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Yuill, Kevin (2015) The spectre of Japan: the influence of foreign relations on race relations theory, 1905–24. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 49 (4). pp. 317-342. ISSN 0031-322X

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## The spectre of Japan: the influence of foreign relations on race relations theory, 1905–24

KEVIN YUILL

**ABSTRACT** Race relations became the dominant paradigm by the time the official report on the 1919 Chicago riot, *The Negro in Chicago*, was published. It expressed a new appreciation of the danger to Whites of conflict based on colour. Before 1905 most observers assumed the inferiority of Blacks and saw race conflict as the fault of African Americans. But a new possibility arose when the fate of African Americans was linked to the rising power of Japan, occurring after the defeat of Russia by Japan in 1904–5. Race conflict, in this new model, was a form of conflict between nations. Race relations pioneer Robert E. Park, in his 1913 article, 'Racial Assimilation in Secondary Groups', noted that 'under conditions . . . of individual liberty and individual competition, characteristic of modern civilization, depressed racial groups tend to assume the form of nationalities. A nationality, in this narrower sense, may be defined as the racial group which has attained self-consciousness, no matter whether it has at the same time gained political independence or not.' Yuill's paper will explore the thesis that a liberal perspective based on developments in contemporary international relations slowly changed the way race was regarded in the United States. Previously, Social Darwinism dominated thinking on race and rigid segregation enforced ideas of superiority and inferiority. From 1905 onwards, a new liberal paradigm sought to manage race conflict. It was this—rather than labour-based racial antipathies or commitment to racial equality—that shaped US race relations in the twentieth century.

**KEYWORDS** 1906 San Francisco schools crisis, history of race relations, Immigration Act of 1924, Japanese-American relations, Johnson-Reed Act, US international relations, US race relations

It is worth recalling the so-called Red Summer of 1919 for the marker it set for race relations in the United States. Between April and October of that year, race riots occurred in twenty-two cities and towns throughout the country. Whereas there had been violent race riots before the First World War in Springfield, Illinois and Atlanta, Georgia, many looked on the post-war violence as a harbinger of problems to come. Some suspected that these riots

were associated with international violence and particularly with the new Bolshevik government in Russia.<sup>1</sup>

Others, however, noted the willingness of the 'New Negro' to fight back against the white mobs terrorizing African Americans. Much as 'hysterical racism' fuelled some of the horrific crimes committed by Whites, the riots gave some African American observers hope.<sup>2</sup> As *The Crisis*, responding to the Chicago riot, noted: 'Today we raise the terrible weapon of Self-Defense. . . . When the armed lynchers gather, we too must gather armed. When the mob moves, we propose to meet it with bricks and clubs and guns.'<sup>3</sup> James Weldon Johnson, who was caught up in the Washington riot, noted in the same journal: 'As regrettable as are the Washington and the Chicago riots, I feel that they mark the turning point in the psychology of the whole nation regarding the Negro problem.'<sup>4</sup>

The tone of many black observers at the time was that the Chicago disturbance was simply the opening shot of a war in which African Americans would achieve their eventual freedom. As the Reverend C. J. Robinson warned in an open letter to President Wilson: 'Before the Negroes of this country will again submit to many of the injustices which we have suffered, the white men will have to kill more of them than the number of soldiers that were slain in the great world war.'<sup>5</sup> Or, as James Weldon Johnson remarked at the time: 'I returned disquieted, but not depressed over the Washington riot; it might have been worse. It might have been a riot in which the Negroes, unprotected by the law, would not have had the spirit to protect themselves.'<sup>6</sup>

The most important reflection on these riots—*The Negro in Chicago*—did not share the idea that the riots signified potential for African Americans but instead called for diplomatic measures to prevent them from ever happening again. Given the scale of the rioting in Chicago where, between 27 and 30 July

- 1 See, for instance, 'Radicals inciting Negro to violence', *New York Times*, 4 August 1919, and 'Denies Negroes are reds', *New York Times*, 3 August 1919, 9.
- 2 Jan Voogd, in *Race Riots and Resistance: The Red Summer of 1919* (New York: Peter Lang 2008), includes the Washington and Chicago riots in a chapter entitled 'Riots as hysterical reactions to race-caste rupture', 37–62. She downplays self-defence on the part of African Americans. For an alternative view, see David F. Krugler, *1919, the Year of Racial Violence: How African Americans Fought Back* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2015); Cheryl Hudson, "'The Negro in Chicago': harmony in conflict, 1919–22', *European Journal of American Culture*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2010, 53–68; and Barbara Foley, *Spectres of 1919: Class and Nation in the Making of the New Negro* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press 2003).
- 3 'Opinion of W. E. B. Du Bois', *The Crisis*, vol. 18, no. 5, September 1919, 231–5 (231). The most comprehensive discussion of the Chicago riot remains William M. Tuttle, Jr, *Race Riot: Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press 1996). See also Krugler, *1919, the Year of Racial Violence*, and Hudson, "'The Negro in Chicago'".
- 4 James Weldon Johnson, 'The riots: an N.A.A.C.P. investigation', *The Crisis*, vol. 18, no. 5, September 1919, 241–4 (243).
- 5 Cited in 'The looking glass', *The Crisis*, vol. 18, no. 5, September 1919, 246–9 (249).
- 6 Johnson, 'The riots'.

1919, 38 lives—23 Blacks and 15 Whites—were lost and 537 people were injured, a commission to study the causes of the riot was set up. Its resulting publication in 1922 became an important text on which both the sociological approach to race relations and race relations policy were based.<sup>7</sup> Nearly sixty years after its publication, sociologist Martin Bulmer noted that this ‘penetrating and honest report . . . remains a model’.<sup>8</sup>

The report was the first to recommend policy involving what had formerly been termed ‘the race problem’ based on a race relations model. Comprehensive, subtle and even-handed, it concentrated on alleviating the immediate causes of violence, on conflict resolution rather than on taking sides. The report rejected the biological racial perspectives of those such as Lothrop Stoddard but also distanced itself from those it felt were too radical on the black side.<sup>9</sup> The report heralded the triumph of a new, quasi-scientific and, above all, *diplomatic* race relations. Perhaps until Gunnar Myrdal’s publication of *An American Dilemma* in 1944, any moral content was removed from race relations. Such a perspective, as we shall see, had been germinating for some time and reflected the fact that race relations had largely been re-imagined in international terms.

The recommendations sought not to resolve the issues but to mollify both parties, preaching tolerance and instructing newspaper editors to capitalize the word ‘Negro’ and avoid the use of the word ‘nigger’. It set out, in treaty style, separate lists of suggestions to ‘White members of the public’ and ‘Negro members of the public’. The term ‘race adjustment’ was used liberally, instructing both sides to curb their most radical elements. It set out to reduce armaments by recommending ‘that the most stringent means possible be applied to prevent the importation, sale, and possession of firearms and other deadly weapons’, robbing African Americans of one of the few defences they had against white mobs.<sup>10</sup>

7 The Chicago Commission on Race Relations (CCRR), *The Negro in Chicago: A Study of Race Relations and a Race Riot* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1922).

8 Martin Bulmer, ‘Charles S. Johnson, Robert E. Park and the research methods of the Chicago Commission on Race Relations, 1919–22: an early experiment in applied social research’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 4, no. 3, 1981, 289–306 (289).

9 Lothrop Stoddard published his infamous *The Rising Tide of Color: The Threat against White World-Supremacy* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons 1920) just after the riots. Stoddard’s book pointed to ‘yellow’ nations—particularly the Japanese—as posing the biggest threat to white supremacy. He advocated separation of the races and withdrawal of Whites from areas in Africa and Asia, allowing separate nations to form. For a reference to Stoddard in the report, see CCRR, *The Negro in Chicago*, 450–1. W. E. B. Du Bois accused the CCRR of bias in its questionnaire. The CCRR refuted the accusations of bias, referring to Du Bois as a Negro ‘living outside of Chicago’, though it listed Du Bois’s complaints. See CCRR, *The Negro in Chicago*, 518–19.

10 CCRR, *The Negro in Chicago*, 595–651 (642). For a discussion of the disarmament of African Americans, see Kevin Yuill, ‘“Better die fighting against injustice than to die like a dog”: African-Americans and guns, 1866–1941’, in Karen Jones, Giacomo Macola and David Welch (eds), *A Cultural History of Firearms in an Age of Empire* (Farnham, Surrey and Burlington, VT: Ashgate 2013), 211–30.

