

Race, nation and empire; the forgotten sociology of Herbert Adolphus Miller

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journals.sagepub.com/home/jcs**Jan Balon and John Holmwood** 

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Abstract

Herbert Adolphus Miller (1875–1951) is a neglected figure within North American sociology, yet he made a distinctive contribution to the sociology and politics of race relations. He was one of the first sociological critics of eugenics and developed a distinctive approach to race relations and the position of subject minorities derived from a critical analysis of European empires. His approach was complementary to that of Du Bois with whom he had a close relationship. In this article, we trace Miller's critique of eugenics and the idea of 'Americanisation' as a policy of immigrant assimilation, showing the distinctiveness of his approach within North American sociology, including the milieu of Chicago sociology with which he was associated. We also examine the connection between his sociology of race and Park's position on race relations as being a process of gradual assimilation. We conclude with discussion of the Chicago school influence over Gunnar Myrdal's *The American Dilemma* and the alternative approach to race relations that both Du Bois and Miller had already outlined in the 1920s.

Keywords

Chicago school, domination, Du Bois, eugenics, immigration, race

In this article we discuss the contribution of Herbert Adolphus Miller (1875–1951) to sociological debates on race and immigration. He is a largely forgotten figure within North American sociology although he had a significant role in a number of key episodes within the sociology and politics of race relations. If he is remembered at all, it is as the co-author with Robert E. Park of *Old World Traits Transplanted* (Park and Miller, 1921), a volume within the Carnegie Corporation's research project on 'Methods of Americanisation'. It later transpired that the volume was written by W. I. Thomas, whose name was removed for reasons associated with a sex scandal that had led to him leaving

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his position at the University of Chicago in 1918. Miller's role came to be understood as 'cover' for the discredited Thomas that enabled the publication of the volume (Gordon, 1975). Miller's separate publications around the same time are largely ignored, including his alternative view on Americanisation presented in *Races, Nations and Classes; The Psychology of Domination and Freedom* (1924).

Miller was active within the settlement movement, and progressive politics more generally, alongside others influenced by pragmatism, including W.I. Thomas (Lissak, 1989). He took a course with Thomas in 1911 and the latter encouraged him in his interests in immigration from Bohemia and sponsored a visit to Prague (Balon and Holmwood, 2022). Jane Addams had established the first settlement at Hull House in 1889 and, together with Graham Taylor in 1897, set up the Chicago Commons, serving immigrant populations (Lissak, 1989; Schneiderhan, 2011). Miller was involved with the Chicago Commons and was also closely connected with Mary E. McDowell who established the University of Chicago Settlement House in 1894 and shared an interest both in the situation in Bohemia and migration from there to the United States. Many of the Chicago settlement women were more radical on issues of race than was typical of the men of Chicago sociology, with Addams, in particular, treating race relations as involving oppression and domination (Diner, 1970), as would Miller. This approach differed significantly from that of Robert E. Park and others within Chicago sociology.

Overlapping circles, segregated institutions and diverging sociologies

Miller's biography and his trajectory within sociology place him within what were, at least initially, overlapping circles. It is this overlap that leads us to associate him with the milieu of Chicago sociology. However, as sociological positions became consolidated in the development of the discipline, the circles begin to move apart and Miller's contribution came to be marginalised or, at least separated from the core of what would be designated as the Chicago school proper, even though it coincided with his involvement in the Carnegie research on the 'Americanisation of immigrants' which was itself central to the consolidation of the school (given that two of its volumes are associated with Park and Thomas).

In the case of Miller, we will suggest that his fate is also bound up with the way in which Chicago sociology itself developed and professionalised (as part of a more general development in American social science at the end of the 19th century and which occurred later for sociology (Furner, 1975)). The very nature of what would otherwise appear to be his propitious networks meant that Miller came to be aligned with academic practices and political leanings that were being displaced in the development of the Chicago school at its centre. In this way, Miller's fate has some similarities with that of the Chicago women discussed by Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley (2002), who would be regarded as conducting 'settlement sociology' and not rising to the standards of 'proper science' (see also Deegan, 1988).

We can also draw a parallel with Du Bois and other African American sociologists. As various writers have suggested, Du Bois's sociological arguments were neglected within

mainstream sociology, notwithstanding their significance and substance (Green and Driver, 1976; Itzigsohn and Brown, 2020; Morris, 2015; Wright II, 2020). After the end of post-Civil War reconstruction in the 1870s, the imposition of segregation under Jim Crow laws in the South, along with *de facto* segregation elsewhere in the US, meant that he was denied appointment at the centres of White sociology. At the same time, while his work was (typically) represented as specific to the experiences of African Americans, it was not taken up by Chicago (or other) sociologists of race relations. Du Bois was committed to a science of social relations as the grounding of his political interventions (Besek et al., 2021; Morris, 2015), but the urgent political situation of racial inequality dictated the shape of his career. His political work became more important to him, and he left academic sociology behind for several decades, thereby reinforcing his neglect in mainstream sociology which, until recently, regarded him primarily as a political figure, where his work was referenced at all (Green and Driver, 1976).¹

The organisation of Chicago sociology also contributed to the marginalisation of Du Bois and the subordination of other sociologists of colour (Baldwin, 2003: 405). In part, this followed from a divergence from Park's own understanding of race relations as primarily being an issue of the South and its system of 'caste'. This was something that was understood would be resolved by a process of gradual assimilation following migration to northern cities (Persons, 1987; Wacker, 1983). It also derived from Park's earlier position as amanuensis to Booker T. Washington from whom he derived his gradualist views on race as well as a consciousness of the antipathy between Washington and Du Bois (Lyman, 1992; Matthews, 1977). For other sociologists of colour, marginality to the White mainstream was a consequence of the segregated nature of higher education (Wilson 2006).

The Chicago department did come to train significant sociologists of colour – among them, for example, Charles S. Johnson and E. Franklin Frazier – but they took up positions in historically Black colleges, specifically Fisk University in Nashville (and later at Howard), and not at Chicago (where a colour bar existed *de facto*, somewhat in contradiction of Park's view of a gradual overcoming of racial prejudice). They maintained the 'official' Chicago position on race relations as being an issue of gradual assimilation. Park, himself as we have noted, went to Fisk after his retirement from the University of Chicago and visited part-year from 1936 until his death in 1944. E. Franklin Frazier's theoretical approach to race and the role of colonialism became noticeably more radical only after he left Fisk University to join Howard University in 1934 and after Park's death, though he retained respect for his mentor (Platt, 1991).² Miller was developing a similar position from at least a decade earlier and doing so within the Chicago milieu despite being increasingly marginal to it.

