life and culture and of race relations, as E. Franklin Frazier, Arnold Rose, Ralph Bunche, Melville Herskovits, Otto Klineberg, J. G. St. Clair Drake, Guy B. Johnson, and Doxey A. Wilkerson.

It should be noted in passing that other spheres of science, technology,

and learning have accorded distinctive and often related roles to both the Insider and the Outsider (Zuckerman and Merton 1972, pp. 311–14). As long ago as the 17th century, Thomas Sprat, the historian of the Royal Society, for example, took it “as evident, that divers sorts of Manufactures have been given us by men who were not bred up in Trades that resembled those which they discover’d. I shall mention Three; that of Printing, [Gun]Powder, and the Bow-Dye.” Sprat goes on to expand upon the advantages of the Outsider for invention, concluding with the less-than-science-based observation that “as in the Generation of Children, those are usually observ’d to be most sprightly, that are the stolen Fruits of an unlawful Bed; so in the Generations of the Brains, those are often the most vigorous, and witty, which men beget on other Arts, and not on their own” (Sprat 1959, pp. 391–93).

In our own time, Gilfillan (1935, p. 88) reported that the “cardinal inventions are due to men outside the occupation affected, and the minor, perfective inventions to insiders.” And in a recent and more exacting inquiry, Joseph Ben-David (1960) found that the professionalization of scientific research “does not in itself decrease the chances of innovation by outsiders to the various fields of science.” For the special case of outsiders to a particular discipline, Max Delbrück (1963, p. 13), himself a founding father of molecular biology, notes that although “nuclear physics was developed almost exclusively within the framework of academic institutes at universities, molecular biology, in contrast, is almost exclusively a product of outsiders, of chemists, physicists, medical microbiologists, mathematicians and engineers.”

The cumulative point of this variety of intellectual and institutional cases is not—and this needs to be repeated with all possible emphasis—is *not* a proposal to replace the extreme Insider doctrine by an extreme and equally vulnerable Outsider doctrine. The intent is, rather, to transform the original question altogether. We no longer ask whether it is the Insider or the Outsider who has monopolistic or privileged access to social truth; instead, we begin to consider their distinctive and interactive roles in the process of truth seeking.

INTERCHANGE, TRADE OFFS, AND SYNTHESSES

The actual intellectual interchange between Insiders and Outsiders—in which each adopts perspectives from the other—is often obscured by the rhetoric that commonly attends intergroup conflict. Listening only to that rhetoric, we may be brought to believe that there really is something like antithetical “black knowledge” and “white knowledge,” “man’s knowledge” and “woman’s knowledge,” etc., of a sort that allows no basis for

judging between their differing claims to knowledge. Yet the boundaries between Insiders and Outsiders tend to be far more permeable than this allows. Just as with the process of competition generally, so with the competition of ideas. Competing or conflicting groups take over ideas and procedures from one another, thereby denying in practice the rhetoric of total incompatibility. Even in the course of social polarization, conceptions with cognitive value are utilized all apart from their source. Concepts of power structure, co-optation, the dysfunctions of established institutions and findings associated with these concepts have for some time been utilized by social scientists, irrespective of their social or political identities. Nathan Hare (1967), for example, who remains one of the most articulate exponents of the Insider doctrine, made use of the notion of the self-fulfilling prophecy in trying to explain how it is that organizations run by blacks find it hard to work out.³⁰ As he put it, "White people thought that we could not have any institutions which were basically black which were of good quality. This has the effect of a self-fulfilling prophecy, because if you think that black persons cannot possibly have a good bank, then you don't put your money in it. All the best professors leave black universities to go to white universities as soon as they get the chance. The blacks even do the same thing. And this makes your prediction, which wasn't true in the beginning, come out to be true" (p. 65). Such diffusion of ideas across the boundaries of groups and statuses has long been noted. In one of his more astute analyses, Mannheim (1952) states the general case for the emergence and spread of knowledge that transcends even profound conflicts between groups:

