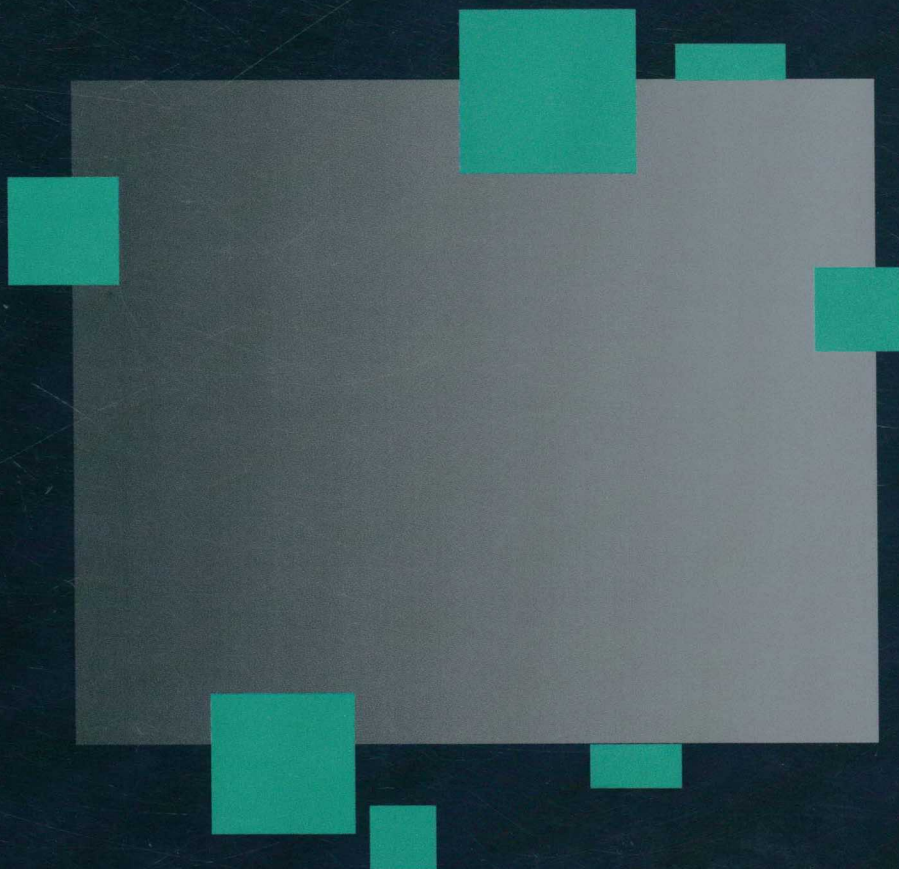


The Established and the Outsiders



Norbert Elias
and John L. Scotson

THE ESTABLISHED AND THE OUTSIDERS

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THE ESTABLISHED AND THE OUTSIDERS

A Sociological Enquiry
into Community Problems

Second edition

NORBERT ELIAS

JOHN L. SCOTSON



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TO
OUR FRIENDS
IN THE
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER
WHO HAVE GIVEN US MUCH HELP AND ENCOURAGEMENT

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Foreword

The Established and the Outsiders was first published in 1965. It grew out of a study of a community near Leicester in the late 1950s and early 1960s by John Scotson, a local schoolteacher interested in juvenile delinquency. But in the hands of Norbert Elias this local study was reworked to illuminate social processes of general significance in human society—including how a group of people can monopolise power chances and use them to exclude and stigmatise members of another very similar group (for example, through the powerful medium of gossip), and how that is experienced in the collective “we-images” of both groups.