**Race relations without scientific racism**

In this paper, I will examine the convergence of race relations and international relations that led to the perspectives of the Chicago Commission on Race Relations (CCRR), tracing the evolution of the theory behind 'race relations' from its first mention. Whereas authors have pointed to the influence of racist perspectives in developing US international relations,<sup>11</sup> I find that the emergence of race relations reflected patterns in international relations that were especially influential in determining how race was to be regarded in the interwar years. In particular, the rise of Japan provoked a questioning of racial assumptions in the United States, especially after the Russo-Japanese war of 1904–5. From this point, a more liberal approach—one that emphasized racial peace rather than racial reform—slowly became the predominant perspective towards race issues between the wars.

What do we mean by 'race relations'? It is both a paradigm governing sociological thought on the issue of race and the model on which policy has been based to deal with race issues. Edgar Thompson defined race relations as

all the relations—biological, economic, political, and cultural—which are incidental to the coming together in a common territory of different peoples of varied racial stocks and different cultures. . . . The race and the relations seem to be born together. The character of the relations, and hence the character of the race, is not predetermined by the traits of biological inheritance. . . . And as race relations change, the races literally change also.<sup>12</sup>

Race relations as a theoretical approach is indelibly associated with the sociologist Robert Ezra Park and his students (Thompson was one of Park's many influential students). Park defined race relations as the 'relations existing between peoples distinguished by marks of racial descent, particularly

11 See Alexander Anievas, Nivi Manchanda and Robbie Shilliam (eds), *Race and Racism in International Relations: Confronting the Global Colour Line* (Abingdon, Oxon. and New York: Routledge 2015); R. J. Vincent, 'Race in international relations', *International Affairs*, vol. 58, no. 4, 1982, 658–70; and Beau Grosscup, 'The racial rationale: constructing a theory of international power', *World Affairs*, vol. 140, no. 4, 1978, 284–303.

12 See Edgar T. Thompson (ed.), *Race Relations and the Race Problem: A Definition and an Analysis* [1939] (New York: Greenwood Press 1968), viii–ix. Henry Yu points out: 'The logical tautology involved in the culture concept as a causal explanation is disturbing, to say the least', in Henry Yu, *Thinking Orientals: Migration, Contact, and Exoticism in Modern America* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press 2001), 183. Others have made similar criticisms. See Robert Miles, *Racism and Migrant Labour: A Critical Text* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1982); Kenan Malik, *The Meaning of Race: Race, History and Culture in Western Society* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 1996), 3; and, more recently, Stephen Steinberg's trenchant critique in *Race Relations: A Critique* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 2007), 42.

when these racial differences enter into the consciousness of the individuals and groups so distinguished'.<sup>13</sup> Park has been called the 'father of race relations' by historians and sociologists.

The race relations paradigm certainly became dominant at the same time that Park emerged as the foremost sociologist of his period. Michael Banton noted that the first recorded use of the term 'race relations' was in the title of an economic study of 'Negroes' in various counties of Georgia in the United States published in 1911.<sup>14</sup> This is not quite true. It emerged in articles by American sociologists in the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>15</sup> However, Banton is right that the term came into more extensive use after the First World War. As well as the term 'race adjustment', 'race relations' gradually replaced previous terms like 'race problem' or 'race friction', implying that it was a permanent feature of the American landscape rather than a problem to be solved.

So what are its characteristics? Of course, relations between groups of people that today might be recognized as racially different existed long before this period of history. Moreover, the government—both state and federal—had already been defining races and thus setting out the terms for their relations for many years. However, we can identify what has been called the 'race relations paradigm' by several characteristics that make it distinct from what occurred in the past. Scholars generally agree that, with Park, the race relations paradigm rejected the biological definition of race, preferring cultural or psychological explanations for racial differences and conflicts. But there are other aspects that, I will show, also changed during this period.

- Races—and in particular, the white race—became more sharply defined. Ambiguities such as the question of whether Eastern and Southern European peasants or Japanese should be considered white were resolved as white became equivalent to 'of European origin', whatever the colour of skin.
- The hierarchy of races model espoused by those such as Madison Grant, whereby Anglo-Saxon or 'Nordic' peoples sat atop a long list of races classified by degrees of civilization, slowly gave way to a simplified list that emphasized cultural difference rather than relative civilization or racial evolution.

13 Robert E. Park, 'The nature of race relations', in Thompson (ed.), *Race Relations and the Race Problem*, 3–45 (3).

14 Michael Banton, 'Race relations', in David Theo Goldberg and John Solomos (eds), *A Companion to Racial and Ethnic Studies* (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell 2002), 90–6 (90).

15 See, for instance, Alfred Holt Stone, 'The Negro in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta', *Publications of the American Economic Association*, 3rd Series, vol. 3, no. 1, 1902, 235–72 (242, 263).

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- Whereas race issues had largely been local (in relation to the Chinese in California, Native Americans on the frontier and African Americans in the South) and specific, race relations defined problems between two groups of people with different origins according to a generic race relations model.

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- The behaviour of Whites towards racial minorities became problematized but, at the same time, naturalized. Just as biological explanations of race difference were undermined, they were replaced by race or racial antipathies, the natural response of one group to another of another race.

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- An internationally minded group of scholars and intellectuals stood above the fray and distanced itself from racial antipathies or crude racial theories but also from any concept of the 'lifting up' of a race or reforming the behaviour of others in an effort to prevent a race war. This was why the sociologists fiddled while Rome burned, as Stephen Steinberg characterized the detachment of Park and his students from the struggles of African Americans.<sup>16</sup>

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- Despite the ostensible neutrality of those studying race relations, the pursuit of equality by racial minorities was treated as 'stirring the pot' rather than the result of the denial of equality by Whites. In other words, questioning the existing racial order became the problem, one that would later be analysed in psychological terms.<sup>17</sup>

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Historians have often claimed that the Progressive Era was the 'nadir' of race relations.<sup>18</sup> As Mark Aldrich commented, these were the years of 'the white man's burden and the yellow peril; of Anglo Saxon concern with race suicide; of the emerging Southern caste system characterized by lynching, disfranchisement of Negroes, and jim crow laws; and of the increasingly open exclusion of blacks from the American Federation of Labor'.<sup>19</sup> More recently, historians such as Andrew Zimmerman, Paul Kramer and Eric Love have challenged that perspective, showing that this period was one of change,

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16 Steinberg, *Race Relations*, 106.

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17 This last point is discussed in Chapter 3 of Christopher Kyriakides and Rodolfo A. Torres, *Race Defaced: Paradigms of Pessimism, Politics of Possibility* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 2012), 80–119. See also Frank Füredi, *The Silent War: Imperialism and the Changing Perception of Race* (London: Pluto Press 1998), particularly 'Reversing the problem of racism', 108–31.

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18 Gregory Michael Dorr repeats black historian Rayford Logan's famous 'nadir' comment about the era in his review essay 'Conceiving contempt and pity: race and Progressive Era Americans', *Journal of the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era*, vol. 9, no. 3, 2010, 395–400 (395).

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19 Mark Aldrich, 'Progressive economists and scientific racism: Walter Willcox and black Americans, 1895–1910', *Phylon*, vol. 40, no. 1, 1979, 1–14 (1). See David W. Southern, *The Progressive Era and Race: Reaction and Reform, 1900–1917* (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson 2005).

particularly in the relationship between empire and race.<sup>20</sup> It is perhaps best to characterize the period as one of transition, when relations between the races were recast in international terms.

### The inherited system

Relations between the races were dealt with locally. If any theories governed these relations, they were inspired by the laissez-faire, Social Darwinian ideas of Herbert Spencer and William Graham Sumner. There was little direct comment on relations between the races; what there was indicated that African Americans' position in society was to be expected, given their racial inferiority. The few publications that dealt with race in the late nineteenth century concurred. German-born statistician Frederick Hoffman published *Race Traits of the American Negro* in 1896 with the American Economic Association; it was distributed by major publishers in the United States and Britain, and widely reviewed and discussed. Hoffman concluded: 'It is not in the conditions of life, but in race and heredity that we find the explanation of the fact to be observed in all parts of the globe, in all times and among all peoples, namely, the superiority of one race over another, and of the Aryan race over all.' Hoffman felt that the African race in the United States would gradually ebb towards extinction. Historian Joseph Tillinghast, raised in Rhode Island but the son of a South Carolina slaveholder, published *The Negro in Africa and America* in 1902. Again, chiefly due to the connection between African and American Negroes, it was widely reviewed and discussed. Tillinghast was similarly pessimistic about the fate of African Americans in the United States: 'It is the hard fate of the transplanted Negro to compete, not with a people of about his own degree of development, but with a race that leads the world in efficiency.'<sup>21</sup>

There was little attempt to coordinate race relations or even to compare the relations between African Americans and Whites to other contemporary relationships between races and peoples. Whereas Hoffman brings in international comparisons only to show the constant relationship between

20 Andrew Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa: Booker T. Washington, the German Empire, and the Globalization of the New South* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press 2010); Paul A. Kramer, 'Race-making and colonial violence in the U.S. empire: the Philippine-American war as race war', *Diplomatic History*, vol. 30, no. 2, 2006, 169–210; Eric T. L. Love, *Race over Empire: Racism and U.S. Imperialism, 1865–1900* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press 2004).