Syntheses owe their existence to the same social process that brings about polarization; groups take over the modes of thought and intellectual achievements of their adversaries under the simple law of 'competition on the basis of achievement.' . . . In the socially-differentiated thought process, even the opponent is ultimately forced to adopt those categories and forms of thought which are most appropriate in a given type of world order. In the economic sphere, one of the possible results of competition is that one competitor is compelled to catch up with the other's technological advances. In just the same way, whenever groups compete for having their interpretation of reality accepted as the correct one, it may happen that one of the groups takes over from the adversary some fruitful hypothesis or category —anything that promises cognitive gain. . . . [In due course, it becomes

³⁰ Elsewhere, Hare treats certain beliefs of "Negro dignitaries" as a self-fulfilling prophecy (1970, p. 44). A recent work (Hole and Levine 1971) on women's liberation movements, both new and old, also observes: "Feminists argue further that there is a self-fulfilling prophecy component: when one group dominates another, the group with power is, at best, reluctant to relinquish its control. Thus in order to keep woman in 'her place,' theories are propounded which presume that her place is defined by nature" (p. 193).

possible] to find a position from which both kinds of thought can be envisaged in their partial correctness, yet at the same time also interpreted as subordinate aspects of a higher synthesis. [Pp. 221-23]

The essential point is that, with or without intent, the process of intellectual exchange takes place precisely because the conflicting groups are in interaction. The extreme Insider doctrine, for example, affects the thinking of sociologists, black and white, who reject its extravagant claims. Intellectual conflict sensitizes them to aspects of their subject that they have otherwise not taken into account.

Social Sadism and Sociological Euphemism

As a case in point of this sort of sensitization through interaction, I take what can be described as a composite pattern of social sadism and sociological euphemism. "Social sadism" is more than a metaphor. The term refers to social structures which are so organized as to systematically inflict pain, humiliation, suffering, and deep frustration upon particular groups and strata. This need have nothing at all to do with the psychic propensities of individuals to find pleasure in cruelty. It is an objective, socially organized, and recurrent set of situations that has these cruel consequences, however diverse its historical sources and whatever the social processes that maintain it.

This type of sadistic social structure is readily overlooked by a perspective that can be described as that of the sociological euphemism. This term does not refer to the obvious cases in which ideological support of the structure is simply couched in sociological language. Rather, it refers to the kind of conceptual apparatus that, once adopted, requires us to ignore such intense human experiences as pain, suffering, humiliation, and so on. In this context, analytically useful concepts such as social stratification, social exchange, reward system, dysfunction, symbolic interaction, etc., are altogether bland in the fairly precise sense of being unperturbing, suave, and soothing in effect. To say this is not to imply that the conceptual repertoire of sociology (or of any other social science) must be purged of such impersonal concepts and filled with sentiment-laden substitutes. But it should be noted that analytically useful as these impersonal concepts are for certain problems, they also serve to exclude from the attention of the social scientist the intense feelings of pain and suffering that are the experience of some people caught up in the social patterns under examination. By screening out these profoundly human experiences, they become sociological euphemisms.

Nor is there any easy solution to the problem of sociological euphemism. True, we have all been warned off the Whiteheadian fallacy of misplaced

concreteness, the fallacy of assuming that the particular concepts we employ to examine the flow of events capture their entire content. No more than in other fields of inquiry are sociological concepts designed to depict the concrete entirety of the psychosocial reality to which they refer. But the methodological rationale for conceptual abstraction has yet to provide a way of assessing the intellectual costs as well as the intellectual gains of abstraction. As Paul Weiss (1971) has put the general issue: "How can we ever retrieve information about distinctive features once we have tossed it out?" (p. 213).

Consider some outcomes of the established practice of employing bland sociological concepts that systematically abstract from certain elements and aspects of the concreteness of social life. It is then only a short step to the further tacit assumption that the aspects of psychosocial reality which these concepts help us to understand *are the only ones worth trying to understand*. The ground is then prepared for the next seemingly small but altogether conclusive step. The social scientist sometimes comes to act as though the aspects of the reality which are neglected in his analytical apparatus *do not even exist*. By that route, even the most conscientious of social scientists are often led to transform their concepts and models into scientific euphemisms.