Jean-Michel Chapoulie describes the configuration of groups studying race relations when discussing the Chicago school's unique contribution to the study of ethnic and race relations in American sociology, which, he suggests, was rather limited as a field within sociology before 1950 and organised around just a few universities. For Chapoulie, the circle involved the University of Chicago at the centre, a group at University of Hawaii (involving Chicago trained sociologists), a separate group around Howard Odum at University of North Carolina and, finally, at 'the traditionally African American Universities Fisk (in Nashville, Tennessee) and Howard (in Washington)' (Chapoulie, 2020: 229).

Significantly, Chapoulie does not include Du Bois (1899) among those contributing to the field, despite his association with Fisk and his landmark study of *The Philadelphia Negro*. Indeed, major contributions by Du Bois bookend the period considered by Chapoulie. For example, *Black Reconstruction* (Du Bois, 1935), comes towards the end of the period discussed but it had been prefigured by an important article setting out its core arguments and criticism of the Dunning school of historiography in the *American Historical Review* (Du Bois, 1910).³ Nor does he discuss Miller as even a minor figure, except to provide the usual ‘clarification’ of the authorship tangle involving *Old World Traits*. Yet Miller (1916) had completed a study of the schooling of immigrant children in Cleveland, which was the basis of his selection to direct the research on ‘immigrant contributions’ for the Carnegie Trust’s Americanisation studies (in which series *Old World Traits* was published). It is as if the clarification of the ambiguity over the authorship of *Old World Traits* clears the way for Thomas’s contribution to be finally recognised and the *Polish Peasant* study to be given its place as a landmark in US sociology (Abbott and Egloff, 2008). At the same time, this lays the ground for the start of Chicago sociology ‘proper’ and, with that re-telling, Miller and his contribution to the sociology of race relations is lost.

Miller is displaced as a consequence of the evolution of Chicago sociology’s ‘collaborative circle’, to use Farrell’s (2001) term. Miller is a satellite that left the orbit and gravitational pull of the core members of the circle. Yet we do not think that explanation is sufficient. Farrell suggests that there are social structural conditions for collaborative circles, but he has little to say about the racialised and gendered conditions that might apply; these are central to the story of the ‘first’ Chicago school as it comes to be called in the period of its formation after the first world war (Fine, 1995). The displacement of female sociologists by assigning them to the settlement movement and of African American scholars to the segregated academy extended to others who continue to work in what was seen as an older, superseded, way as part of their collaborative circles.⁴

Farrell’s account (and that of McLaughlin) identifies the special ‘creativity’ and innovation of the core group as it rebels against orthodoxies to create its own distinctive position. The figure of Du Bois should be sufficient to remind us that those who are excluded might also have a significant claim to originality. Du Bois was never part of the collaborative circle, while Miller fell away. We shall suggest, too, that Miller represented a richer development of a Chicago sociological theory grounded in pragmatism than is found within the core group by extending its social psychology to issues of power and domination. In addition, he was alone among the White sociologists of the pre-war generation of Chicago sociologists inspired by pragmatism to seek to steer it towards a position connecting race relations and colonialism on which Dewey, for example, remained rather timid (Fallace, 2011), while Mead actively supported US imperialism as in the incorporation of Hawaii (Huebner, 2014).

Just as Du Bois developed a global (and post-colonial *avant la lettre*) angle to his work through the idea of an *international* ‘colour-line’, so, too, did Miller develop his arguments about domination to address problems of colonialism and empire, initially in the context of Slavic nationalism.⁵ It was a strategic decision on the part of core Chicago sociologists to align what they suggested was but a temporary colour-line in northern cities with a general process of immigrant assimilation. In contrast, Miller continued to

have an interest in both race and immigration, what connected them, and how they differed. In that context, we will suggest that he made advances in sociological theory beyond those at the core of the collaborative circle, albeit advances that fell on deaf ears. Indeed, at each stage of his career Miller's sociological positions were distinctive and different from those of other Chicago sociologists and the wider community of White sociologists. His 'advocacy' was distinctive, but it was based on his science. It was not what has subsequently been termed disparagingly 'advocacy research' (Athens, 2020).

Our claim that Miller's theories were more advanced begs the question. We are not arguing that the positions of Park and other members of the circle described by Chapoulie were 'racist' (Athens, 2020; Kivisto, 2017). Indeed, as we shall see, they were 'progressive' when compared with the eugenic position that was otherwise widely held in both public and academic circles, including among those associated with the wider progressive movement in politics, like Commons (1907). Miller's position *may be more aligned with current sensibilities in sociology*, but our argument does not depend on 'retro-fitting' him to it. As Go (2020) has argued, sociology across the period – whether in the US or Europe (see also, Bhambra and Holmwood, 2021) – was organised through an 'Imperial episteme', which operated to exclude those who were critical of empire and its systems of domination. Those voices did exist and they had allies with the White academy. Miller's arguments for cultural pluralism and equality are unequivocal and aligned with the position under development by Du Bois and other advocates of the 'new Negro' (Baldwin, 2003).

Eugenics and early North American sociologies of race relations

Following Fallace (2011: 104ff.), we identify three broad approaches to race within the mainstream US academy at the start of the 20th century. The first is that of eugenics where inherited biological traits were understood to differentiate racial groups in terms of a hierarchy of superiority and inferiority. This influenced popular discourse on racial mixing and 'replacement' and was bound up in xenophobic concerns about immigration in the last part of the 19th century and through into the nineteen-twenties. The second, moderate view, was that, while there were possibly some inherited traits characteristic of groups, most group characteristics were environmental in character and determined by different ways of life or cultures. However, this was typically presented in terms of superiority and inferiority of cultures which were then represented in a developmental sequence.⁶ This was the dominant position within the Chicago school of sociology, forming, for example, a core organising principle of Thomas's (1909) *Sourcebook for Social Origins*.