21 Frederick L. Hoffman, *The Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro* (Ithaca, NY: American Economic Association 1896), 312; Joseph Tillinghast, *The Negro in Africa and America* (New York: Negro Universities Press 1902), 227. W. E. B. Du Bois reviewed both books; see his 'Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro by Frederick L. Hoffman, F.S.S.', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 9, 1897, 127–33; and 'The Negro in Africa and America by Joseph Tillinghast', *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 18, no. 4, 1903, 695–7.

dominant and inferior races—he mentions the Japanese only to note that the Ainu suffered when they came into contact with the ‘superior race’ of Japan—Tillinghast, whose apparent strong point was the comparison of those of African origins with those still in Africa, does not compare either to other races. But, as the new century progressed, so did the challenge to the received Social Darwinian wisdom of ‘survival of the fittest’. As the Japanese rose, they challenged the western world-view of race superiority.

### 325 **Racial pessimism, fear of degeneration, race suicide and Japan**

Prior to the Russo-Japanese war, a *fin-de-siècle* pessimism, more evident in Europe than in the United States, gradually appeared across the Atlantic. Such pessimism, expressed vividly in British author Max Nordau’s *Degeneration*, published in 1892, held that enervation, hysteria, egotism and fatigue—all signs of ‘overcivilization’—were on the rise. Discussion of a recent increase of suicide became prevalent on both sides of the Atlantic in the 1890s. In 1894 the celebrated ‘infidel’ Colonel Robert Ingersoll wrote a letter to the *New York World* suggesting that the moral taint of suicide be removed.<sup>22</sup> The discussion of suicide was arguably more metaphoric than a reflection of real events: as Barbara Gates has shown, the suicide rate in the United States and in England was higher in 1860 than at any other time up to 1910.<sup>23</sup> Instead, the suicidal impulse was, as a book by S. A. K. Strahan, published in Boston in 1894, had it, ‘a sign of the degeneration of the human species, brought about by the deteriorating influences of civilization. . .’<sup>24</sup>

This pessimism gradually began to frame discussion about race. If the white race was degenerating due to ‘overcivilization’, might it lose out to ‘backward’ races that had yet to embrace civilization fully? Such prognostications were not new. As the African American intellectual Kelly Miller noted perceptively in a review of Hoffman’s book:

350 On the appearance of each census since emancipation, there has been some hue and cry as to the destiny of the Negro population. Public opinion has been rhythmical with reference to its rise and fall above and below the mean line of truth. In 1870 it was extermination; in 1880 it was dreaded that the whole country would be Africanized because of the prolific-ness of a barbarous race; in 1890 the doctrine of extinction was preached once more; what will

22 The letter was reprinted along with several rebuttals and a reply in Robert G. Ingersoll *et al.*, *Is Suicide a Sin?* (New York: Standard Publishing Company 1894).

23 Barbara Gates, *Victorian Suicide: Mad Crimes and Sad Histories* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1988), 111.

24 Cited in ‘Suicide and its sources’, *New York Times*, 14 January 1894 (a review of S. A. K. Strahan, *Suicide and Insanity: A Physiological and Sociological Study*).

be the outcry in 1900 can only be divined at this stage, but we may rest assured that it will be something startling.<sup>25</sup>

365 But 'overcivilization' theory gave new impetus to pessimism. Henry Cabot Lodge, the upper-class New England politician and popular historian, mixed Anglo-Saxon triumphalism with anxieties about the fate of their race in New England, where they faced a number of daunting challenges. Lodge focused his fears about the future of the Anglo-Saxon 'race' on immigrants rather than on African Americans or Asians.<sup>26</sup>

370 At the turn of the twentieth century, as historian Thomas Dyer has observed, few social science theories gripped the western imagination more completely than the idea of race suicide. It provoked enthusiastic discussions on both sides of the Atlantic among laymen and scholars alike, stressing the notion that entire 'races' faced extinction. 'Foremost among the true believers in this doctrine stood the American race theorist, amateur sociologist, and politician Theodore Roosevelt.'<sup>27</sup>

380 In 1903 Roosevelt wrote an open letter to a woman decrying childlessness in the better classes, and repeated this message often. His speech 'On Motherhood' in 1905 compared the wilfully childless with the soldier who runs away from battle or the father who fails to provide for his offspring.<sup>28</sup> Whereas Roosevelt made no reference to African Americans, a prominent woman in Seattle drew the obvious conclusion shortly after his speech: 'With race suicide prevalent among the whites; with early marriages and prolific maturity among Negro woman, one finds the strongest argument to substantiate the claim that ultimately America will be a black people country.'<sup>29</sup> Such an attitude contrasted with earlier predictions of the extinction of African Americans.

## 390 The Japanese

Race suicide was hardly associated at the time with Japanese immigration. Concern with the Japanese from a racial perspective may fairly be said to begin with labour, though only, like the Chinese, as potential competition

395 25 Kelly Miller, *A Review of Hoffman's Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro*, Occasional Papers, no. 1 (Washington, D.C.: American Negro Academy 1897).

26 Bluford Adams, 'World conquerors or a dying people? Racial theory, regional anxiety, and the Brahmin Anglo-Saxonists', *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2009, 189–215.

400 27 Thomas G. Dyer, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press 1980), 143.

28 Theodore Roosevelt, 'On American motherhood', a speech given before the National Congress of Mothers, Washington, D.C., 13 March 1905, available on the *National Center for Public Policy Research* website at [www.nationalcenter.org/TRooseveltMotherhood.html](http://www.nationalcenter.org/TRooseveltMotherhood.html) (viewed 19 June 2015).

405 29 Quoted in 'Against race suicide', *Seattle Republican*, 5 January 1906, 3.

for native American workers.<sup>30</sup> Sociologist Edward Ross, who coined the term 'race suicide' in his article 'The Causes of Racial Superiority',<sup>31</sup> had already complained about the Japanese in 1900, specifying them but including Chinese and Asian Indians in his complaint that to allow more immigration that would 'underlive' American labour was essentially race suicide.<sup>32</sup> But the main thrust of the 'race suicide' issue, when it was taken up by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1903, was directed at the low birth-rate of white Anglo-Saxons rather than against any specific group.

However, in the context of *fin-de-siècle* fears for their future, Europeans were growing increasingly nervous of Japan's power and influence. In 1895 the Japanese victory over China in the first Sino-Japanese War had many ruing the fact that a non-white people had proved their ability to use European weapons and tactics. The phrase 'yellow peril' was uttered by none other than Kaiser Wilhelm at this time. Many Americans, however, preferred to look upon the Japanese as American protégés. The title of one popular book of the time, *Yankees of the East*, sums up popular perspectives on Japan.<sup>33</sup> As one newspaper put it in 1895: 'The "yellow peril" is what is now troubling excitable folk in Europe . . . The phrase covers the fear of a tremendous conflict impending with the yellow races . . .'<sup>34</sup>

Whereas Americans pointed to the industrial competition Japan might soon provide, France immediately saw a threat to its Pacific colonies, and Germany feared Japan's ability to marshal coloured races against Whites. Some prognosticators foresaw the eclipsing of the West by the East. British/Australian author Charles H. Pearson predicted in a book on the future published in 1893 that the white race faced a terrible prospect: 'The

30 See American Federation of Labor, *Some Reasons for Chinese Exclusion. Meat vs Rice: American Manhood against Asian Coolieism. Which Shall Survive?* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office 1902). Though the pamphlet specifies all Asian labour, it mentions the Japanese only three times.

31 Edward Ross, 'The causes of racial superiority', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 18, July 1901, 67–89.

32 Ross was reported as saying, in a speech given in San Francisco in 1900: 'But what American labor objects to is exposure to competition with a cheaper man. The coolie cannot outdo him, but he can underlive him. He cannot produce more, but he can consume less. The Oriental can elbow the American to one side in the Common Occupations because he has fewer wants. To let him go on, to let the American be driven by coolie competition, to check the American birth-rate in order that the Japanese birth-rate shall not be checked, to let an Opportunity for one American boy be occupied by three Orientals so that the American will not add that boy to his family, is to reverse the current of progress, to commit race suicide.' Ross was dismissed by Stanford University at the insistence of the widow of Leland Stanford, as the Stanfords had made their fortune employing Chinese labour on the railroads. Ross's speech, quoted in William Jennings Bryan's newspaper *The Commoner* (Lincoln, NE) as 'Prof. Ross on cheap labor', 22 March 1901, 6.