Ten years later Elias dictated, in English, a long new introduction for the Dutch translation of the book. This “Theoretical Essay on Established and Outsider Relations” spelled out how the theory could be applied to a whole range of changing patterns of human inequality: to relations between classes, ethnic groups, colonised and colonisers, men and women, parents and children, gays and straights. For many years it was thought that parts of the English text of this important essay had been lost, but they came to light in 1994, and the final version was assembled by myself and Saskia Visser. The essay is published in English for the first time in this volume, exactly as Elias dictated it, with only minor editorial changes. Shortly before his death in 1990, Elias added a brief appendix on Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mocking Bird* for the German edition of the book which is not included here.

May 1994

Stephen Mennell
University College, Dublin

Preface

The Established and the Outsiders is a study of a small community with a relatively old settlement as its core and two more recent settlements which have formed around it. The enquiry started like so many others because local people drew our attention to the fact that one of the neighbourhoods had a consistently higher delinquency rate than the others. Locally that particular neighbourhood was regarded as a delinquency area of low standing. As we began to probe into the actual evidence and to look for explanations, our interest shifted from the delinquency differentials to the differences in the character of the neighbourhoods and to their relationships with each other. In the course of a fairly intensive exploration of the microcosm of Winston Parva with its three distinct neighbourhoods, one got to know the place and some of its individual members sufficiently well. The fascination which its problems had for us steadily increased—all the more so as we became gradually aware that some of them had a paradigmatic character: they threw light on problems which one often encountered on a much larger scale in society at large.

As it turned out, the shift of the research interest from the delinquency problem to the wider problem of the relationship between different neighbourhoods within a community prevented what might have been a waste of effort. In the third year of the research the delinquency differentials between the two larger neighbourhoods (which had supported the local idea that one of them was a delinquency area) practically disappeared. What did not disappear was the image which the older neighbourhoods had of the newer neighbourhood with the formerly higher delinquency rate. The older neighbourhoods persisted in stigmatising the latter as a neighbourhood where delinquency was rampant. The question why opinions about these facts persisted, even though the facts themselves changed, was one of the questions which impressed itself upon us in the course of the enquiry although we had not set out to explore it. Another question was why the facts themselves

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changed—why the delinquency differential between the two neighbourhoods more or less disappeared.

Thus the study as presented here was not planned as such from the outset. We often followed clues and took up new problems which appeared as we went along and, in one or two cases, what we discovered on the way changed the main direction of the enquiry.

An investigation conducted by not more than two people who were responsible only to themselves, and who were unhampered by set stipulations often entailed by the receipt of a research grant, could be conducted in a relatively elastic manner without the need to stick to a prescribed problem or to a set schedule. The opportunity to follow clues as they offered themselves and to change the main course of the enquiry if they appeared promising proved on the whole advantageous. It helped to counteract the rigidities of any set idea we had as to what was and was not significant in the study of a community. It enabled us to scan the horizon for inconspicuous phenomena that might have unexpected significance. And this seemingly diffuse experimentation led in the end to a fairly compact and comprehensive picture of aspects of a community which one can regard as central—above all of the power and status relationships and of the tensions bound up with them. We tried to discover the reasons why some groups in Winston Parva had greater power than others, and what we found went some way towards explaining these differences. On a wider plane the enquiry shed light on the merits and limitations of intensive micro-sociological studies. While proceeding with it, we ourselves were surprised to see how often configurations and regularities we dug up in the microcosm of Winston Parva suggested hypotheses which might be of use as a guide even for macro-sociological enquiries. Altogether the enquiry indicated that the small-scale problems of the development of a community and the large-scale problems of the development of a country are inseparable. There is not much point in studying community developments as if they take place in a sociological vacuum.

By and large the intention was to keep a balance between simple factual presentation and theoretical considerations. We are by no means certain whether we succeeded. But we tried not to allow our theoretical interests to overwhelm our interests in the social life of the people of Winston Parva itself.