On this basis, Africans were identified as representing a 'lower' culture, with African Americans additionally understood to be deracinated in cultural terms by enforced transportation to the US, and only partially integrated into Anglo American culture when involved in a 'civilising process' of participation in the plantation household (Park, 1934). Southern and Middle Europeans were distinguished from Northern Europeans, who were either directly of 'Anglo American' culture or easily assimilated to it, especially where their religious heritage was Protestant. Primarily, however, the culture of Southern and Middle Europeans was understood to be a 'lower' peasant form of their

home national culture. The central question was how they were to be assimilated to the dominant Anglo-American culture. This was a central theme of Thomas and Znaniecki's (1996 [1918–1921]) study of the *Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, alongside the disintegrative and demoralising effects of the process of migration prior to eventual assimilation. It would also be the main theme of *Old World Traits* (1921) African Americans not exposed to the 'racial etiquette' of the plantation household in the South, as a consequence of being freed into sharecropping, were, in effect, understood to be incorporated into a similarly backward peasant culture.⁷

Fallace (2011: 105) identifies a third position; this was a 'multicultural and pluralistic view of race [which] expressed full cultural and biological equality among the races'. He associates it with Du Bois and Franz Boas. Even here there were ambiguities with regard to other advocates ostensibly of the same position. Kallen (1998 [1924]), for example, was an ardent defender of Jewish traditions against assimilation and an advocate of Zionism, but he did not include African Americans in his pluralist democracy. Herbert Miller, as we will see, is unequivocally of this third position albeit that his association as co-author of *Old World Traits*, would otherwise seem to place him in the second group. His advocacy of the plight of 'oppressed peoples' in Europe (including Jews) and his work with immigrants to the US from those groups might seem to place him closer to Kallen. However, he is unequivocal in including African Americans, alongside Jews, among the 'subject and oppressed peoples' that were the focus of his interest. In a letter he wrote to Du Bois, he outlined that his interest in the position of immigrants in the US derived from his prior interest in the situation of African Americans.⁸ Indeed, he explicitly challenged the 'myth of racial inferiority', whether on psychological or socio-cultural grounds, seeing the psychological and socio-cultural form of the argument as being equally a product of the modern period and its relations of domination (Miller, 1922).

Miller's early academic career is significant for understanding the development of his thought. On graduating from Dartmouth College in 1899, he took up a position teaching philosophy and athletics at Fisk University, teaching the first courses in sociology there (Wright II, 2010). He went from Fisk to Harvard in 1902 to study for a PhD in the psychology department. His thesis was on the topic of 'The race problem and psychophysics' and was awarded in 1905.

The department had strong interests in psychophysics and eugenics, as represented by Robert Yerkes, who had graduated the year that Miller joined and was appointed as an instructor (Cohen, 2016). Miller was encouraged by William James to devise an intelligence test as part of his dissertation research. As might be expected, when operating in a context where eugenics was strongly endorsed by more senior faculty as being scientific, we can imagine that Miller was careful to pay obeisance to its 'potential', at the same time as arguing that it had been misused (Miller, 1914: 390). In particular, he was concerned that it had been used to propose that differences among (racial) groups are indications of inherent capacity rather than environmental circumstance. Tests, he argued, had hitherto been administered to groups in very different circumstances with the unwarranted conclusion that discovered differences expressed within them were indications of inherent racial differences.

The test that Miller developed was along a number of dimensions.⁹ It was administered to three 'racial' groups – African Americans, Native Americans and White

Americans – all in similar circumstances of disadvantage. The White Americans included Highlanders from Kentucky and Tennessee as well as other rural locations. On this basis, Miller found few differences among the groups or the sexes. In particular, he concludes that, ‘race problems develop from the lack of common ideals and not from psychophysical differences. The cause of the difference in ideals is the accidental existence of external differences which stand for the symbols of the sameness of kind’ (Miller, 1905: 99).¹⁰

Explicating what the seemingly ‘accidental existence of external differences’ derived from – the structures of domination associated with races, nations and classes – would become his life’s work in sociology and inspired the political activism that went alongside it. In the conclusion to the article drawn from his PhD in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Miller argues that science is concerned to establish what is ‘necessary’, allowing the identification of what is ‘accidental’ as a possible focus of action. Racial differences fall into the latter category and are a product, for Miller, of the operation of prejudice and the absence of mixing. He writes, ‘the purpose of education and social progress is to make the accidental give way to the essential, and to let each individual stand for his true worth to society; then the problems as they now confront us will cease to exist’ (Miller, 1906: 363).¹¹

In effect, Miller proceeded ‘dialectically’ to show that whereas eugenics encouraged social control and the representation of social problems as deriving from poor ‘stock’, a proper scientific analysis demonstrated that the solution would lie in social reform, education and inclusion (with the important and fundamental proviso that inclusion also required the transformation of structures of domination).¹² Significantly, Du Bois included Miller’s article in the chapter on Negro Health and Physique as part of Atlanta University’s social studies and also as a source for the resolutions of the 11th Atlanta conference for the study of the Negro problem (Du Bois, 1906). Franz Boas had been invited to provide the commencement address at the conference (Liss, 1998). It is clear that from the outset of Miller’s academic career, Du Bois regarded him as among a select few White scholars who sought to establish the social scientific basis of race equality and draw appropriate political conclusions.

‘Race’, immigration and the social psychology of domination

We have discussed Miller’s involvement in research into immigration – for example, as author of a book on immigrants and their schooling under the auspices of the Cleveland Survey (Miller, 1916) and as part of the Carnegie Corporation’s Americanisation research project – in a separate paper (Balon and Holmwood, 2022). The reviewers of that paper wished us to dispense with the thread that connected Miller’s interest in the debate over the ‘Americanisation’ of immigrants to his interest in problems of race relations deriving from the forced transportation and enslavement of Africans within the Southern plantation system. However, for Miller, the two sets of issues are directly connected in terms of the processes by which hierarchies of cultural value are constructed in each domain.