33 William Eleroy Curtis, *The Yankees of the East: Sketches of Modern Japan* (New York: Stone and Kimball 1896).

34 *Clinch Valley News*, 30 August 1895, 2.

day will come, and perhaps is not far distant, when the European observer will look round to see the globe girdled with a continuous zone of the black and yellow races, no longer too weak for aggression. . . .’ The book was widely reviewed in the United States in sociological and political science circles.<sup>35</sup>

Even after the comprehensive and, to European powers, impressive victory of Japan over China, the prospect of Japan in its own right held little terror. Instead, it was the Japanese potential to lead other ‘Asiatics’. The fear of the ‘yellow peril’ envisioned not a dominant Japanese power but the prospect of the Japanese organizing 300 million Chinese against the Europeans. The *Minneapolis Journal* rather mockingly referred to the fears expressed by Kaiser Wilhelm again in 1903, characterizing them as the idea ‘that some Japanese Alexander will start out westward to conquer the world, drawing upon China’s millions for soldiers, and stimulating them to the extreme fighting fervour under Jap officers trained in modern tactics’.<sup>36</sup>

The Japanese themselves were often favourably compared to the Chinese when they arrived, albeit in very small numbers, in the United States. In 1883, just after the ban on Chinese labour brought in by the Geary Act of 1882, an Oregon paper editorialized, in a very brief piece: ‘One of the effects of the Chinese Exclusion Act is the increase of Japanese immigration to this coast. The Japanese are always ready to assimilate and adopt our customs, being of a higher grade of humanity than their continental neighbors the Chinese.’<sup>37</sup>

Even as William Jennings Bryan and others pleaded to include a ban on the Japanese as well as the Chinese when the Geary Act came up for renewal in 1902, many noted that the Japanese were not a ‘Mongol’ race but more closely related to Aryan or Semitic races. The *San Francisco Call*, which agreed with the exclusion of the Japanese (and later played a key anti-Japanese role in the 1906 schools crisis), did so only because the lowest of Japanese who were not of the ‘conquering race’—the majority of the Japanese nation—would come. The paper claimed in 1898:

While ethnologists differ as to the racial rank of the Japanese, none of the disputants assigns them definitely to the Mongols. . . . In their color, stature and characteristics the conquering race has marked features in common with the European races and the Brahmins who represent in India the survival of Aryan blood.<sup>38</sup>

35 Charles H. Pearson, *National Life and Character: A Forecast* [1893] (New York: Macmillan 1913), 89. See, for reviews of the book, Frank H. Giddings in *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 10, no. 1, 1895, 160–2, and C. H. Lincoln in *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 5, January 1895, 140–3.

36 ‘The yellow peril’, *Minneapolis Journal*, 4 June 1903, 3.

37 *The Daily Astorian* (Astoria, OR), 14 October 1883, 2.

38 ‘The Japanese race’, *San Francisco Call*, 10 February 1898, 6.

In the Netherlands East Indies (now Indonesia) in 1899 the Dutch promoted the Japanese within the colony's system of racial classification. No longer 'Foreign Orientals', the Japanese were now officially 'Europeans'. This status granted them a wide range of legal and political rights denied to 'Orientals' and native Indonesians.<sup>39</sup>

In the wake of the Russo-Japanese conflict of 1904–5, the admiration for the civilized nature of the Japanese turned into fear of a competitor race, and many thoughtful Americans adopted the less sanguine attitude of their European counterparts. Mohandas Gandhi, for example, grasped from remote South Africa that 'the people of the East seem[ed] to be waking up from their lethargy' immediately following the war.<sup>40</sup> The white supremacist Lothrop Stoddard and the black activist and sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois, on opposite sides of most discussions on race, agreed on the significance of the event. Stoddard noted that 'above all, the legend of white invincibility lay, a fallen idol, in the dust'.<sup>41</sup> Du Bois wrote in 1906: 'The Russo-Japanese war has marked an epoch. The magic of the word "white" is already broken. . . . The awakening of the yellow races is certain. That the awakening of the brown and black races will follow, no unprejudiced student of history can doubt.'<sup>42</sup>

Into this nervous atmosphere, the news that the Japanese had defeated the Russians created as much dismay as admiration, particularly on the West Coast of the United States. Hostility to the Japanese grew in its wake. The historian John Higham noted that, from 1905 on, 'war scares recurrently agitated the Pacific states', with Japanese immigrants generally portrayed as an army of soldiers and spies invading the region.<sup>43</sup> After the end of last battle between Russia and Japan ended at Mukden, the California legislature passed a resolution expressing opposition to Japanese immigration.<sup>44</sup>

It was only after the Japanese victory that agitation against the Japanese occurred. It is within this context that the schools crisis that broke out in 1906 should be seen. On 11 October 1906, the San Francisco school board passed a resolution demanding that all 'Chinese, Japanese or Korean children' be sent to the Oriental public school. The move was specifically aimed at Japanese pupils: Chinese pupils already attended the Oriental school. The move

39 Joseph M. Henning, *Outposts of Civilization: Race, Religion, and the Formative Years of American-Japanese Relations* (New York and London: New York University Press 2000), 167.

40 Gandhi, quoted in Rotem Kowner, 'Between a colonial clash and World War Zero: the impact of the Russo-Japanese war in a global perspective', in Rotem Kowner (ed.), *The Impact of the Russo-Japanese War* (London: Routledge 2007), 1–25 (2).

41 Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color*, 12.

42 Du Bois, quoted in Bill V. Mullen and Cathryn Watson (eds), *W. E. B. Du Bois on Asia: Crossing the World Color Line* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi 2005), vii.

43 John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860–1925* [1955] (New York: Atheneum 1973), 172

44 Masuda Hajimu, 'Rumors of war: immigration disputes and the social construction of American-Japanese relations, 1905–1913', *Diplomatic History*, vol. 33, no. 1, 2009, 1–37 (9).

545 outraged the Japanese community in San Francisco, who refused to comply with the order and contacted the press in Japan. On 22 October the *Mainichi Shimbun*, a Tokyo daily owned by a member of the Japanese legislature, called on its readers: 'Stand up, Japanese nation! Our countrymen have been humiliated on the other side of the Pacific. Our poor boys and girls have been expelled from the public schools by the rascals of the United States . . .'<sup>45</sup> President Theodore Roosevelt saw the difficulties for diplomacy attending such an incident. He warned Congress of the 'gravest consequences' of the school board's action, which he called a 'wicked absurdity'.<sup>46</sup>

550 The character of the Japanese immigrant was perceived differently than the 'servile' Chinese peasant that undercut the wages of American labour. In November 1906 the *San Francisco Chronicle* spelt out its opposition to Japanese immigration: The 'objection of our people is simply to the establishment of Oriental forms of civilization in the United States. We particularly object to a Japanese invasion, because, as the Japanese are the most virile of Oriental peoples, their lodgment on our shores is by so much the more dangerous.'<sup>47</sup>

560 A diplomatic crisis between Japan and the United States followed the schools crisis. Several war scares emerged at the time prompted by Japan's protests. The so-called 'gentlemen's agreement'—whereby Japan voluntarily restricted its citizens from emigrating to the United States—seemed to resolve the conflict for a time, but anti-Japanese rioting broke out in San Francisco in late May 1907. Japanese and American newspapers in both countries ignited another war scare.<sup>48</sup>

## 565 **The sociologists and the beginnings of race relations**

570 Whereas there was certainly a response to the war among colonial subjects, the response of their-then overlords, who assumed their racial superiority, was

45 Quoted in Thomas A. Bailey, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Japanese-American Crises: An Account of the International Complications arising from the Race Problem on the Pacific Coast* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 1934), 50. Bailey's account remains invaluable for understanding the contrast between the perspectives of the San Francisco school board and Washington. See also Charles M. Wollenberg, *All Deliberate Speed: Segregation and Exclusion in California Schools, 1855–1975* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press 1976), 52–68; and David Brudnoy, 'Race and the San Francisco school board incident: contemporary evaluations', *California Historical Quarterly*, vol. 50, no. 3, 1971, 295–312.

580 46 Theodore Roosevelt, quoted in Bailey, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Japanese-American Crises*, 89–90.

47 Editorial, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 30 November 1906, quoted in Herbert B. Johnson, *Discrimination against the Japanese in California: A Review of the Real Situation* (Berkeley, CA: Courier Publishing Company 1907), 15.

