



Forty Four Years of Debate: The Impact of Race, Community and Conflict

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Abstract

Race, Community and Conflict by John Rex and Robert Moore was published in 1967 and had a considerable public impact through press and TV. Forty four years later it is still widely cited in research on British urban society and 'race relations'. It is used in teaching research methods, theory, urban sociology and 'race relations' to undergraduates. This article describes and explains the immediate impact of the book and its more lasting contribution to sociology. *Race, Community and Conflict* immediately addressed contemporary public issues around immigration and race relations and was the first book systematically to explore the responses of one city administration to the arrival of new migrants drawn in by the local demand for labour. The longer term impact of the book, it is argued, derives from its attempt to create a theoretical framework deriving from both the work of the Chicago School of Sociology and the adoption of a Weberian approach to social class and urban conflict. The combination of theorised structural analysis with detailed local ethnographic approaches to research probably accounts for the book's continued contribution to the teaching of sociology.

Keywords: *Sociology, Urban, Immigration, Housing, Housing Classes, Community, Sparkbrook, Birmingham, Race Relations, Discrimination*

Introduction

1.1 *Race, Community and Conflict* was launched in London with a lunch at the Café Royal in February 1967. This, in itself, was a rather unusual *venue* for the launch of an academic book. But the Survey of Race Relations, sponsors of the research, wished the book to have maximum coverage in the press. To this end Jim Rose the Director of the Survey used his wide contacts in the publishing world to ensure that publication was a high-profile event at a high status location.

1.2 The book had an immediate public impact, with reviews in major national publications, with the first leader in *The Times*, the fourth leader in *The Guardian* and a leading article on the editorial page of the *Daily Telegraph*, on the 16th February. *The Times* used the publication of *Race, Community and Conflict* to argue for much tighter control of 'coloured immigration'. It welcomed the measures introduced by Harold Wilson's 1965 White Paper *Immigration from the Commonwealth* but noted 'one anomaly' that at the moment restrictions apply to members of the white as well as well as the

black Commonwealth. If this comes in practice to prevent the entry of a number of say, Australians and Canadians who would bring nothing but benefit to British life, there should be no hesitation about changing the rules.^[1]

1.3 We should not, the editorial went on, pretend that immigration control had nothing to do with colour. Control is, it said, 'a genuine effort to look after the interests of the coloured population in Britain'. The conclusion the leader-writer drew from the book was that to prevent the growth of more areas like Sparkbrook, tighter immigration control (in fact a tighter immigration colour-bar) was needed, combined with a greater provision of council housing. A degree of positive discrimination might even be needed to ensure that local authority housing became available to 'coloured families' *The Times* argued.

1.4 This *Times* editorial drew a response from Michael Ramsey the 100th Archbishop of Canterbury. He

wrote not in his archiepiscopal role but as the Chairman of the National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants, his deputy chairman co-signed the letter. They asserted that

.. it is a fallacy to suppose that the work of integration is helped by limitation of entry – if that limitation is based, as you frankly say it should be based, on colour discrimination.

The letter ends:

But we can think of nothing more likely to frustrate this work [of integration] than a policy which discriminated between "coloured immigration" and "Australians and Canadians who would bring nothing but benefit to British life" as if it were only white people who contributed to the economy and the life of our society.^[2]

1.5 *The Guardian's* response was to draw attention to the failure of local authorities, estate agents and building societies to provide housing for the minority population. They could no more be relied upon to stop housing discrimination than 'the unions, the employers and the market' to end discrimination in employment. Legislation was needed to eliminate discrimination in housing and pressure on local authorities was needed to meet the needs of immigrants.

1.6 The *Telegraph's* lead article was written by Enoch Powell. He devoted just seven of his thirty one column inches to a discussion of the book. The remainder was a familiar rant about 'the menace' of coloured immigration and how the 'invasion' was changing the face of Smethwick, Wolverhampton and many other localities in the UK. Powell suggested that we, the authors, offered no solutions to the growth of ghettos. Powell's solution was the cessation of all Commonwealth immigration and, he hoped, the emigration of a significant number of 'coloured' residents, perhaps with inducement offered for their departure. On the same day *The Sun* (then a serious, if popular, broadsheet) carried an advertisement for subsidised emigration to Canada, not, perhaps directed at the 'coloured' population. Both the *Sun* and the *Daily Express* carried stories about young British doctors seeking to qualify to practice in the USA, again not the emigration Powell wished to encourage. The main 'colour' stories in the more popular papers concerned the arrival of colour TV. Neither *The Sun* nor the *Daily Express* mentioned *Race, Community and Conflict* in their reports or book review sections.