In the other paper, we undertook considerable reconstruction work to tell the story both of the Carnegie Corporation’s Americanisation research project and Miller’s role within it. Indeed, the Americanisation studies receive little mention in the secondary literature on US immigration policy, which is much more concerned with the xenophobic

Dillingham Commission and its 42 volume report published in 1911 (King, 2000; Mirel, 2010). The major study of Americanisation as a public policy by George Hartmann (1948), has just two very brief mentions of it, notwithstanding that the author identifies two moments of intense political concern; specifically, the last decades of the 19th century leading up to the Dillingham Commission and 1915–1916, when war in Europe had accelerated the pressures to inculcate patriotism, and which had been the very context in which the Carnegie Corporation research had been planned.¹³

The Dillingham Commission had recommended stringent measures for controlling against poor ‘stock’, promoting eugenic arguments about unfit ‘races’, and arguing for a rigorous assimilation to ‘American values’, actions which were already in train in many cities and were gathered under the proselytising efforts of the North American Civic League for Immigrants. Different cities had ‘Americanisation Committees’ (Hartmann, 1948) and incorporated educators, librarians and social workers under that drive, but not always as willing participants (Jones, 2013).

The dominant discourse on assimilation is evident in the title of the Carnegie project – ‘The Study of Methods of Americanisation of Fusion of Native and Foreign-Born’ – albeit that the focus on identifying *appropriate methods* of Americanisation potentially steered away from identifying *social problems* associated with immigration (Lagemann, 1989). At the same time, it gave scope to researchers with a different orientation, like Miller, implicitly to contest the very idea of Americanisation through a critique of the current methods used by the many city committees on Americanisation that had been formed, just as he had done in his discussion of schooling in Cleveland.

The Carnegie project appears to have missed its moment. By the end of 1918, the impetus for it was petering out. It had been conceived during a period of febrile public concern about the patriotism of immigrants to the USA in the light of possible American entry as a combatant in WWI. Entry in early 1917 was decisive in bringing the war to an end in November 1918 with allied victory well before the publication of any of the studies, which were delivered into a very different political environment. After the war, public opinion settled into support for direct assimilation, and it had hardened against a more progressive understanding. In part, this was also as a consequence of the ‘race riots’ that occurred in 1919 in a number of cities, including Chicago (Waskow, 1966). Robert Park had been drawn into an advisory role for the study of the riots and had appointed the young graduate student Charles S Johnson to undertake the research (Chicago Commission on Race Relations, 1922).¹⁴

As Persons (1987: 34) suggests, the main Chicago sociologists conflated race and ethnicity with a rural-urban distinction and, in that way, represented African American migration to the north as posing problems of ‘adjustment’ similar to that of European peasants migrating to the US. They were involved in recommending that African Americans would be better to remain in the south and were involved in the Chicago Urban League’s actions in the first years of its founding to achieve that end (Strickland, 1966). It is this view that is also represented in the Chicago Commission report.

Miller’s approach both to issues of immigration and race relations is very different and had been evolving during his involvement in the Carnegie project. The immediate moment of Allied victory reinforced the call for assimilation and values of patriotism. In contrast, Miller stressed *freedom from oppression* and underlying and unrealised

(American) values of freedom, not patriotism as such. His research for the Carnegie project addressed immigrant contributions from subject minorities under the domination of European empires. Despite being immigrants from what in wartime were judged alien and enemy powers, they were animated by the ‘spirit of freedom’ (Miller, 1916: 56). For this reason, Miller shifted from a pacifist opposition to war to one of advocating participation (Balon and Holmwood, 2022)

Significantly, Du Bois had expressed a similar ambivalence to the war, regarding participation in it as necessary to the furtherance of African American claims for equal citizenship. They should participate as Americans and, as participants, should be granted the same rights and respect as other citizens. His experience of the failure of this strategy took him in more radical directions, as it did for Miller with regard to his subsequent critique of the pathologies of nationalism. Miller advocated internationalism reconciled with a ‘proportionate patriotism’: ‘It is my claim that already more than half of the values that give reality to our lives are internationally in existence and that the possibilities of pluralistic sovereignty make it entirely possible to be loyal to them. Most specific patriotic claims are anachronous’ (Miller, 1921a: 143).

When *Old World Traits Transplanted* appeared in 1921 under his name and that of Park, albeit written by Thomas, this view was absent, to be replaced by the standard Chicago view of a two-stage process of immigration assimilation. Miller had left the project half-way through to become secretary to the Mid-European Union and advocate for the rights of subject peoples, including Czechoslovak Independence (Balon and Holmwood, 2022; Bednar, 2022; May, 1957). However, he did not suspend his sociological interest in race relations, immigration and the problem of domination, albeit that by October 1918 the political engagement had become central. He returned to develop his sociological views and did so in explicit opposition to the position on Americanisation that had been reinforced by Thomas (and Park).

What was it about Miller’s approach that created difficulties, both in interpretation by other sociologists and by university authorities? Ultimately, it would lead to his dismissal from Ohio State University in 1932. We will not go into the latter episode in detail here. Suffice to say that Miller was dismissed for his toleration and support for racial mixing among his students and for his support for independence movements in Korea and India from Japanese and British imperial domination respectively (Sabine, 1931). A speech given at the start of the Salt March in India in March 1930, in particular, was cited by the university authorities.

This all rather gives the lie to the few sociological comments on Miller’s work that do exist. For example, C.W. Mills (1943) criticised a prevailing professional ideology of ‘social pathologists’ in which Miller is mentioned in three footnotes (albeit in one, it is to the editor of the series in which Miller’s book on *Races, Nations and Classes* (1924) was published). Social pathologists, according to Mills, operate from a perspective of ‘social disorganisation’. This is a position repudiated by Miller, although it is put forward by W.I. Thomas in his treatment of the ‘two-step’ process of disorganisation followed by assimilation associated with the migrant processes. Mills also argues that the social pathologists fail to address large social structures, when, as we shall see, Miller patently is concerned with the structures of domination associated with race, class and nation.