All this involves the special irony that the more intellectually powerful a set of social science concepts has proved to be, the less the incentive for trying to elaborate it in ways designed to catch up the humanly significant aspects of the psychosocial reality that it neglects.

It is this tendency toward sociological euphemism, I suggest, that some (principally but not exclusively black) social scientists are forcing upon the attention of (principally but not exclusively white) social scientists. No one I know has put this more pointedly than Kenneth Clark (1965): "More privileged individuals may understandably need to shield themselves from the inevitable conflict and pain which would result from acceptance of the fact that they *are* accessories to profound injustice. The tendency to discuss disturbing social issues such as racial discrimination, segregation, and economic exploitation in detached, legal, political, socio-economic, or psychological terms as if these persistent problems did not involve the suffering of actual human beings is so contrary to empirical evidence that it must be interpreted as a protective device" (p. 75).

From Social Conflict to Intellectual Controversy

Perhaps enough has been said to indicate how Insider and Outsider perspectives can converge, in spite of such differences, through reciprocal adoption of ideas and the developing of complementary and overlapping

foci of attention in the formulation of scientific problems. But these intellectual potentials for synthesis are often curbed by social processes that divide scholars and scientists. Internal divisions and polarizations in the society at large often stand in the way of realizing those potentials. Under conditions of acute conflict, each hostile camp develops highly selective perceptions of what is going on in the other. Perspectives become self-confirming as both Insiders and Outsiders tend to shut themselves off from ideas and information at odds with their own conceptions. They come to see in the other primarily what their hostile dispositions alert them to see and then promptly mistake the part for the whole. The initial interaction between the contending groups becomes reduced in response to the reciprocal alienation that follows upon public distortions of the others' ideas. In the process, each group becomes less and less motivated to examine the ideas of the other, since there is manifestly small point in attending to the ideas of those capable of such distortion. The members of each group then scan the outgroup's writings just enough to find ammunition for new fusillades.

The process of increased selective inattention to ideas of the other produces rigidified all-or-none doctrines. Even intellectual orientations that are not basically contradictory come to be regarded as though they were. *Either* the Insider *or* the Outsider has access to the sociological truth. In the midst of such polarized social conflict, there is little room for the third party uncommitted in the domain of knowledge to, for them, situationally irrelevant group loyalties, who try to convert that conflict into intellectual criticism. Typically, these would-be noncombatants are caught in the crossfire between hostile camps. Depending on the partisan vocabulary of abuse that happens to prevail, they are tagged as intellectual mugwumps, pharisees or renegades, or somewhat more generously, as "mere eclectics" with the epithets making it unnecessary to examine the substance of what is being asserted or to consider how far it holds true. Perhaps most decisively, they are defined as mere middle-of-the-roaders who, through timidity or expediency, will not see that they try to escape the fundamental conflict between unalloyed sociological good and unalloyed sociological evil.³¹

When a transition from social conflict to intellectual controversy is achieved, when the perspectives of each group are taken seriously enough to be carefully examined rather than rejected out of hand, there can develop trade offs between the distinctive strengths and weaknesses of Insider and Outsider perspectives that enlarge the chances for a sound and relevant understanding of social life.

³¹ The foregoing two paragraphs are drawn almost verbatim from a not easily accessible source: Merton 1961, pp. 21-46.

Insiders, Outsiders, and Types of Knowledge

If indeed we have distinctive contributions to make to social knowledge in our roles as Insiders or Outsiders—and it should be repeated that all of us are both Insiders and Outsiders in various social situations—then those contributions probably link up with a long-standing distinction between two major kinds of knowledge, a basic distinction that is blurred in the often ambiguous use of the word “understanding.” In the language of William James (1932, pp. 11–13), drawn out of John Grote (1865, p. 60), who was in turn preceded by Hegel (1961 [1807]),³² this is the distinction between “acquaintance with” and “knowledge about.” The one involves direct familiarity with phenomena that is expressed in depictive representations; the other involves more abstract formulations which do not at all “resemble” what has been directly experienced (Merton 1968, p. 545). As Grote noted a century ago, the distinction has been imbedded in contrasting pairs of terms in various languages as shown below.