1.7 As might be expected the West Midlands press took a close interest in *Race, Community and Conflict*. The *Birmingham Evening Mail and Despatch* carried long extracts from the book for about two weeks prior to publication, these were then followed by a substantial number of readers letters and a couple of protests from local officials who claimed they were unfairly represented in the book. In Birmingham there was considerable official hostility to the book, but within a decade the findings of *Race Community and Conflict* had been incorporated into the official history of the city. My personal archives are not comprehensive but I have press cuttings which show that both *The Observer* and *The Northern Echo* also published reviews.

1.8 Substantial reviews appeared in a wide range of periodicals including *New Society* (16 February, 1967), *The Listener* (23 February), *The Economist* (18 – 24 February), *New Christian* (9 March) and *Peace News* (24 March). These were more measured comments on the book compared with the somewhat polemical responses of *The Times* and *Daily Telegraph*.

1.9 We also received some television coverage. If my memory serves me well, I appeared with Dipak Nandy and Mark Bonham-Carter in a programme broadcast by Southern TV from Southampton. John Rex and I were also consulted about a programme on the book to be broadcast on a national network. We heard no more after the initial consultation. Then a programme about Sparkbrook appeared on TV. During the studio discussion the book was prominently displayed on a coffee table (the title could be clearly seen) but it was never referred to directly. The burden of the programme was that some people had suggested Sparkbrook was characterised by racial conflicts. A selection of local residents were interviewed in order to show that this was not the case. Stanley Reynolds seemed to swallow the programme's line wholesale because in a review in *The Guardian* he suggested that John Rex and I would have done better to have started off from the TV programme's perspective.

1.10 We had been seriously misrepresented in the programme, and indeed misled about the programme's intentions. John Rex wrote to the BBC to ask if we could have an opportunity to reply – to set the record straight. At the very least perhaps we could publish a letter in *The Listener* as a rejoinder to the programme. The extraordinary response that John Rex received was that neither would be possible because there was a risk that by letting us reply the BBC might be breaking the Race Relations Act. The feeble anti-discrimination law enacted in 1965 outlawed discrimination on the grounds of colour, race, ethnic or national origins in public places and made it a civil offence to refuse to serve a person, or overcharge, on the grounds of colour, race, ethnic or national origins. By what stretch of the imagination the BBC believed they might have been in breach of this Act we never did understand – but the message was clear. We would not be able to respond to a gross misrepresentation of our work in prime-time TV on a main national channel.

1.11 The immediate impact of the book was therefore considerable and would probably have been greater had the BBC shown more balance in its response to *Race, Community and Conflict*. It is unlikely nevertheless that the short-term impact spread beyond people who read serious newspapers or who lived in the West Midlands. But John Rex and I probably remain the only sociologists whose work has been defended by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

2.1 Why was the publication of a book by two sociologists able to command so much public attention? Publication did not take place in a vacuum; the issues addressed by *Race, Community and Conflict* had a history and had been amongst the most contentious topics in domestic politics since the mid-1950s. 'Race' had been news for some time when our book was published and continued to feature in the headlines. Whilst migration from Ireland continued to be the major source of immigration into the UK labour market, Commonwealth immigration had been encouraged from the 1950s, to fill vacancies in the NHS, public transport and a number of industries that were in the process of either expanding or restructuring. Recruiting offices were set up in the West Indies and employers actively recruited in parts of Pakistan. By the turn of the decade the UK had become a country of net Commonwealth immigration. This became the occasion for racist campaigning in Parliament and amongst sections of the wider public. One dismal highlight of the agitation for an immigration colour bar came in 1958 when young white men attacked black residents in Notting Hill. Notting Hill was an area of London in which there was competition for housing, parts of the district were run down, with large houses being broken up into flats or rooms to let. The British Union of Fascists, under the slogan 'Keep Britain White' sought to mobilise the disaffected white youth of the area against the black population, resulting in the so called 'Notting Hill race riot'. One outcome of the political agitation over 'race' was the passage of the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act which regulated the numbers of immigrants by requiring would-be immigrants to acquire work permits issued by the government. The rights of dependents to join immigrants were left intact, thus limiting the legislation's capacity to restrict the total numbers of migrants (the removal of the right of family reunion came later). The leader of the Labour Party, Hugh Gaitskell described the 1962 Act as 'cruel and brutal anti-colour legislation' and he pledged the party to repeal the Act when they were elected to government.