Another position, most recently put forward by Bednar (2022), is that Miller endorsed ‘nationalism’. A more nuanced version is put forward by Wacker (1983) in his brief discussion of Miller’s momentary role within Chicago sociology. He suggests that while Miller harboured ‘nationalist’ sympathies up to the end of the first world war, he subsequently allied national consciousness with racial and class consciousness and saw them all as equally ‘pathological’. According to him, Miller’s position evolved to be a more conservative position than that of Park and he argues that he became concerned with threats to stability and order (Wacker, 1983: 26. See also Švec, 2007).¹⁵

This is a serious error of interpretation. We have already seen that Miller endorsed what he called ‘*proportionate* patriotism’ and he was always conscious and critical of ‘nationalist patriotisms’ and the operation of what he called an ‘oppression psychosis’ (Miller, 1921a). He was also concerned about an emerging new risk of war and of rising anti-Semitism in Europe and the threat posed by fascist ethno-nationalism. However, he was an advocate of ‘revolution’ against racial political orders, or what we would now regard as anti-colonial movements. These did pose dangers of atavism associated with group identities formed under conditions of domination. But Miller never renounced his commitment to a plural and equal, multi-cultural political order both locally and globally (with America as a microcosm of problems with a global scale): ‘The intensity and diversity of opinion over the campaign for ‘Americanization’ have done much to stimulate thought. The Great War, the disorganization of Europe, the Ku Klux Klan and political restlessness have called attention to the need of a rational program rather than for a rationalized justification of status’ (Miller, 1924: vii).

Alone among contemporary commentators, Bernard and Bernard (1934) sum up Miller’s position correctly, if briefly, in their survey of sociological contributions to the field of international relations. For Miller, as they put it, nationalism, ‘is essentially a revolt against political and cultural imperialism. It flourishes to best advantage under repression, and as a consequence it develops an oppression psychosis. He believes it to be a disease, but thinks it must run its course and, . . . that its cure will be the disappearance of imperialism’ (Bernard and Bernard, 1934: 63–64).¹⁶

Miller developed his arguments in a series of articles written in the early 1920s, which drew on his research for the Carnegie project, but were not part of its report (Miller, 1919, 1921a, 1921b). These articles were re-drafted and gathered into his book, *Races, Nations and Classes: The Psychology of Domination and Freedom* (Miller, 1924). The book was a sociologically informed discussion of its topics for a general audience to persuade them of the need for a rational programme of freedom on a global scale.

Miller’s reference to a ‘psychology’ of domination suggests to Hinkle (1952) in his survey of theories of social stratification that his position was ‘individualist’ and not sociological in character. Yet, Miller explicitly begins with the *group*. Thus, he writes, ‘the individual according to the theory maintained in this study, brings to the group a predisposition to identify himself with it, and its influence on him arises from his own nature. By nature he is adapted to the group’ (Miller, 1924: 4). This aspect of human sociability is the condition of the survival of the species, where ‘each individual unconsciously postulates his own existence in the continuity of his group, because in the struggle for survival there was no other possibility of existence’ (Miller, 1924: 5). Miller argues, ‘we are the product of social relationships, or, in other words, of the groups to

which we belong. We react in terms of our groups, and must always be understood as reflecting them' (Miller, 1924: 10). There is, then, a 'consciousness of kind' and it is sustained through practices (including rituals) that reinforce membership. Moreover, the individual is seen by others in terms of his or her membership of the group, as sharing its characteristics and identifications.

Miller understands the Chicago school's concern with 'disorganisation', but inverts it. His primary focus is conflictual relations among groups and the domination of one group over another. He argues that, 'when the family ceases to hold the attention of the boy he joins a gang, for whose reality he will fight bloody battles. The adult must be in some group such as a family, club, or neighbourhood; otherwise he will be restless and lost like a rudderless ship' (Miller, 1924: 6). This informed his criticisms of the standard approach to Americanisation which sought to break the bonds that tied individuals to their groups, sustained through family, language and religion (including, in the case of the Czechs, their freethinking clubs and gymnastic associations). The immigrant was not naturally disorganised but could be made such and demoralised by a programme of Americanisation which failed to respect multiculturalism and facilitate a plural American culture, presenting instead the culture of one group as a monoculture to which others must adapt.

The focus of Miller's book, however, is not the problem of disorganisation, but of conflict, involving the mobilisation of solidarities. All groups, according to Miller, embody emotional identifications and there are processes associated with bringing group identity to the fore. These are processes of 'consciousness raising' that can help to bring a group into being and, for Miller, they are no different whether the object is religious, national, or economic. Thus, 'when the Englishman says that there would be no Irish question, if it were not for the agitators, or the capitalist that labour would be content if it were not for the professional organiser, they are looking at an incident, not at a main cause. Does the agitator represent a potential group into which those whom he is trying to influence will naturally fall when they are aroused to a consciousness of the significance of the group to themselves? If the agitation makes good, this will be unquestionable' (Miller, 1924: 10). Once the group is formed it will inspire loyalty (solidarity) and an impulse to self-determination (freedom). This will potentially involve conflict between groups, which, if self-determination is denied, will be consolidated as domination of one group over another.

Domination, for Miller, involves a singular consciousness of superiority and he devotes a chapter to the 'myth of superiority', and racial superiority in particular. This rehearses his earlier criticisms of IQ tests and 'pseudo-science'. For those who are dominated there is a form of 'double consciousness', an analysis that Miller (1924: 147) takes from Du Bois. One aspect is the group consciousness necessary to the struggle for freedom, the other involves the forms of consciousness that represent adaptations to the situation of being dominated. The dominant group advocates gradualism and mobilises stereotypes associated with acquiescence to justify its position, at the same time as praising the acting out of deference. Miller is clear that a global revolution against the different forms of domination is necessary, but there is also a danger that the identities mobilised by a group to achieve its freedom will contain the seeds of the domination of others, as in various forms of ethno-nationalism or religious identification. Miller does not denigrate different religious traditions, and he argues the necessity of learning from

their different ethical traditions. In offering an examination of the problem at hand, Miller eschewed both a scientific fundamentalism and a fundamentalism about Western civilisation as the embodiment of reason. Each has been used to justify domination of others and has presented that domination in racialised terms.