585 48 For a discussion of these riots, see Erika Lee, 'The "yellow peril" and Asian exclusion in the Americas', *Pacific Historical Review*, vol. 76, no. 4, 2007, 537–62, esp. 550–4.

sharper. The interpretation of events was determined by a *fin-de-siècle* insecurity expressed in racial terms. As Akira Iriye has noted, in the United States and Britain, 'the fear of a pan-Asian combination was vastly exaggerated' due to the 'West's insecurity about its position in Asia'.<sup>49</sup> And as Frank Füredi has stated: 'Race conflict was presented in a zero-sum way. Success for one race was presented as the inevitable prelude to the subjection, if not the destruction, of the other.'<sup>50</sup>

Concomitantly, the beginnings of race relations—the desire to head off racial violence—can be seen. The paternalistic intervention by an acknowledged 'superior' race was no longer deemed applicable in an age in which non-white races demonstrated success. African Americans joined the 'continuous girdle of black and yellow' fearfully alluded to by Charles Pearson in the minds of those concerned with racial matters. No longer a pathetically inadequate race doomed to extinction, African Americans represented the two-thirds of the world that threatened Whites. With a zero-sum mentality whereby the gains of one race seemed to harm another, the emphasis on uplift personified by Booker T. Washington gave way to repressive laws designed to keep Blacks down. Jim Crow laws, having begun in the 1880s and sanctioned by the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision, tightened their grip on African Americans.<sup>51</sup>

An emerging group of sociologists, concomitant with the rise of Progressivism, accepted the pessimistic prognoses of the times but rather than lamenting the situation pointed to in Pearson's jeremiad and even more in Nordau's *Degeneration*, called for some meaningful action based on a scientific understanding of the issues involved.<sup>52</sup> Thus, the relatively new field of sociology divided between those who might be termed Social Darwinists—influenced chiefly by Herbert Spencer and, in the United States, William Graham Sumner—and a newer generation that challenged the individualist and strictly biological notions. The latter believed intelligent intervention might alleviate what they agreed was a dangerous situation. Lester Ward, Charles H. Cooley and Edward A. Ross joined in an assault on the earlier views, contrasting their social optimism with Sumner's social pessimism. In the first issue of the *American Journal of Sociology* published in 1895, Albion Small, who later hired

49 Akira Iriye, *Power and Culture: The Japanese-American War 1941–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1981), 51.

50 Füredi, *The Silent War*, 62.

51 For a useful history of Jim Crow laws, see C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* [1955] (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press 2002). See also Michael Perman, *Struggle for Mastery: Disfranchisement in the South, 1888–1908* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press 2001). On the progress of Jim Crow laws at this time, see August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, 'The rise of segregation in the federal bureaucracy, 1900–1930', *Phylon*, vol. 28, no. 2, 1967, 178–84.

52 See Pearson, *National Life and Character*; and Max Nordau, *Degeneration* [1892], trans. from the German (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press 1993). Nordau arguably led *fin-de-siècle* thought in arguing that the spirit of the times was characterized by enervation, exhaustion, hysteria, egotism and inability to adjust or to act.

Robert Ezra Park to teach at the University of Chicago, noted sombrely that ‘the relations between man [and] man are not what they should be’, and called for some action to ‘right the wrongs’.<sup>53</sup> However, there were no articles in the journal that century about race relations, save one that concerned Europeans.<sup>54</sup>

Race relations gradually emerged from such Progressivism, using policy to allay problems that others simply identified as hopeless. A group of statisticians and economists who first studied the ‘race problem’ in the South were led by Walter Willcox. Willcox saw himself as between the radical anti-Negro attitudes of Governor James K. Vardaman of Mississippi, the infamous racist governor who objected to the education of any Blacks, and what he saw as the radical pro-Negro perspectives of W. E. B. Du Bois. In other words, Willcox might have been seen as one of the forerunners of race relations, as a Northerner attempting to find a solution for what had been a regional issue but was increasingly seen as a national or even international problem.

Typifying the era, Willcox felt that a solution to the problems of African Americans was a system that apprenticed black children to white families until the age of 21, where they might learn ‘what they [African Americans] need most of all to learn[:] those habits of obedience, industry, self-restraint, and sexual morality, the lack of which is now gradually undermining the race and may prove its destruction’. Revealing a stages theory of racial development, he claimed that the real basis of Negroes’ problems, including their criminality, was the ‘race separation [that] has led Negroes to [a] weakened grip on white man’s civilization’. In the future, Willcox predicted, ‘the [black] race will follow the fate of the Indians’, a victim of disease, vice, crime and discouragement brought on by its own inability to compete in the economic struggle for existence.<sup>55</sup>

### Josiah Royce, Alfred Holt Stone *et al.*

Josiah Royce, a Harvard idealist philosopher influenced by and his close friend William James, was one of the first to refer to the Japanese in an article dealing with black/white relations, entitled ‘Race Questions and Prejudices’, published in 1906. Royce, at the peak of his career, began publishing on practical

53 Albion Small, quoted in Sean H. McMahon, *Social Control and Public Intellect: The Legacy of Edward A. Ross* (New York: Transaction Publishers 1999), 44.

54 See, for instance, Carlos C. Closson, ‘The hierarchy of European races’, *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1897, 314–27; or Georges Vacher de Lapouge, ‘Old and new aspects of the Aryan question’, trans. from the French by Carlos C. Closson, *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 5, no. 3, 1899, 329–46. The only exception—perhaps predictably—was W. E. B. Du Bois, ‘The study of the Negro problems’, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 11, January 1898, 1–23.

55 Walter Willcox, quoted in Aldrich, ‘Progressive economists and scientific racism’, 5. See also Robert Cherry, ‘Myrdal’s cumulative hypothesis: its antecedents and its contemporary applications’, in Thomas D. Boston (ed.), *A Different Vision. Volume Two: Race and Public Policy* (London and New York: Routledge 1997), 17–37 (23).

issues in philosophy around that time. Speaking of the need to promote harmony between races, he reminded readers to ‘recall what the recent war between Japan and Russia has already meant for the future of the races of men’. He went on: ‘And the recent war has shown us what Japan meant by imitating our Western ways. . . Already I have heard some tender souls amongst us say: “It is *they* who are racially *our* superiors.” Some of us may live to see Japanese customs pervading our land. . .’ Royce warned his readers that, though the ‘negro has so far shown none of the great powers of the Japanese’, it is best to be placatory when it comes to preventing race friction.<sup>56</sup> Referring obliquely to Japan, he noted:

The trouble comes when you tell the other man, too stridently, that you are his superior. Be my superior, quietly, simply showing your superiority in your deeds, and very likely I shall love you for the very fact of your superiority. For we all love our leaders. But tell me that I am your inferior, and then perhaps I may grow boyish, and may throw stones. Well, it is so with races.<sup>57</sup>

Royce also identified race antipathies as the basis of the race problem. Rejecting the emphasis on scientific studies of racial difference, he argued that, thus far, the science was inconclusive. Instead, he argued, ‘our so-called race-problems are merely the problems caused by our antipathies’.<sup>58</sup>

Mississippian Alfred Holt Stone, an American planter, writer, politician and tax commissioner for the state of Mississippi, developed some of the themes explored by Royce but his writings also changed their tone in discussions of African Americans after 1904–5. Starting out pessimistically with regard to the prospects for African Americans, Stone is perhaps most important for demonstrating the shift from uplift strategies to zero-sum strategies based on racial separation. When Stone began writing, his articles, published by the American Economic Association and also in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, were in the same vein as the works by Frederick Hoffman and Joseph Tillinghast: he too forecast the competitive extinction of Negro Americans. In an *Atlantic Monthly* article published in 1903, Stone attributed whatever successes Negro Americans had achieved to the infusion of white blood, and pointed to both Du Bois and Booker T. Washington as leading examples.<sup>59</sup>

Stone has been condemned for constantly justifying and defending slavery.<sup>60</sup> Of course, this is true. Stone, a native Mississippian, certainly held

56 Josiah Royce, ‘Race questions and prejudices’, *International Journal of Ethics*, vol. 16, no. 3, 1906, 265–88 (266, 270). On Royce’s work in general, see Bruce Kucklick, *Josiah Royce: An Intellectual Biography* (Indianapolis, IN and New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company 1972).

57 Royce, ‘Race questions and prejudices’, 275.

58 *Ibid.*, 285.

59 Alfred Hope Stone, ‘The mulatto factor in the race problem’, *Atlantic Monthly*, May 1903, 658–61.

60 See James G. Hollandsworth, Jr, *Portrait of a Scientific Racist: Alfred Holt Stone of Mississippi* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press 2008).

the views of his contemporaries in southern society. But he was also an intelligent, persuasive and creative thinker. In 1908 Stone produced a seminal study in race relations that heavily influenced Robert Ezra Park.<sup>61</sup> Stone began by admitting that race differences—whatever their cause—existed in the reaction of Whites to darker races but also *vice versa*. Stone's article, entitled 'Is Race Friction between Blacks and Whites in the United States Growing and Inevitable?', identified slavery as a system that had kept in check racial antipathies that would naturally have occurred when the black and white races came into contact by systematizing the relationship of inferiority and superiority.