2.2 Competition was not confined to housing; major cities were drawing in migrants to fill key positions in the local labour market but making no provision of extra housing or other services to meet the needs of the new arrivals. The latter thus found themselves in competition and potential conflict with local residents for the housing and services that were available. In public discussions in Birmingham this conflict was increasingly being expressed in racial terms.

2.3 'Race' was also international news. There had been major uprisings of black populations in large cities of the USA, resulting in extensive destruction of property, deaths and injuries: Philadelphia (1964), Watts (1965) Newark and Detroit (1967). From television and press reports it seemed as if the USA was in flames. In South Africa demands for emancipation were also growing against a repressive white regime which used a range of methods of violent repression. In 1960 sixty nine black people were killed and around 200 injured (many shot in the back) in Sharpeville by the South African police. In 1965 Ian Smith, the leader of the minority white regime in what was then Rhodesia, declared independence from the UK, amplifying the conflict between black and white populations within Rhodesia and again making racial conflict international headlines. These events in the USA, the UK and southern Africa were taking place against the background of an increasingly brutal war conducted by the USA in Vietnam, this war generated protest movements world-wide and enabled protesters to bring together events in different continents, linking analyses of colonialism with domestic racial and class oppression. All of these events attracted major coverage in the mass media and were kept in the public eye over a period of some ten years.

2.4 In the 1964 General Election a Labour government was elected with a majority of four. One major shock was the failure of Labour's intended Foreign Secretary, Patrick Gordon Walker, to be elected. He was the sitting MP for Smethwick in the West Midlands and had been beaten by a candidate with an overtly racist platform (Foot, 1966). Part of the reason for Gordon Walker's defeat was his unpopularity with Smethwick voters, including Labour voters, who felt he neglected the constituency and had a supercilious attitude towards the local population. To get Gordon Walker into Parliament a Labour MP in a safe seat was ennobled and Gordon Walker fought the subsequent by-election. He lost. One outcome of the close result of the General Election, and the loss of a valued member of the Labour leadership, was a panic on the issue of race. To any observer at the time it would seem that the British public were mainly confused by immigration issues. Many could see that immigrants were needed and that like ordinary working class British people the immigrants became victims of the housing shortages that many areas were experiencing. Others assumed and argued that the immigrants were the cause of the problems – if we did not have immigrants there would not be a shortage of housing. I certainly interviewed many people in Sparkbrook and spoke to people elsewhere who genuinely appeared not to know what to make of the situation. Harold Wilson did not wait for the findings of a parliamentary committee on immigration that he had established but published his own White Paper *Immigration from the Commonwealth* (Cmnd 2739). This settled the issue for many; immigration was the *cause* of our woes. I have argued since that this White Paper was the cornerstone of racist immigration policies and perhaps served to bring a wider legitimacy to anti-immigrant attitudes in general. No political party now had grounds on which to resist demands for further control of 'coloured' immigration. In 1966 Wilson called another General Election and this time secured a workable majority of 96 seats. Given the political turbulence of the period and the salience of 'race' in the U.K. it is not surprising that the sponsors of our research should want to promote the findings of a major study nor that there was considerable immediate interest in the press.

3.1 The longer-term impact of *Race, Community and Conflict* was perhaps hinted at in two of the initial reviews. *The Guardian* editorial commented that our book, like the Milner-Holland report of 1965, had highlighted the failure of every agency involved in housing to tackle discrimination, and that they were unlikely to succeed in the future:

Intervention will have to mean legislation against genuine discrimination (racial covenants in leases, estate agents acquiescing in a colour bar) and stronger pressure on local authorities to recognise the needs of immigrants of all kinds.