PREFACE

An enquiry such as this would have been impossible without the friendly help and co-operation of others. We are indebted to the people of Winston Parva who helped to make interviewing a pleasant as well as an enlightening task. Intrusion into their homes brought no resentment. Many of them took a cheerful and encouraging interest in the research. We were greatly helped by the officials and members of voluntary organisations in Winston Parva. We owe a special debt of gratitude to the County Probation Service and to the Senior Probation Officer. Above all we are indebted to Dr. Bryan Wilson, Reader in Sociology at Oxford. In the final stages he has looked through the whole manuscript. It owes a great deal to his wise help and counsel, and to his power of persuasion which was often needed in convincing us of improvements he suggested.

February 1964

Norbert Elias
John L. Scotson

Introduction

A Theoretical Essay on Established and Outsider Relations

THE ACCOUNT of a suburban community presented in this book shows a sharp division within it between an old-established group and a newer group of residents, whose members were treated as outsiders by the established group. The latter closed ranks against them and stigmatised them generally as people of lesser human worth. They were thought to lack the superior human virtue—the distinguishing group charisma—which the dominant group attributed to itself.

Thus one encountered here, in the small community of Winston Parva, as it were in miniature, a universal human theme. One can observe again and again that members of groups which are, in terms of *power*, stronger than other interdependent groups, think of themselves in human terms as *better* than the others. The literal meaning of the term “aristocracy” can serve as an example. It was a name which an Athenian upper class of slave-owning warriors applied to that type of power relation in Athens which enabled their own group to take up the ruling position. But it meant literally “rule of the best”. To this day the term “noble” retains the *double* meaning of high social rank and of a highly valued human attitude, as in “a noble gesture”; just as “villein”, derived from a term that applied to a social group of low standing and, therefore, of low human value, still retains its meaning in the latter sense—an expression for a person of low morals. It is easy to find other examples.

This is the normal self-image of groups who in terms of their power ratio are securely superior to other interdependent groups. Whether they are social cadres, such as feudal lords in relation to

I am greatly indebted to Cas Wouters and Bram van Stolk. Discussing problems of translation into Dutch with them helped me to improve the text, and they stimulated me to write this essay.

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villeins, "whites" in relation to "blacks", Gentiles in relation to Jews, Protestants in relation to Catholics and vice versa, men in relation to women (in former days), large and powerful nation-states in relation to others which are small and relatively powerless, or, as in the case of Winston Parva, an old-established working-class group in relation to members of a new working-class settlement in their neighbourhood—in all these cases the more powerful groups look upon themselves as the "better" people, as endowed with a kind of group charisma, with a specific virtue shared by all its members and lacked by the others. What is more, in all these cases the "superior" people may make the less powerful people themselves feel that they lack virtue—that they are inferior in human terms.

How is it done? How do members of a group maintain among themselves the belief that they are not merely more powerful but also better human beings than those of another? What means do they use to impose the belief in their own human superiority upon those who are less powerful?

The study of Winston Parva deals with some of these and related problems. They are discussed here with reference to different groupings within a small neighbourhood community. As soon as one talked to people there one came up against the fact that the residents of one area where the "old families" lived regarded themselves as "better", as superior in human terms to those who lived in the neighbouring newer part of the community. They refused to have any social contact with them apart from that demanded by their occupations; they lumped them all together as people less well bred. In short, they treated all newcomers as people who did not belong, as "outsiders". These newcomers themselves, after a while, seemed to accept with a kind of puzzled resignation that they belonged to a group of lesser virtue and respectability, which in terms of their actual conduct was found to be justified only in the case of a small minority. Thus one encountered in this small community what appeared to be a universal regularity of any established-outsider figuration: the established group attributed to its members superior human characteristics; it excluded all members of the other group from non-occupational social contact with its own members; the taboo on such contacts was kept alive by means of social control such as praise-gossip about those who observed it and the threat of blame-gossip against suspected offenders.