Stone's article reflected a perception that these relationships were more fluid than his previous work and, crucially, identified its origin in the international sphere. Here, Stone clearly imposed the world-view of the intellectual elite rather than any actual experience. 'And the white man may with possible profit pause long enough to ask the deeper significance of the negro's finding of himself. May it not be only part of a general awakening of the darker races of the earth?'<sup>62</sup> This was a relatively new connection between discussions of international issues and what had hitherto been strictly a problem located in the South. Unlike in earlier articles, Stone referred to Japan and, specifically, to the Japanese victory in this article about black and white race issues, pointing to the black response, which he called a 'quite clear cry of exultation over the defeat of a white race by a dark one'.<sup>63</sup>

The white man on the Pacific Coast may insist that he does not feel anything like the race prejudice toward the Chinaman that he does toward the Japanese. In truth the antipathy is equal in either case but the Chinaman accepts the position and imputation of inferiority—no matter what or how he may really feel beneath his passive exterior. On the other hand the Japanese neither accepts the position nor plays the rôle of an inferior, and when attacked he does not run. . . . We need not ask what would be the situation in India, and what the size of the British garrison there, if the Hindus had the assertive and pugnacious characteristics of the Japanese, veiled though the latter are behind a bland and smiling demeanor.<sup>64</sup>

Having identified race antipathies as permanent features of race contact, he noted that there was no solution to racial problems other than racial

61 Whereas the influence of W. I. Thomas on Park's work has been noted by, among others, Fred H. Matthews, in *Quest for an American Sociology: Robert E. Park and the Chicago School* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press 1977), the fact that Park adopted almost word for word Stone's earlier hypotheses has been less noted.

62 Alfred Holt Stone, 'Is race friction between Blacks and Whites in the United States growing and inevitable?', [*American Journal of Sociology*], vol. 13, no. 5, 1908, 676–97 (695).

63 *Ibid.*, 696.

64 *Ibid.*, 681–2.

separation or amalgamation. 'And in no proper conception is either of these a "solution".' Stone lay the foundations for race relations policy by stressing that the real problem was in the 'race consciousness' created by those who drew attention to race issues. As he noted: 'The white man is no wiser than the ostrich if he refuses to see the truth that in the possibilities of race friction the negro's increasing consciousness of race is to play a part scarcely less important than the white man's racial antipathies. . . .' The real problem was those, black or white, who stirred the pot. Stone, no doubt drawing on his earlier work on the mulatto, pointed to the 'steadily increasing group of men. . . who refuse to accept quietly the white man's attitude toward the race'.<sup>65</sup> This reasoning pointed to the need to smooth out difficulties and downplay problems, incorporating the sort of diplomacy employed by Roosevelt in relation to the Japanese school segregation issue or by diplomats in negotiations between countries. Stone noted: 'We have wasted an infinite amount of time on interminable controversies over the relative superiority and inferiority of different races. . . . for the purposes of explaining or establishing any fixed principle of race relations [these discussions] are little better than worthless.'<sup>66</sup>

A parallel was emerging in relation to diplomacy. Again, the experience of the emerging power of Japan was most important. Alfred Thayer Mahan, a retired admiral in the US Navy, published his celebrated *The Influence of Sea Power upon History 1660–1783* in 1890, influencing a young Franklin Roosevelt as well as his cousin Theodore.<sup>67</sup> The German navy and the Imperial Japanese navy carefully studied Mahan's text, building up their navies along the principles he outlined. Mahan, in turn, paid close attention to the Japanese. In 1900 he wrote a series of articles for *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, collected and published as *The Problem of Asia and Its Effect upon International Policies*.<sup>68</sup> Writing just after the Boxer rebellion, Mahan identified Japan as a 'Teutonic power', along with Great Britain, Germany and the United States. But Mahan warned that the natural growth of nations resulted in ever-widening spheres of interest or dominion and stressed the need for equilibrium. Whereas Mahan in 1900 felt there was little threat from Japan because of the limited size of its population, by 1906 both Mahan and Theodore Roosevelt thought war with Japan likely on the basis of immigration, the Monroe Doctrine and the Open Door policy towards China.<sup>69</sup>

The challenge, therefore, was to stave it off as long as possible. The Old Diplomacy, which had been characterized by 'military alliances, the scramble

65 Ibid., 691, 696, 695.

66 Ibid., 678.

67 A. T. Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History 1660–1783* (Boston: Little, Brown 1890).

68 A. T. Mahan, *The Problem of Asia and Its Effect upon International Policies* (Boston: Little, Brown 1900).

69 Sadao Asada, *Culture Shock and Japanese-American Relations: Historical Essays* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press 2007), 67.

for colonies, and the arms race', was no longer appropriate for such conditions. The New Diplomacy, personified by Woodrow Wilson, was 'self-determination, removal of economic barriers, reduction of armaments, [and] peaceful settlement of disputes . . .'<sup>70</sup>

### Robert Ezra Park and race relations policy

Robert Ezra Park picked up where Stone and others left off, becoming the 'great pioneer in the study of ethnic groups and race relations'.<sup>71</sup> He, through his students perhaps even more than through his own writings, was an important influence on the development of race relations. His students included Everett C. Hughes, Herbert Blumer, Stuart Queen, Leonard Cottrell, Edward Reuter, Robert Faris, Louis Wirth and E. Franklin Frazier, each of whom became president of the American Sociological Society. Helen McGill Hughes, John Dollard, Robert Redfield, Ernest Hiller, Clifford Shaw, Walter C. Reckless, Joseph Loman and many of his other students spread the gospel of the Chicago School of Sociology, as it is called, throughout the land. His concepts defined the issue of race relations. Even at the nadir of his reputation, liberal sociology continued to build on some aspects of Park's work.

Park's major preoccupation with race may have begun when he worked for Booker T. Washington at the Tuskegee Institute. Sociologist Stanford Lyman in particular sees Park's interest in race as developing from his experience writing articles for the Congo Reform Association, an organization dedicated to exposing the abuses of King Leopold II of Belgium in the Congo in the early 1900s.<sup>72</sup> In any case, Park maintained an interest in both foreign relations and race, and drew comparisons between the two frequently. As he later recalled about his interest in African Americans:

I was interested, most of all, in studying the details of the process by which the Negro was making and has made his slow but steady advance. I became convinced, finally, that I was observing the historical process by which civilization, not merely here but elsewhere, has evolved, drawing into the circle of its influence an ever widening circle of races and peoples.<sup>73</sup>

70 Ibid., 84.

71 Donald A. Nielsen, 'A gothic sociology of modern civilization', *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1993, 109–20 (118).

72 Stanford M. Lyman, *Color, Culture, Civilization: Race and Minority Issues in American Society* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press 1994), esp. the chapter 'Civilization, culture, and color: changing foundations of Robert E. Park's sociology of race relations', 43–59.

73 Robert Ezra Park, 'An autobiographical note', in *Race and Culture: The Collected Papers of Robert Ezra Park*, ed. Everett Cherrington Hughes, Charles S. Johnson, Jitsuichi Masuoka, Robert Redfield and Louis Wirth (Glencoe, IL: Free Press 1950), vii–viii. See also Daniel Breslau, 'The scientific appropriation of social research: Robert Park's

The first article Park published in a sociological journal, 'Racial Assimilation in Secondary Groups' (1913), outlined a theme to which he continually returned. In it, he reiterated the idea espoused by his erstwhile employer, Booker T. Washington, when he stated that the same sort of pressure as currently obvious in the Balkans was making the Negro in the United States 'a nation within a nation'.

From what has been said it seems fair to draw one conclusion, namely: under conditions . . . of individual liberty and individual competition, characteristic of modern civilization, depressed racial groups tend to assume the form of nationalities. A nationality, in this narrower sense, may be defined as the racial group which has attained self-consciousness, no matter whether it has at the same time gained political independence or not.<sup>74</sup>

With this conceptual framework, Park began to systematize race relations as a form of relations between nations.