3.2 The Race Relations Act 1968 made it illegal to refuse housing, employment or public services to people because of their ethnic background. The Act was partially intended to offset the highly discriminatory Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1968 which removed the right of large numbers of British passport holders to enter the country whose passport they held (Moore and Wallace 1975). UK passport-holders became refugees and as late as 2011 some are still marooned as UK citizens in foreign countries. The mildly liberal provisions of the anti-discrimination legislation were hardly sufficient to offset the cruelty of the Immigration Act, but they provided some much-needed extensions to the 1965 Act. Local authorities had been reluctant to tackle what they recognised as a problem because of the fear of the electoral consequences. Legislation would plainly encourage them to act, although a number delayed and not all were immediately compliant. A series of investigations by the Race Relations Board were required to bring the most recalcitrant local authorities into line, even then the 2000 Race Relations (Amendment) Act was needed to ensure that all public bodies were *fully* compliant with the spirit of the 1968 and 1975 Race Relations Acts. Rex and Moore were not alone in creating a climate of opinion conducive to change; the voluntary sector made its voice heard in addressing urban problems notably, again, housing. Other academics wrote on the housing theme in a way that highlighted discrimination by local authorities, especially Elizabeth Burney in her *Housing on Trial* (1967). Richard Crossman, the Labour Minister of Housing until 1966, simply asserted that Birmingham City Council could not be racially discriminatory in its housing allocation policies because it was a Labour council. But evidence that councils, including Labour councils, discriminated nevertheless accumulated throughout the 1960s. The extent of racial discrimination in Britain, as distinct from Birmingham alone, was amply demonstrated in the PEP report *Racial Discrimination in Britain* (1967)^[3] *Race Community and Conflict* was plainly seen as an authoritative addition to the evidence. Thus the book itself, plus press responses to it, added to the pressure for the legislative change which came about in 1968. I have been told in private conversations that our book was critical to the shaping of the 1968 legislation.

3.3 Whilst the impact of the book on public policy was probably indirect by contributing to medium-term changes in anti-discrimination legislation, there was one rather more immediate impact from an unexpected direction. I was contacted by a group of students at a teacher training college. They said they were being trained to teach in all-white English schools and doing their teaching practice in multi-racial inner city areas like Sparkbrook. Their college lecturers had no experience of such areas and the students were at a loss for how to approach the issues they encountered. I pointed out that I had no knowledge of school-teaching, education was not my field. Jennifer Williams, who had assisted in the research, was not available, and so the students pressed me to visit. In the event I found the students were not seeking technical advice but an opportunity to talk through the problems they encountered and to try to set them in a coherent theoretical framework. The students felt there was a considerable gap between what they were being taught and the 'real world' of inner city schools in the West Midlands. I believe the fact that the students had taken this initiative led to some reconsideration of the training they received in the college. A few years later one of the then students told me that I had probably given the first talk to teachers in training on issues in multi-racial schools. I do not know if this really is the case. In later years some teachers told me that *Race, Community and Conflict* was 'all they had' when they started their teaching careers in inner-city schools.

4.1 In his review in *The Listener* (23 February 1967) Stuart Hall said that

[The authors] have brought off a double feat. They bring us close in to a familiar, recognisable part of one of our large industrial cities and the detailed character of life there. At the same time they have given us the theoretical tools with which to understand the social processes by which, apparently without human intervention or agency, such places come to exist at all....what is even more impressive is the way in which the theoretical perspective operates as a 'way of seeing and understanding' the situations and processes analysed in depth throughout the rest of the volume.

4.2 The initial academic response was nevertheless muted; in the UK only *Sociology* and *The Sociological Review* reviewed the book and the latter review was entirely from a social policy perspective.^[4] In *Sociology* Pahl said that

He [John Rex] argues with great verve that a class struggle over the use of houses is the central process of the city as a social unit. The housing market is distinct from the labour market since men in the same situation in the latter may have different degrees of access in the former. Rex distinguishes six types of housing situations and these are likely to be repeated in standard texts and student essays for many years to come (1967: 308).

4.3 About a year after publication we received a bound set of essays on *l'hypothèse Rex et Moore* by postgraduates from the University of Nice. Our book was indeed included in standard texts and student essays for many years. *Race, Community and Conflict* was adopted as a set book for the first year sociology course in the Open University and featured in lists of set books for university students of sociology across the UK and thence back into schools. It was probably the OU that gave the book its widest currency amongst the public. Over forty years later I meet people in senior positions in public service occupations who remember reading Rex and Moore as students. The book is still used for teaching research methods, urban sociology and 'race relations'. But it is not always read very carefully as was evidenced by the student who recently attributed the book to Wrexham Moore. The 'Google Scholar' citations index shows that to date the book has been cited 832 times in scholarly journals. Unusually for a British publication it was noticed in the United States and has citations in the *American Journal of Sociology*, the *American Sociological Review* and *Social Forces*.