To study aspects of a universal figuration within the compass of a small community imposes upon the enquiry certain obvious limitations. But it also has its advantages. The use of a small social unit as a focus of enquiry into problems which one can also encounter in a great variety of larger and more differentiated social units makes it possible to explore these problems in considerable detail—as it were, microscopically. One can build up a small-scale explanatory model of the figuration one believes to be universal—a model ready to be tested, enlarged and if necessary revised by enquiries into related figurations on a larger scale. In that sense the model of an established-outsider figuration which results from an enquiry into a little community like Winston Parva can serve as a kind of “empirical paradigm”. By applying it as a gauge to other more complex figurations of this type, one can understand better the structural characteristics they have in common and the reasons why, under different conditions, they function and develop upon different lines.

Walking through the streets of the two parts of Winston Parva, a casual visitor might have been surprised to learn that the inhabitants of one part thought of themselves as vastly superior to those of the other. So far as the standards of housing were concerned, the differences between the two parts were not particularly evident. Even if one looked more closely into the matter, it was at first surprising that the inhabitants of one area felt the need and were able to treat those of the other as inferior to themselves and, to some extent, could make them *feel* inferior. There were no differences in nationality, in ethnic descent, in “colour” or “race” between residents of the two areas; nor did they differ in their type of occupation, their income and educational levels—in a word, in their social class. Both were working-class areas. The only difference between them was that mentioned before: one group was formed by old residents established in the neighbourhood for two or three generations and the other was a group of newcomers.

What, then, induced the people who formed the first of these two groups to set themselves up as a higher and better order of human beings? What resources of power enabled them to assert their superiority and to cast a slur on the others as people of a lesser breed? As a rule one encounters this kind of figuration in connection with ethnic, national and other group differences that have been

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mentioned before and, in that case, some of their salient features tend to escape one's notice. But here in Winston Parva the full armoury of group superiority and group contempt was mobilised in the relations between two groups who were different only with regard to the duration of their residence at this place. Here one could see that "oldness" of association, with all that it implied, was, on its own, able to create the degree of group cohesion, the collective identification, the commonality of norms, which are apt to induce the gratifying euphoria that goes with the consciousness of belonging to a group of higher value and with the complementary contempt for other groups.

At the same time one could see here the limitations of any theory which explains power differentials only in terms of a monopolistic possession of non-human objects, such as weapons or means of production, and disregards figurational aspects of power differentials due purely to differences in the degree of organisation of the human beings concerned. As one came gradually to recognise in Winston Parva, the latter, especially differentials in the degree of internal cohesion and communal control, can play a decisive part in the power ratio of one group in relation to that of another—as, indeed, one is able to see in a great many other cases. In that small community the power superiority of the old established group was to a large extent of this type. It was based on the high degree of cohesion of families who had known each other for two or three generations, in contrast to the newcomers who were strangers in relation not only to the old residents but also to each other. It was thanks to their greater potential for cohesion and its activation by social control that the old residents were able to reserve officers in local organisations such as council, church or club for people of their own kind, and firmly to exclude from them people who lived in the other part and who, as a group, lacked cohesion among themselves. Exclusion and stigmatisation of the outsiders by the established group were thus powerful weapons used by the latter to maintain their identity, to assert their superiority, keeping others firmly in their place.

One encountered here, in a particularly pure form, a source of power differentials between interrelated groups which also plays a part in many other social settings, but which, there, is frequently overlaid for the eyes of an observer by other distinguishing

characteristics of the groups concerned, such as those of colour or social class. On closer inspection one can often discover that in these other cases too, as in Winston Parva, one group has a higher cohesion rate than the other and this integration differential substantially contributes to the former's power surplus; its greater cohesion enables such a group to reserve social positions with a high power potential of a different type for its members, thus in turn reinforcing its cohesion, and to exclude from them members of other groups—which is essentially what one means when one speaks of an established-outsider figuration.