In this same article, Park pointed to the parallels between the Japanese and black Americans in the sense that they both provoked a response to what Park called a 'racial uniform':

The Japanese, like the Negro, is condemned to remain among us an abstraction, a symbol, and a symbol not merely of his own race but of the Orient and of that vague, ill-defined menace we sometimes refer to as the 'yellow peril.' This not only determines . . . the attitude of the white world to the yellow man, but it determines the attitude of the yellow man toward the white.<sup>75</sup>

Park's article is fascinating not only because it points out that racial fears form the basis of the idea of the 'yellow peril' but that racial antipathies are naturalized and attributed to the victims as well as the aggressors. However, he fails to explain why, just a few years earlier, many argued that the Japanese were in fact white. The stress on skin colour ignored the fact that conflicts between Whites and Japanese on the West Coast broke out not after mass immigration but after their victory over Russia provoked fears over the potential for a Japanese invasion to Americans on the West Coast. Prior to that, as we have seen, the Japanese had been favourably compared to the Chinese, due to their westernized appearance and lifestyles, close family life and tendency to live among rather than apart from white Americans.<sup>76</sup>

human ecology and American sociology', *Theory and Society*, vol. 19, no. 4, 1990, 417–46 (438); and Yu, *Thinking Orientals*.

74 Robert E. Park, 'Racial assimilation in secondary groups with particular reference to the Negro', *Publications of the American Sociological Society*, vol. 8, 1913, 66–83 (70).

75 *Ibid.*, 77.

76 The beginning of the anti-Japanese campaign leading up to the 1906 school segregation dispute is usually dated 23 February 1905, when the *San Francisco Chronicle* ran the headline 'THE JAPANESE INVASION, THE PROBLEM OF THE HOUR'. Before that, Japanese and African American children attended schools with Whites whereas Chinese children

During the First World War, Park endorsed the National Committee for Constructive Immigration Legislation (NCCIL), sometimes portrayed as one of the few liberal initiatives that set out an alternative to the restrictive legislation of the 1920s.<sup>77</sup> Headed by Sidney Gulick, a missionary who spent large parts of his life in Japan, and backed by a 'Committee of 1000' prominent citizens, the NCCIL resisted the debarment of all those of Asian background. Gulick inveighed against racial intermarriages and introduced the quota plan that would later be developed into the 1924 Immigration Act.<sup>78</sup> He favoured a 'rigid restriction of immigration of peoples so diverse from us as are the Japanese, Chinese, and Hindus'.<sup>79</sup> Park developed Gulick's emphasis on diplomacy and the need for tact when dealing with race problems, and answered Gulick's call for a 'New International Mind'.<sup>80</sup>

### The peace movement

In the wake of the First World War, the most horrendous war humanity had ever witnessed, a strong emphasis on peace contributed to an attempt to play down and smother racial conflict by means of a slow, legal approach.

attended segregated Chinese schools. See Irving G. Hendrick, *The Education of Non-Whites in California, 1849–1970* (San Francisco: R&E Research Associates 1977).

77 See, for instance, Son-Thierry Ly and Patrick Weil, 'The antiracist origin of the quota system', *Social Research*, vol. 77, no. 1, 2010, 45–78. Ly and Weil, in this interesting article, do, however, reject 'the notion of a clear split between restrictionists and liberals' (46).

78 The 1924 Immigration or National Origins Act awarded quotas on the basis of national origins. Blatantly racial, it identified the national origins of the population of the United States in 1890 (before large numbers of Eastern and Southern Europeans arrived) as being the basis of quotas in 1924. Preferring 'Nordic' immigrants, it cut down severely the numbers from Southern and Eastern Europe, and prevented any immigrant that could not be naturalized (i.e. Asians) from immigrating. See Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, esp. the final chapter 'Closing the gate'; Desmond King, [Making Americans: Immigration, Race and the Origins of the Diverse Democracy] (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press 2000); Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press 2004); and Mae M. Ngai, 'The architecture of race in American immigration law: a reexamination of the Immigration Act of 1924', *Journal of American History*, vol. 86, no. 1, 1999, 67–92.

79 Sidney L. Gulick, *American Democracy and Asiatic Citizenship* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons 1918), 103. John Higham notes that the NCCIL represented 'the one real effort on the part of liberals to define a clear-cut alternative to the main draft of postwar restriction' (Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 302). See also 'The regulation of immigration: principle features of the bill introduced into Congress by Congressman Benjamin F. Welty', 22 May 1920: University of Chicago, Regenstein Library, Papers of Robert Ezra Park, National Committee for Constructive Immigration Legislation, Folder 1 'Americanization', Box 3.

80 Sidney L. Gulick, *The American Japanese Problem: A Study of the Racial Relations of the East and the West* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons 1914), 213.

Rather than the increasingly forlorn attempt to show racial combatants the error of their ways, the discussion was framed in scientific terms. Scholars studying this era are familiar with the theories of the biological basis of race difference that were prominent, but commentators at the time also argued for a biological basis to international relations. In an article in a scientific journal in 1919, Physicist Perley G. Nutting assumed, like many others at the time, that exacting scientific standards could be applied to human relations:

The behavior of one nation toward another is in accord with those principles of biology relating to all life and growth. During extended periods of peace, amity and equity, growth and development are more or less continuous and uniform. Interspersed with these normal periods are intervals of violent readjustment of interrelations, periods of extremely rapid development along special lines and of general reformation of objectives, practises and habits. A similar statement would apply to the life of an individual and with slight modification to each living cell composing the individual.<sup>81</sup>

Nutting noted, after this opening sentence, that there was 'little to discuss in this simple biological principle'. The assumption in both these emerging disciplines was that the issues were no longer subject to political forces but involved natural inclinations that could only be managed from the outside by scholarly or scientific observers. Race relations, like international relations, became the preserve of the intelligentsia and the task was to manage conflicts rather than resolve them. An idealist's answer was to educate the ignorant masses who expressed the 'race conceit' that bred imperialism. But, as the idealism of the Wilson years receded, a policy of segregation of belligerent parties replaced the stress on education.

War was, however, still seen as an extension of race issues and therefore especially dangerous in the United States. Erstwhile Republican candidate and career diplomat David Jayne Hill, having been critical of Wilson's involvement in the war, stated solemnly that American intervention in Old World affairs 'would result in divisions that would be deeper than they are now and involve our Government in constant domestic turmoil; for it is not realized in Europe that we have in the United States all the races, all the race affections, and all the race prejudices that exist in Europe'.<sup>82</sup> Peace—both racial and international peace—was seen as 'a problem of management' designed to exclude irrational behaviour. Management, rather than reform, was the priority.

During the First World War, Park, following Stone and W. I. Thomas, began to develop further his idea that race prejudice was an objective reality. If that

81 P. G. Nutting, 'The principles and problems of international relations', *Scientific Monthly*, vol. 8, no. 1, 1919, 66–70 (66).

82 David Jayne Hill, 'The permanent court of international justice', [*American Journal of International Law*], vol. 14, no. 3, 1920, 387–92 (387).

were so, it was useless simply to condemn it, as many liberals at the time were wont to do, as simple ignorance about a particular race. In his introduction to the 1917 book, *The Japanese Invasion*, written by one of Park's students as a Ph. D. dissertation, Park identified prejudice against the Japanese on the West Coast as an interesting phenomenon in itself. Arguing against the liberal sentiment that racial antipathies were simply a matter of misunderstanding, Park said '... it would be more accurate to say that our racial misunderstandings are merely the expression of our racial antipathies. Behind these antipathies are deep-seated, vital, and instinctive impulses.'<sup>83</sup> He continued:

Race prejudice is a mechanism of the group mind . . . [which is stimulated by] unrestricted competition of peoples with different standards of living. Racial animosities and the so-called racial misunderstandings that grow out of them cannot be explained or argued away. They can only be affected when there has been a readjustment of relations and an organization of interests in such a way as to bring about a larger measure of cooperation and a less amount of friction and conflict.<sup>84</sup>

It is worth pointing out that identifying prejudice or antipathy as the most important determinant in creating race divisions at least suggests that those who exhibit the prejudice (or who experience the prejudice of the non-white) may also be grouped simply as the white race. Those who reveal prejudice against non-whites, as new immigrants coming to work in factories with white and black Americans quickly learned, become 'white'.<sup>85</sup>

Park continued to develop his internationalized conception of race relations in 1918, when he published a piece on education (with special reference to the Negro). Infamous for calling African Americans the 'lady of the races', the piece developed the idea that the United States, because it was made up of so many different ethnicities and races, had brought the world's problems to its doorstep. Such sentiments led Park and other liberals in the NCCIL to support immigration controls, if not for the blatantly racial reasons that many of its supporters voiced: 'But America, in view of all the races and peoples which we have incorporated into our body politic, lies in the future rather than in the past. As the ends of the earth have come together

83 Robert E. Park, 'Introduction', in Jesse Frederick Steiner, *The Japanese Invasion: A Study in the Psychology of Inter-Racial Contact* (Chicago: M. C. McClurg 1917), vii–xvii (xii).

84 *Ibid.*, xvii.