4.4 Forty four years after publication we need to remind ourselves of some key elements of the book. The Birmingham context is important: the city was drawing in a large labour force not only to staff public services but to sustain the motor-car industry and its extensive supporting industries. Metal-working and other manufacturing industries were therefore in need of labour. Birmingham was also undergoing a period of rapid redevelopment which required large numbers of construction workers, many traditionally supplied by the more impoverished rural areas of the Republic of Ireland. Thus Birmingham was experiencing a major in-migration. At the same time it was engaging in what can only be described as massive slum clearance operations in the inner parts of the city, large tracts of older red-brick terraced houses were being bulldozed, fresh acres of rubble seemed to appear daily. Beyond the pre-war private and council housing estates Birmingham council was building new housing (with many immigrant workers employed in their construction) to rehouse those displaced from nearer the city centre. So the supply of housing was diminishing in the centre of the city and increasing on the edge. Where were new arrivals to live? The new housing on the periphery was largely denied them, building societies, banks, estate agents, and the local authority all discriminated against immigrants and especially 'coloured' immigrants. Discrimination could be overt in the form of advertisements, to covert in the judgements that estate agents made about the suitability of candidates for housing or housing in certain areas, or the assessments that housing officers employed by the council made about the suitability of families from different Commonwealth backgrounds for council accommodation.

4.5 The immigrants therefore had to make do with the housing that was found near the city centre comprising, firstly, red-brick terraces being held by the city council for demolition or others that had not yet been designated for slum clearance. Secondly just beyond the inner ring of terraced houses were the homes of the old middle class, large houses, perhaps with space for servants, unsuited to the needs and demands of contemporary families who had now moved to modern and more affluent suburbs. These houses, which formed a significant part of the Sparkbrook housing stock, were increasingly broken up into rented rooms, often with shared facilities. The 'lodging house' (today's 'house in multiple occupation') was the destination of many single men, especially those from India, Pakistan and Ireland. A number of men from Pakistan had also found ways to raise sufficient capital to invest in a lodging house; this meant that they and their relatives could live without having to pay rent by maximising the number of rent-paying tenants in the dwelling. Thus the division between landlord and tenant could also have an ethnic dimension. Commonwealth migrants in Birmingham housed themselves as best they could, but the overcrowded lodging house became a target for the public health and housing authorities. So the city council did not house the city's new migrants but sought to punish them for the housing arrangements they made for themselves.

4.6 In this context John Rex and I were very interested in elaborating ideas first developed by the Chicago School of Sociology in the 1930s. We were observing at close quarters the processes of 'invasion and succession' that McKenzie had described (McKenzie, 1967).^[5] What made the analysis particularly interesting to John Rex and I was that whereas the processes described in Chicago ultimately derived from a free market in land and dwellings, in the UK the allocation of a significant part of the housing stock was controlled by local authorities, whose administrations applied criteria of needs and entitlement. Furthermore, as we have seen, the local authorities were major suppliers of housing through extensive house-building programmes and in Birmingham the council were also promoting extensive demolition. The welfare state modified the conflicts described by the Chicago authors in important ways, and created new forms of conflict over urban resources.

4.7 Central to our argument was that the segregation, stratification and conflicts seen in Birmingham could in large part be explained by reference to housing 'classes' which derived not from residents' relations to the means of production but to housing. It was evident that people who were outright owners of houses or who had a mortgage on a house, stood in very different relations to 'the means of housing' from a council tenant, a lodging house landlord or a lodging house tenant. Unemployment was at a very low level in Birmingham and the main conflicts appeared to be over access to services and, crucially, to housing. Thus 'housing classes' were a key concept in our attempt to understand and explain the processes we were observing in Sparkbrook.

4.8 There was very little response to the invitation to engage with the Chicago School in developing a theoretically grounded understanding of British cities. Perhaps it was thought too 'functionalist' by our contemporaries. Some commentators responded (with some justice) that we were describing a particular city, at a particular stage in its economic development, with a particular mix of housing types. That we were indeed writing about part of a city at one moment in its history might have been a challenge worth taking up. But when it was taken up, the response was not to the way in which we had used the Chicago ecological model of urban change but rather to the differences in labour markets, housing stock and patterns of migration in other British towns and cities.