“Acquaintance with”	“Knowledge about”
noscere	scire
kennen	wissen
connaître	savoir

These interrelated kinds of understanding may turn out to be distributed, in varying mix, among Insiders and Outsiders. The introspective meanings of experience within a status or a group may be more readily accessible, for all the seemingly evident reasons, to those who have shared part or all of that experience. But authentic awareness, even in the sense of acquaintance with, is not guaranteed by social affiliation, as the concept of false consciousness is designed to remind us. Determinants of social life—for an obvious example, ecological patterns and processes—are not necessarily evident to those directly engaged in it. In short, sociological understanding involves much more than acquaintance with. It includes an empirically confirmable comprehension of the conditions and often complex processes in which people are caught up without much awareness of what is going on. To analyze and understand these requires a theoretical and technical competence which, as such, transcends one’s status as Insider or Outsider. The role of social scientist concerned with achieving knowledge about society requires enough detachment and trained capacity to know how to assemble and assess the evidence without regard for what the analysis seems to imply about the worth of one’s group.

³² Hegel catches the distinction in his aphorism: “Das Bekannte überhaupt ist darum, weil es bekannt ist, nicht erkannt.” Polanyi (1959, 1967) has made a significant effort to synthesize these modes of understanding, principally in his conception of “tacit knowing.”

Other attributes of the domain of knowledge dampen the relevance of Insider and Outsider identities for the validity and worth of the intellectual product. It is the character of an intellectual *discipline* that its evolving rules of evidence are adopted *before* they are used in assessing a particular inquiry. These criteria of good and bad intellectual work may turn up to differing extent among Insiders and Outsiders as an artifact of immediate circumstance, and that is itself a difficult problem for investigation. But the margin of autonomy in the culture and institution of science means that the intellectual criteria, as distinct from the social ones, for judging the validity and worth of that work transcend extraneous group allegiances. The acceptance of criteria of craftsmanship and integrity in science and learning cuts across differences in the social affiliations and loyalties of scientists and scholars. Commitment to the intellectual values dampens group-induced pressures to advance the interests of groups at the expense of these values and of the intellectual product.

The consolidation of group-influenced perspectives and the autonomous values of scholarship is exemplified in observations by John Hope Franklin who, for more than a quarter-century, has been engaged in research on the history of American Negroes from their ancient African beginnings to the present.³³ In the first annual Martin Luther King, Jr., Memorial Lecture at the New School for Social Research, he observes in effect how great differences in social location of both authors and audiences can make for profound differences in scholarly motivation and orientation. Franklin notes that it was the Negro teacher of history, "outraged by the kind of distorted history that he was required to teach the children of his race," who took the initiative in the 19th century to undo what one of them described as "the sin of omission and commission on the part of white authors, most of whom seem to have written exclusively for white children" (1969, p. 4). The pioneering revisionist efforts of W.E.B. DuBois and others found organized expression in the founding in 1915 of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History and, a year later, of the *Journal of Negro History* by Carter G. Woodson and his associates. This institutionalization of scholarship helped make for transfer and interchange of knowledge between Insiders and Outsiders, between black historians and white. In Franklin's words, the study of Negro history became "respectable. Before the middle of the twentieth century it would entice not only a large number of talented Negro scholars to join in the quest for a revised and more valid American history, but it would also bring into its fold a considerable number of the ablest white historians who could no longer tolerate biased, one-sided American history. Thus, Vernon Wharton's *The Negro in Mississippi*, Kenneth Stampp's *The Peculiar Institution*, Louis Harlan's *Sepa-*

³³ Perhaps the best known of Franklin's many writings is *From Slavery to Freedom*, now in its third edition.

rate *But Unequal* and Winthrop Jordan's *White Over Black*—to mention only four—rank among the best of the efforts that any historians, white or black, have made to revise the history of their own country. In that role they, too, became revisionists of the history of Afro-Americans" (1969, pp. 5–6).