Group consciousness, for Miller, then, is a necessary part of the process of achieving freedom, but it is not the end point of any struggle. Nor could assimilation be the desired outcome, since the pathologies associated with the dominant group also need to be overcome. These are expressed within Anglo American values as conventionally understood and expressed within the dominant idea of Americanisation. Miller was interested in values of freedom that would transcend local patriotism and would govern inter-group relationships.¹⁷

In common with Thomas, Park, and other Chicago sociologists, Miller's starting point is Cooley's (1902) distinction between primary and secondary groups. The former is associated with the family and kin relationships, while the latter represents wider associations which can have a voluntary character. The typical development of these ideas addresses different cultural forms expressed within secondary groups in different settings – for example, rural and urban settings, peasant society and industrial society – and is a large part of the development of Chicago sociology's ecological approach. The relation between primary and secondary group was also used by Miller to address the problem of Americanisation where immigrant children were asked to repudiate the culture of their families in order to identify with American values; shame is one of the pathologies of domination and it does not serve integration but demoralisation.

However, Miller also developed a novel conceptual distinction between the *vertical* and the *horizontal* group. Membership in the nation, involves membership in a vertical group, while membership in a class involves a horizontal group. Both involve claims to solidarity and, since they are often cross-cutting, there is frequent mobilisation against class-conscious lower classes that they are disloyal or unpatriotic. Miller also understands religion to be a vertical group, one that can be mobilised in support of the nation. It is in this context that Miller addresses subject groups and the fact that they frequently exhibit religious and linguistic differences. Attempts can be made to unify the nation by seeking to suppress minority languages and religions, but this is doomed to failure, and it only has the effect of raising religious and linguistic difference to the status of a symbol within the definition of the group. The technologies of domination elicit a reaction that serves to reproduce and strengthen the dominated group. Much of the book is dedicated to demonstrating these processes across different contexts and involving different groups, from Jews and anti-Semitism, Ireland and India under British rule, Middle Europe, Japan and Korea, to the United States with regard to Mexico, Hawaii and the Philippines, as well as race relations within the United States. The common aspect is the issue of self-determination in the context of external rule, deriving for the most part from empire (not all the examples are associated with colonialism and empire, but it is a major part of Miller's account).

If democracy is the answer, which Miller believes to be the case, then it is a pluralist democracy that recognises the self-determination of groups. This includes, for Miller, the economic sphere and the functional representation of classes through industrial democracy. Many of the other groups identified by Miller are those that were the focus of the

Carnegie project. It is clear from Miller's book that he intends it as a riposte, since his penultimate chapter is entitled the 'paradox of Americanisation' with the conclusion called 'proportionate loyalty'. The proponents of assimilation identify American values with the dominant group and its definition of the nation. However, Miller inverts the idea of vertical groups to suggest that, as a consequence of migration, religion and ethnicity have become the basis of horizontal groups as well as vertical groups. He writes, 'the foreign-born offer us the opportunity of appropriating spiritual values in unfamiliar forms. Unless we become able to do this we shall not be prepared to live in the new era' (Miller, 1924: 177).¹⁸

This is the basis of 'proportional patriotism'; the 'internationalisation' of groups, including classes, who become the basis of the human values that embed local democracies. Initially, Miller sets this out in a manner reminiscent of government worries about Americanisation, only to represent what they perceived to be a 'risk' inherent to immigration as being, in fact, a positive aspect of domestic politics. He writes, 'the foreign-born will never forget the land of their origin and their responsibility for it so long as injustice prevails there; the identification of America with the problems of Europe, therefore, is so close that we cannot escape our share in the responsibility however we may wish. There can be no real Americanisation of the immigrant unless there is a real league of nations, as the symbol of a real organisation which will substitute in Europe a reign of justice for the reign of immorality' (Miller, 1924: 177).

This was something that Miller would develop as a global perspective. The same situation applied globally: 'there are India, China, Korea, Egypt, Pan-Africa – more than half the human race still in national relationships in which national self-respect is demanding satisfaction' (Miller, 1924: 183). Indeed, his talks and lectures to Black audiences reiterated that the problem of racial oppression in America was part of a global situation where they were one among other oppressed peoples. In a commencement speech in 1934 at Cheyney University, for example, he drew attention to the rise of the Nazi movement in Germany and their treatment of Jews. 'The white races of the world are facing a crisis because they have built a culture in which money and power are the leading factors . . . the coloured races are world's hope'.¹⁹ Unity among oppressed peoples was Miller's constant refrain.

Conclusion

Miller's political engagements and attitudes towards race had a significant effect on his professional career. In an earlier section of this article, we indicated that moves to dismiss Miller from his position at Ohio State University began in 1931 (he was finally dismissed in 1932) shortly after a trip to Japan, Korea and India. This trip would inform his later book, *The Beginnings of Tomorrow* (Miller, 1933), and deepen his sociological critique of empire. In a deposition to the American Association of University Professors, he refers to the fact that he had left Oberlin in 1924 because of threats to his employment.²⁰ This was in 1924 at the time of the publication of *Races, Nations and Classes*. In between, in 1924–1925 as we noted in our introduction, he was drawn into a dispute at Fisk University when he was appointed as chair of a committee to resolve the future of the university after student protests had forced the resignation of its President, Lafayette

McKenzie (Lamon, 1974; Taylor, 1952). Having been drafted in to resolve the situation at Fisk, he would be subject to dismissal proceedings by his own university. This coincided with the publication of *The Beginnings of Tomorrow*: (1933). From this time onwards, he was reliant on his friends to organise speaking tours for a fee and on temporary positions at liberal colleges, including Bryn Mawr, where he was employed at a faculty starting salary. On reaching retirement age, he took up a position which provided accommodation for him and his wife at the experimental arts college in North Carolina, Black Mountain College. His promising career ended at the margins (albeit in a radical milieu), but his sociological arguments remained profound.

His move to the margins began with his interrupted involvement in the Carnegie project on Americanisation. This, in its turn, coincided with a change in focus on the part of the philanthropic foundations, which also consolidated the academic hegemony of the social scientific research they funded. For example, Frederick Keppel took over the presidency of the Carnegie Corporation from its acting President, Henry Pritchett, in 1923. Pritchett had served between 1921 and 1923, although he was the person at the Corporation with responsibility for the Americanisation studies from their inception (under the presidency of Elihu Root). Keppel set the foundation on a firm course in support of professional social science addressing pressing public issues, but he did so within the existing race relations. That it potentially appears differently is partly to do with his role in setting up the major Carnegie-funded study of race relations under the Swedish social scientist, Gunnar Myrdal, which was published as *An American Dilemma* in 1944 (after Keppel's retirement in 1941 and death in 1943) and how that study has been interpreted as part of a new 'liberal orthodoxy' (Jackson, 1990).