4.9 The ideas we developed on the impact of markets and the other means by which minorities acquiring housing have nevertheless had a long-lasting influence. For example in 2008, forty one years after the publication of *Race, Community and Conflict*, Cole and Ferrari (2008) were writing

[Rex and Moore] suggested that analyses concerned only with labour market position, economic power and social-class formation needed to incorporate a clearer understanding of how the housing market offered different types of access to ethnic groups, and thus could become a crucial and 'independent' arena of competition and conflict

On the basis of their own research in Birmingham (including Sparkbrook) they concluded:

... 40 years on, universalising prescriptions about housing, community cohesion, cultural

preference and patterns of mobility also need a keener sensibility of housing market processes and functions (2008: 77).

4.10 One criticism of our analysis was that we seemed to be assuming a unitary urban value system, with a shared desire on the part of residents to move to the suburbs; a 'homes and gardens' drive as Colin Bell described it. Here we may have been rather too closely wedded to the concentric rings of the Chicago model. Whilst it was true that in 1965 many regarded the most desirable residences as being on the suburban fringes of the city, this was not true for all Birmingham residents nor was it an urban universal. Indeed within a few years run down inner city areas were being gentrified by affluent incomers whilst many peripheral areas – especially council estates – were characterised by relatively high rates of unemployment, physical decline and social residualisation.

4.11 It was, however, the debate around 'housing classes' that was to generate continuous discussion into the 1970s and 1980s, with critiques of these developments extending into the 1990s and perhaps to be the most important lasting impact of *Race, Community and Conflict*. A 1995 PhD thesis by Lyn Hancock showed that the idea of housing classes had generated 28 years of almost continuous debate. Our point of departure for housing class analysis was Max Weber's formulation:

That we may speak of a 'class' when (1) a number of people have in common a specific causal component of their life chances, insofar as (2) this component is represented exclusively by economic interests in the possession of goods and opportunities for income, and (3) is represented under the conditions of the commodity or labour markets. This is 'class situation' (1968: 927).

4.12 The life chances of people in Sparkbrook had a significant component in the ownership or non-ownership of an important commodity – housing. Our critics argued that housing tenure derived *from* the market, it was an outcome of the resident's position in the labour market. Others pointed out that housing had a use-value and was a form of consumption, not production. But Weber was also quite clear that there were 'property classes' – positively or negatively privileged (1968: 302-5). It is less clear whether it was the *income generating* potential of property that was critical to his definition.

4.13 Peter Saunders was a critic of our work but he pointed to aspects of home ownership that made *accumulation* possible, for not only did ownership attract state subsidy,^[6] it provided a basis for credit and furthermore the value of property could be enhanced by mobilising to preserve the character of the locality through planning legislation, to conserve the environment and restrict the supply of housing (closure and exclusion). It has to be said that this sounds very much like *class*-based action. Saunders noted that in his earlier work he had suggested that:

The importance of domestic property ownership as a means of wealth accumulation lay in the fact that the division between owners and non-owners provided a basis for distinct patterns of political alignment We should consider the ways in which domestic property ownership may be contributing to a restructuring of class relations in advanced capitalist societies (Saunders 1984: 203).

4.14 Our original Sparkbrook analysis was not one of ownership and non-ownership of domestic property but of the variety of ways in which one might acquire housing through a range of market and public routes (some of the former being potentially highly exploitative). We did not go so far as to say that domestic property ownership might restructure class relations deriving from the labour market. Housing classes in *Race, Community and Conflict* were treated as separate from labour market classes, and although one's position in the former might be related to position in the latter, housing was an autonomous field of conflict. Private landlords and tenants might be in antagonistic relations but just as sections of the working class might come into conflict with one another so owner-occupiers may come into conflict over, for example, planning issues or access to school places. We did not suggest or expect that the housing classes we identified would be homogeneous, or that they would *necessarily* be in conflict with one another. Furthermore it is common for residents in different tenures to unite for the protection of common or shared interests against perceived threats to their locality^[7].

4.15 Saunders rejected the idea of housing classes mainly because: It is confusing and unhelpful to use the same theoretical and conceptual tools to analyse relations

constituted in the sphere of production around ownership and control of the means of production, and relations constituted through processes of consumption, even where [.....] private ownership of the means of consumption may function as a source of revenue (1984: 206).

Like Rex and Moore, Saunders recognised that 'class is not the only major basis of social cleavage in contemporary capitalist societies'. This was a point of departure for Saunders to develop his theory of consumption classes, in which it was possible to reintroduce the idea of exploitation – so that, for example, the most marginalised in society might be exploited both in traditional class terms *and* in consumption class terms (Saunders 1984: 215).