85 As Park noted: 'If racial temperament—particularly when it gets itself embodied in institutions and in *nationalities*, that is, in social groups based upon race—is so real and obdurate a thing that education can only enrich and develop it but not dispose of it, then we must be concerned to take account of it in all our schemes for promoting naturalization, assimilation, Americanization, Christianization, and acculturation generally' (Robert E. Park, 'The conflict and fusion of cultures with special reference to the Negro', *Journal of Negro History*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1919, 111–33 (130)).

in America, we have become, against our wills, a world's melting-pot. For us the international situation has now become a domestic problem.<sup>86</sup>

1040 The fact that Park taught sociology at the University of Chicago at the time of the riot in 1919 meant he was perfectly placed to lead the report by the Chicago Commission on Race Relations. However, he preferred to remain an *eminence gris* behind the study; his student, Charles S. Johnson, became the executive secretary of the Commission.<sup>87</sup> But Park played a big role nonetheless. As James McKee argues: '... Park's most significant participation in civic affairs was his involvement in the workings of the Chicago Commission on Race Relations... Park undertook a strong consultative role in the research process and in the preparation of the final document.'<sup>88</sup>

1050 He was, however, otherwise engaged. Though he distanced himself from the racial views of Lothrop Stoddard, he agreed at least with Stoddard's assertion that the Japanese question was the most important race relations issue of the day.<sup>89</sup> He soon returned to the problem of racial issues between West Coast Whites and the Japanese in 1923. That summer the Institute of Social and Religious Research, a foundation in New York, approached Park about directing a survey of race relations on the Pacific Coast. The director of the Institute, Galen S. Fisher, formerly a missionary in Japan, was concerned about the outbreak of hostility against the Japanese in California, Oregon and Washington. As Park noted at the time, 'race relations was a political issue'.<sup>90</sup> Whereas Fisher and others understood the proposed survey to be 'one of the great peace promoting tasks of 1924',<sup>91</sup> Park doubted that getting the facts to the public, as the survey was designed to do, would do much to lessen the existing tensions, but he agreed to head the survey nonetheless. The race relations model was not unanimously accepted by the social scientists involved in the survey. As

1065 86 Robert E. Park, 'Education in its relation to the conflict and fusion of cultures, with special reference to the problems of the immigrant, the Negro, and missions', *Publications of the American Sociological Society*, vol. 13, 1918, 38–63 (59, 62–3). See also Ly and Weil, in 'The antiracist origin of the quota system', who agree that liberals as much as conservatives originated the quota system.

1070 87 Steinberg, *Race Relations*, 45.

88 James B. McKee, *Sociology and the Race Problem: The Failure of a Perspective* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press 1993), 108.

1075 89 Stoddard warned: 'There is no immediate danger of the world being swamped by black blood. But there is a very imminent danger that the white stocks may be swamped by Asiatic blood' (Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color*, 301). See, for instance, Park's dismissal of biological race theories in his review of E. A. Ross's *Standing Room Only* and other texts in *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 34, no. 2, 1928, 376–82.

90 Winifred Raushenbush, *Robert E. Park: Diary of a Sociologist* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 1979), 107.

1080 91 Galen S. Fisher, quoted in Eckard Toy, 'Whose frontier? The Survey of Race Relations on the Pacific coast in the 1920s', *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, vol. 107, no. 1, 2006, 36–63 (39).

Henry Yu pointed out: 'Not all the survey researchers agreed with Park's connection between the Negro Problem and the Oriental Problem.'<sup>92</sup>

The Survey on Race Relations inspired some of Park's most celebrated and influential pieces. Even the title of 'Our Racial Frontier on the Pacific' suggests an international dimension to racial issues, an imagined line in the Pacific between Europe and Asia. Park noted: 'The present ferment in Asia and the racial conflict on the Pacific Coast of America are but different manifestations of what is, broadly speaking, a single process; a process which we may expect to continue until some sort of permanent equilibrium has been established between the races and peoples on both sides of the oceans.' In another passage, Park mused: 'Race has in recent years come to be what religion has been since the dawn of Christianity, an interest which divides and unites people irrespective of national boundaries.'<sup>93</sup>

Park, though perhaps the most influential architect of race relations, was hardly alone in his analysis. Most liberal thinkers at the time believed that race problems were simply variants of international issues and vice versa. The liberal journal based at Clark University, the *Journal of Race Development*, changed its name in 1919 to the *Journal of International Relations* (later to become *Foreign Affairs*).<sup>94</sup> John Dewey evidently shared Park's original analysis that racial prejudice is only an instance of a much broader problem: 'Race is a sign, a symbol, which bears much the same relation to the actual forces which cause friction that a national flag bears to the emotions and activities which it symbolizes, condensing them into visible-tangible form.'<sup>95</sup> Despite seeing race prejudice as a 'defective, hasty judgment', and despite being at the forefront of attacks on Americanization, Dewey told the Chinese Social and Political Science Association in 1922 that immigration legislation made sense: 'The simple fact of the case is that at present the world is not sufficiently civilized to permit close contact of people of widely different cultures without deplorable consequences.'<sup>96</sup> Park, who might fairly be understood not as an original thinker but as a synthesizer of the ideas of others, can at least be credited for inculcating these ideas into a new generation of sociologists.

92 Yu, *Thinking Orientals*, 42. As Park noted at the Findings Conference in 1925: 'It is not a question of getting the facts, because all these facts are likely to be misinterpreted.' (Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, Stanford University, CA: Survey of Race Relations Papers, Findings Conference, Box 4, Folder 10).

93 Robert E. Park, 'Our racial frontier on the Pacific', *Survey Graphic*, no. 56, May 1926, 192-6 (192, 196).

94 In April 1919, vol. 9, no. 4 was published as the *Journal of Race Development*; the following issue, vol. 10, no. 1 (1919), was published as the *Journal of International Relations*.

95 John Dewey, quoted in Gregory Fernando Pappas, 'Dewey's philosophical approach to racial prejudice', in Julie K. Ward and Tommy L. Lott (eds), *Philosophers on Race: Critical Essays* (Oxford: Blackwell 2002), 285-97 (289).

96 John Dewey, quoted in J. Christopher Eisele, 'John Dewey and the immigrants', *History of Education Quarterly*, vol. 15, no. 1, 1975, 67-85.

## From race problems to race relations

1130 The emerging role of the United States in the world caused many—particu-  
 1135 larly those sensitive to international events—to re-imagine race problems as  
 those besetting nationalities. Whereas Park and others rejected the biological  
 basis of racial difference, they recast races as different national minorities.  
 Whereas many African American observers at the time saw the riots of 1919  
 as an inevitable product of their race's growing power, sociologists and  
 thoughtful Whites imagined they were early and dangerous outbreaks  
 leading to an international race war. Segregation of potential combatants—  
 not as an assertion of race superiority—became the basis of liberal support  
 for the blatantly racial immigration acts of the early 1920s. This is perhaps  
 why liberals tolerated segregation, despite their rejection of Social Darwinism  
 and eugenics; their eyes were focused, like Park's, on the horizon, looking for a  
 coming race war. Any measures that could keep the peace at home—whether  
 or not they were morally acceptable—might be tolerated.

1145 The model of race relations theory that identified African Americans and  
 Japanese as similar in the way Whites responded to them lasted throughout  
 the interwar years, but the closing off of any immigration by the 1924 Act  
 ensured that the issue of Japan and the 'Japanese invasion' faded from the  
 forefront of the public mind until the Second World War. The destructive res-  
 olution of national antipathies in that war and the dominance of the United  
 States in the post-war world lifted anxiety in the West about a 'girdle of  
 black and yellow' encircling the globe. No more did Japan represent the  
 biggest threat—imagined in racial terms—to American predominance. The  
 race war anxieties were replaced by an ideological battle for the hearts and  
 minds of what was by then called the 'third world'. Accordingly, Gunnar  
 Myrdal's era-defining publication, *An American Dilemma*, rewrote the basis  
 of race relations, identifying the problem not as an inevitable outcome of  
 the coming together of different races and peoples but as a 'century long lag  
 in public morals'.<sup>97</sup>

1160 **Kevin Yuill** lectures in American history at the University of Sunderland, spe-  
 cializing in the intellectual history of civil rights in the twentieth-century. He is  
 currently completing a monograph on the 1924 US Immigration Act and has  
 previously published on immigration during FDR's presidency, African Amer-  
 1165 icans and firearms, and a monograph entitled *Richard Nixon and the Rise of  
 Affirmative Action: The Pursuit of Racial Equality in an Era of Limits* (Rowman  
 and Littlefield 2006). Email: [kevin.yuill@sunderland.ac.uk](mailto:kevin.yuill@sunderland.ac.uk)

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1170 97 Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and American Democracy*  
 (New York and London: Harper and Brothers 1944), 24.