According to Southern (1987), Keppel conceived the study in the mid-1930s and sought to commission someone to lead it from outside the United States and, additionally, someone not from one of the European imperial powers. Yet, Keppel and the Carnegie Corporation were not neutral on the matter of empire. As Willoughby-Herard (2015) has shown, Keppel travelled to South Africa in 1927 and subsequently funded a study of 'poor Whites' designed for their uplift and the maintenance of racial hierarchies. The new study of race relations in America was not conceived outside this framework. Lagemann (1989: 6) describes Keppel's ambition as a 'mandate to define, develop and distribute knowledge' as part of a 'franchise' to govern indirectly. As Willoughby-Herard suggests, this included the governance of unequal race relations both locally and globally. If the moment was not right for the earlier Americanisation studies in the immediate aftermath of World War I, the opposite was the case for Myrdal's study in the context of World War II and, to some extent, it created a federal mandate to govern *directly* beyond the intentions of those who had initiated it.

Keppel settled on Myrdal who began his work in spring 1938 with consultations with the major race relations specialists associated with the Chicago school of sociology and Howard University, alongside individuals associated with the National Urban League and the NAACP. Included in the latter group was W.E.B. Du Bois, but Myrdal studiously avoided any idea of a 'global colour line'. His study was firmly domestic. Nor did he refer to the earlier studies of Americanisation, despite adopting some of the themes of Chicago school sociology on assimilation and gradual processes of change undermining

both caste-like social structures in the South and racial prejudice and de facto segregation in the North.²¹

In fact, Myrdal's own position on race fell firmly within the second of the three positions outlined by Fallace (2011) and discussed above, a position that emphasised the cultural hierarchy of racialised groups and represented enslavement as a process of 'de-racination' (Jackson, 1990). Paradoxically, his study can be seen as a variant of Americanisation, applied to White America (in the form of the incorporation of poor Whites into middle class mores). Thus, Myrdal argued that, 'the main thing happening to the South is that it is gradually becoming Americanized' (Myrdal, 1944: 466).²² This conclusion, however, also kept at arm's length Miller's earlier position that 'Americanisation' failed to recognise the essentially imperial character of its project: 'Every intelligent Englishman knows that his days in Egypt, India, and China are numbered; Americans are less aware of their shaking tenure of race domination, because they are less aware of their own empire' (Miller, 1933: 72).

Miller, like Du Bois as we have seen, had also developed a global perspective on domination and oppression and he argued for a plural and multi-cultural America. On the face of it, Myrdal also argued that the 'American creed' involved a 'unity of ideals and a diversity of culture' (Myrdal, 1944: 3), deriving from the Declaration of Independence. However, his version inverts what Miller had set out: 'American nationalism', Myrdal writes, 'is permeated by the American Creed, and therefore becomes international in its essence' (Myrdal, 1944: 6).

Significantly, Miller pointed out the opposite process, that 'events are moving rapidly in America. . . . Defense mechanism is being set up which appeals to bigotry and prejudice as well as higher emotions. Patriotism is being set off against the struggle for justice by calling movements for more justice radical and un-American. The sacredness of the Constitution has been magnified and its defenders have waved the flag to divert attention from realities' (Miller, 1933: 40). The unresolved dilemma of Myrdal's own approach is how to explain the occurrence of the 'problem', and its entrenched character, in the light of the Creed and its foundational character. Myrdal appeals to 'American nationalism' without addressing the problems of 100% patriotism as Miller had set out. Nonetheless, Myrdal's study set the new terms of debate and it would be some time before his 'dilemma' would be recognised as not only domestic – an 'American dilemma' – but global. Rightly, that would be the moment that Du Bois would be remembered. Herbert Adolphus Miller would remain a largely forgotten figure.

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Notes

1. Green and Driver (1976: 323) cite Miller as denying Du Bois's sociology and referring to him in *Races, Nations and Classes* (Miller, 1924) as an 'editor' and 'agitator', but this ignores the fact that Miller is strongly endorsing his leadership in this text and discusses his sociology elsewhere. Miller and Du Bois had a close connection deriving from their common involvement with Fisk.
2. This is so notwithstanding the Whiggish tendency of Chicago school historiography to make all positions in the sociology of race relations emanate from Park. Thus, Everett C. Hughes has commented that, 'much later [Frazier] wrote a book on *Race and Culture Contacts in the Modern world*. It follows Park's work rather closely by perceiving race relations as a product of the colonial expansion of Europe' (Hughes et al., 1979: 187). This implies a criticism of colonialism and neglects Park's favourable evaluation of imperialism and its civilising consequences (see Magubane, 2014; Matthews, 1977).
3. Taylor (1924) is otherwise credited with the first challenge to the Dunning school of historiography. Taylor was appointed at Fisk in 1926 and, at the end of his life, authored a detailed, unpublished history of the institution which is very favourable to Miller's role at Fisk (Taylor, 1952).
4. Deegan (1988) nicely captures the idea of the Chicago women of the settlement movement as a collaborative circle ahead of that coinage.
5. Miller's admiration for Du Bois is clear from a letter asking for an autographed photograph to be displayed in his study among 'photographs of persons who are symbolic of my special interest. They are Paderewski. President Masaryk. Syngman Rhee, President of the revolutionary Korean governments, and some others'. Letter from Miller to W.E.B. Du Bois, January 26, 1925. W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.
6. A combination of the two views is found in the Chicago school emphasis on the positive role of the 'mulatto' or mixed-race individual, where the frequently forced circumstances of race-mixing were elided and the emphasis was on the influence of the traits associated with the 'superior' race. See, for example, Reuter (1918). Miller (1931a) was an advocate of 'race mixing', as he sets out in *The Crisis*, reflecting on his sacking by Ohio State University, but he regarded it not in terms of improvement of 'stock', but as an index to the decline of prejudice. See Franklin (2007) for a discussion of criticisms by African American scholars of the use of IQ-tests in the period.
7. During his period as amanuensis to Booker T Washington, Park travelled with him to Europe as part of a series of explorations into the cultures of those emigrating to America. In the language used in the title of the book about the trip, the African American was not the 'man farthest down' (Washington, 1912).
8. He wrote, 'for a good many years I have been devoting myself to the study of minority peoples in Europe. My interest in them, however, originated from an effort to get perspective for the study of the race problems' (Letter from Miller to Du Bois, December 16, 1924, W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries).
9. The tests were: (1) quickness and accuracy of perception; (2) disconnected memory, both auditory and visual, as tested by figures and letters exposed and read; (3) logical memory, tested by reproducing a story; (4) rational instinct, as shown in the immediate detection of fallacies; (5) suggestibility, as shown by the judgement of the size of equal circles on which