These efforts only began to counter the "uniformed, arrogant, uncharitable, undemocratic, and racist history [which] . . . spawned and perpetuated an ignorant, self-seeking, superpatriotic, ethnocentric group of white Americans who can say, in this day and time, that they did not know that Negro Americans had a history" (1969, p. 9). But much needed counterdevelopments can induce other kinds of departure from scholarly standards. Franklin notes that the recent "great renaissance" of interest in the history of Negro Americans has found proliferated and commercialized expression. "Publishers are literally pouring out handbooks, anthologies, workbooks, almanacs, documentaries, and textbooks on the history of Negro Americans. . . . Soon, we shall have many more books than we can read; indeed, many more than we should read. Soon, we shall have more authorities on Negro history than we can listen to; indeed, many more than we should listen to" (1969, pp. 10–11).

Franklin's application of exacting, autonomous and universalistic standards culminates in a formulation that, once again, transcends the statuses of Insiders and Outsiders:

Slavery, injustice, unspeakable barbarities, the selling of babies from their mothers, the breeding of slaves, lynchings, burnings at the stake, discrimination, segregation, these things too are a part of the history of this country. If the Patriots were more in love with slavery than freedom, if the Founding Fathers were more anxious to write slavery into the Constitution than they were to protect the rights of men, and if freedom was begrudgingly given and then effectively denied for another century, these things too are a part of the nation's history. It takes a person of stout heart, great courage, and uncompromising honesty to look the history of this country squarely in the face and tell it like it is. But nothing short of this will make possible a reassessment of American history and a revision of American history that will, in turn, permit the teaching of the history of Negro Americans. And when this approach prevails, the history of the United States and the history of the black man can be written and taught by any person, white, black, or otherwise. For there is nothing so irrelevant in telling the truth as the color of a man's skin. [1969, pp. 14–15]

Differing profoundly on many theoretical issues and empirical claims, Cox (1948; also introduction to Hare 1970) and Frazier (1957, 1968) are agreed on the relative autonomy of the domain of knowledge and, specifically, that white scholars are scarcely barred from contributing to what Frazier described as a "grasp of the condition and fate of American Negroes." Recognition of what has been called "the mark of oppression,"

Frazier notes, "was the work of two white scholars that first called attention to this fundamental aspect of the personality of the American Negro. Moreover, it was the work of another white scholar, Stanley M. Elkins, in his recent book on *Slavery*, who has shown the psychic trauma that Negroes suffered when they were enslaved, the pulverization of their social life through the destruction of their clan organization, and annihilation of their personality through the destruction of their cultural heritage" (Frazier 1968 p. 272). And Cox, in his strong criticism of what he describes as "the black bourgeoisie school" deriving from Frazier's work, emphasizes the distorting effects of the implicitly black nationalist ideology of this school on the character of its work (Cox 1970, pp. 15-31).

It should now be evident that structural analysis applied to the domain of knowledge provides an ironically self-exemplifying pattern. For just as the union of any other collectivity based on a single status—of Americans or of Nigerians, of blacks or of whites, of men or of women—is continuously subject to the potential of inner division owing to the other statuses of its members, so with the collectivities often described as the scientific community and the community of scholars. The functional autonomy of science and learning is also periodically subject to great stress, owing in part to the complex social differentiation of the population of scientists and scholars that weakens their response to external pressures. The conditions and processes making for the fragility or resiliency of that autonomy constitute one of the great questions in the sociology of knowledge.

It is nevertheless that autonomy which still enables the pursuit of truth to transcend other loyalties, as Michael Polanyi (1959), more than most of us, has long recognized: "People who have learned to respect the truth will feel entitled to uphold the truth against the very society which has taught them to respect it. They will indeed demand respect for themselves on the grounds of their own respect for the truth, and this will be accepted, even against their own inclinations, by those who share these basic convictions" (pp. 61-62).³⁴

A paper such as this one needs no peroration. Nevertheless, here is mine. Insiders and Outsiders in the domain of knowledge, unite. You have nothing to lose but your claims. You have a world of understanding to win.

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³⁴ I have taken the liberty of modifying Polanyi's pronouns in this passage in order to preserve his meaning within the context of the subject of this paper.

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