4.16 This brief excursion into the work of one of our more interesting critics indicates one aspect of the impact of *Race, Community and Conflict*, namely that it stimulated and contributed to debates in sociology in fields beyond those in which we were originally interested. But whilst the book may have a place in the sociology of consumption nevertheless it was 'the housing classes debate' that continued and occasioned vigorous discussion about social class and perhaps re-focused a number of our colleagues and students

on Weberian approaches to sociology at a time when Marx's writing were being rediscovered by younger sociologists. The value of the idea of housing classes to sociological theory, especially class theory, and for the understanding of urban processes and conflicts has been debated for over forty years since *Race, Community and Conflict* was published.

4.17 It is nevertheless important to remember that the book was not only about housing classes. Although this provided a framework for our analysis we were equally interested in the day to day life and social processes of what in Chicago terms was a 'zone of transition' (or to Birmingham city council, a 'twilight zone'). Thus we explored the ethnography of Sparkbrook, talking to people in their homes, in pubs, cafes and places of worship and on the streets. We interacted with many of the people who gathered around the Sparkbrook Association and with the workers based there, we made friends with many local people. We observed the lives of those for whom Sparkbrook was an entry point to 'mainstream' life in the wider city – they were on their way 'in and up' in Birmingham. We also came to know people on their way 'down and out' from previous relationships, occupational or residential communities. We engaged with young Irish lads who were forging new Anglo-Irish identities – Teddy Boys one day, wild Irish rebels the next. Amongst the people living precariously on the margins of society whom we encountered in Sparkbrook John Rex and I became well acquainted with an East European migrant who had failed to adapt and was deeply unhappy, he was grateful for support in the Sparkbrook Association but his many endeavours to repay kindnesses with practical activities foundered on his addiction to alcohol. He was truly a lost soul in Sparkbrook, existing too close to the edge of Birmingham society and bound, as it happened, for an early grave.

4.18 We provided an analysis of associations in Sparkbrook and their functions; those that enabled newcomers to find companionship and support and to create something of the old home in a new country. We found football teams that brought men from Caribbean islands together, Saturday schools that taught children their parents' language and the Mosques, Gurdwaras, Pentecostal churches, shops, banks and travel agents that provided the social and economic basis for an immigrant 'colony' in Birmingham. We observed also the churches in which the 'old' residents of Sparkbrook came together to re-create and celebrate a way of life that they saw passing. The characters we met and the associations we observed would have been familiar types to the Chicago researchers.

4.19 It is hard to write about the impact of one's own work without either boasting or false modesty. It is nevertheless clear that *Race, Community and Conflict* had a significant impact upon opinion-formers and thereby influenced legislation to outlaw discrimination in housing. This, in turn, stimulated debates in the public sector about housing policy and administration, and especially 'race' and housing, for many years. Reference is made to *Race, Community and Conflict* in books and reports published in the early 21st century when patterns of distribution of minority populations are discussed. The book also stimulated debates about social class and sociological theory. Most importantly it introduced (or re-introduced) a theoretical framework within which to understand the complex processes that were taking place in cities experiencing in-migration and how patterns of 'race relations' developed in response to, or as part of, these processes. The book combined structural analysis, firmly rooted in the sociological traditions of the Chicago School and Weberian theory with personal observation and interviews with local actors which provided, in Hall's words, a "way of seeing and understanding" the situations and processes' of race relations in a major city.

Notes

¹A suggestion duly acceded to in revisions to the *Immigration Rules* and the introduction of the idea of *patriality*.

²The Archbishop's letter was followed by one from Lord Elton urging tighter, racially discriminatory control of immigration.

³The report was later popularised in a book by W.W. Daniel (1968) *Racial Discrimination in England*

⁴The *British Journal of Sociology* simply noted *Race, Community and Conflict* as a 'book received' in Vol. XVIII, No. 2 (June 1967)

⁵The *Wikipedia* entry for the Chicago School gives a useful short summary of the history and work of the School. For a full scholarly account see Bulmer (1984)

⁶MIRAS. the tax relief on mortgage interest was finally abolished in 2000.

⁷Interestingly Weber's relatively undeveloped idea of *party* might be relevant in the analysis of the mobilisation of interest groups around property-values and or social status. (see L. Hancock, 1995)

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