- there were numbers of different denominations; and, finally, (6) colour preference'. For a discussion of the wider interests of psycho-physics in taste and aesthetics, see, Fretwell (2020).
10. This may be contrasted with Odum (1913) who purported to discover very significant differences between white and black children in New Jersey and Philadelphia, findings which reinforced local policies of school segregation into the 1950s.
 11. This is a theme continued in later articles (Miller, 1914, 1927) where he set out the scientific significance of eugenics at the same time as pivoting to indicate that its real value was pointing to the role of 'environment' in the determination of social problems and, therefore, to the role of education and social work in changing environments.
 12. Hinkle (1952) associates the compelling force of eugenics in US social science with IQ tests conducted in the army after World War I. In a later reflection, Miller wrote, '25 years ago, at the suggestion and with the help of Dr. R. M. Yerkes, who later was largely responsible for the Army Tests, I devised in the Harvard psychological laboratory a series of tests, and, with money secured by William James, I made a trip South, giving the tests to hundreds of Negroes, mountain whites, and the Indians at Hampton and Carlisle. Although I won the Bowdoin Prize and wrote a doctor's dissertation from the material, its one essential value to me was to convince me that, as a method of group classification, it was utterly useless. All the developments in recent years have not dissuaded me from this opinion. They have their value, but it is not in this field, and yet on the basis of the Army Tests, Professor McDougall undertook to prove that America is not safe for democracy, and many other people having lost their Biblical fundamentalism have substituted intelligence tests as a new religion' (Miller, 1931b: 345). William McDougall was an English professor of psychology who took up a position at Harvard in 1920 and then at Duke in 1927. He published the eugenic tract, *Is America Safe for Democracy?*, to which Miller refers in 1931 (Pattie, 1939). Miller's reference to fundamentalism is a significant theme in his psychology of domination, as we shall discuss later.
 13. It is discussed more fully in Smith's (1939) *Americans in the Making: The Natural History of the Assimilation of Immigrants*. As might be anticipated from the sub-heading, Smith adopts the Chicago school approach in outlining a two-stage process of assimilation and aligns *Old World Traits* with that argument.
 14. Charles Johnson was jointly responsible for the Chicago Commission on Race Relations' investigation into the Chicago 'race riots' of 1919, which was published as *The Negro in Chicago, in 1922*. It was a comprehensive study for which Johnson – then a graduate student in the Chicago sociology department – was responsible for the research. The co-organiser was Graham Romeyn Taylor, son of the founder of the Chicago Commons settlement house and himself actively involved in it and the survey movement. Robert Park is widely credited with guiding Johnson and Winifred Raushenbush was first employed as an assistant in the writing up period. The study tends to be identified when discussing the contributions of African American sociologists at Chicago, but left out of the main histories of Chicago sociology of the period, including those of Wacker (1983) and Persons (1987) focused on race and ethnic relations. For an exception, see Bulmer (1984). Johnson was constrained to support the position of the Chicago Urban League.
 15. Park (1926) criticised Miller's treatment of 'pathologies of domination', albeit without understanding the argument. His own view was that there was steady progress towards assimilation, an outcome that Miller criticised. Park also lacked Miller's sense of urgency of the need to address racial equality. It was Miller, not Park, who understood that the world was moving towards a second world war and 'pathologies of domination' were part of the explanation. This is set out in detail in *The Beginnings of Tomorrow* (Miller, 1933).
 16. Luther Bernard had also initiated a project collecting the memoirs of leading sociologists, including Miller. Unfortunately, while a letter thanking him for sending the manuscript is

- among the Bernard papers, Miller's memoir is missing. Luther Lee Bernard Papers 1928–1938, Series II: Life Histories of Sociologists, Box 2, Folder 19.
17. There was renewed interest in the Chicago school's approach to race and ethnicity after the 1970s which is when Miller's role comes to be partially recognised. However, this was after controversy associated with Patrick Moynihan's (1965) description of the African American family as 'dysfunctional' and 'pathological', which, as Patterson (2019) has recently written rendered reference to pathologies of oppression as problematic, notwithstanding that these had been identified from W.E.B Du Bois through to Kenneth Clark.
 18. In this context, Miller is not offering a secularised 'sociodicy' (Vidich and Lyman, 1985), since he sees different religions as providing a valuable plurality of moral engagement.
 19. As reported in the article 'Coloured Races Are World's Hope, Says Bryn Mawr Prexy', published in *The Afro-American* (Baltimore [Md.]), June 20, 1934. We have not been able to locate a text of the speech.
 20. He describes the President at Ohio State University investigating various allegations made against him: '(1) My activities in India; (2) that I had been on the point of being dismissed from Oberlin when I came to Ohio State University in 1924; and (3) that my attitude on matters of Race were (sic) unsound' (Sabine, 1931: 467).
 21. Myrdal, and his wife, Alva Myrdal, maintained friendly relations with W.I. Thomas and Dorothy Swaine Thomas from an earlier fellowship visit to the US and reciprocal visit by the Thomases in the early 1930s (Jackson, 1990: 740–745) and Dorothy Thomas was employed on the *American Dilemma* study for a brief period to provide statistical analyses.
 22. This included arguments about pressing for gradual change, including the 'Americanisation' of African Americans, 'to begin allowing the higher strata of the Negro population to participate in the political process as soon as possible, and to push the movement down to the lowest groups gradually. The more urgent it is also to speed up the civic education of those masses who are bound to have votes in the future' (Myrdal, 1944: 519).

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