However, even though the nature of the power resources on which is founded the social superiority and the feeling of human superiority of the established group in relation to an outsider group can vary greatly, the established-outsider figuration itself shows in many different settings common characteristics and regularities. One could discover them in the small setting of Winston Parva. Once discovered, they stood out more clearly in other settings. Therefore it became evident that the concept of an established-outsider relationship filled a gap in our conceptual equipment which prevented us from perceiving the common structural unity as well as the variations of this type of relationship and from explaining them.

One example of the structural regularities of established-outsider relationships may help readers to discover others for themselves as they go along. As the study of Winston Parva indicates, an established group tends to attribute to its outsider group as a whole the "bad" characteristics of that group's "worst" section—of its anómic minority. In contrast, the self-image of the established group tends to be modelled on its exemplary, most "nomic" or norm-setting section, on the minority of its "best" members. This *pars pro toto* distortion in opposite directions enables an established group to prove their point to themselves as well as to others; there is always some evidence to show that one's group is "good" and the other is "bad".

The conditions under which one group is able to cast a slur upon another group, the socio-dynamics of stigmatisation, deserve some attention in this context. One encountered the problem as soon as one talked with people in the older parts of Winston Parva. They were all agreed that the people "over there" in the newer part were

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a lesser breed. One could not help noticing that the tendency of one group to stigmatise another, which plays such a large part in relations between different groups all over the world, could be found even here in this small community—in the relationship between two groups who, in terms of nationality and class, were hardly different, and because one could observe it here, as it were, in a social microcosm, it appeared more manageable. It was easy to see in this setting that the ability of one group to pin a badge of human inferiority on another group and to make it stick was a function of a specific figuration which the two groups formed with each other. It requires, in other words, a figurational approach for its investigation. At present the tendency is to discuss the problem of social stigmatisation as if it were simply a question of people showing individually a pronounced dislike of other people as individuals. A well-known way of conceptualising such an observation is to classify it as prejudice. However, that means perceiving only at the individual level something which cannot be understood without perceiving it at the same time at the group level. At present one often fails to distinguish between, and relate to each other, group stigmatisation and individual prejudice. In Winston Parva, as elsewhere, one found members of one group casting a slur on those of another, not because of their qualities as individual people, but because they were members of a group which they considered collectively as different from, and as inferior to, their own group. Thus one misses the key to the problem usually discussed under headings such as “social prejudice”, if one looks for it solely in the personality structure of individual people. One can find it only if one considers the figuration formed by the two (or more) groups concerned or, in other words, the nature of their interdependence.

The centrepiece of that figuration is an uneven balance of power and the tensions inherent in it. It is also the decisive condition of any effective stigmatisation of an outsider group by an established group. One group can effectively stigmatise another only as long as it is well established in positions of power from which the stigmatised group is excluded. As long as that is the case, the stigma of collective disgrace attached to the outsiders can be made to stick. Unmitigated contempt and one-sided stigmatisation of outsiders without redress, such as the stigmatisation of the untouchables by the higher castes in India, or that of the African slaves or

their descendants in America, signals a very uneven balance of power. Attaching the label of "lower human value" to another group is one of the weapons used in a power struggle by superior groups as a means of maintaining their social superiority. In that situation the social slur cast by a more powerful upon a less powerful group usually enters the self-image of the latter and, thus, weakens and disarms them. Accordingly, the power to stigmatise diminishes or even goes into reverse gear when a group is no longer able to maintain its monopolisation of the principal resources of power available in a society and to exclude other interdependent groups—the former outsiders—from participation in these resources. As soon as the power disparities or, in other words, the unevenness of the balance of power, diminishes, the former outsider groups, on their part, tend to retaliate. They resort to counter-stigmatisation, as negroes do in America, as peoples formerly subject to European domination do in Africa and as a former subject class, the industrial workers, do in Europe itself.

That may be enough to indicate briefly why the type of stigmatisation—of "prejudice" between groups—which one encountered in the miniature setting of Winston Parva demanded an enquiry into the overall structure of the relationship between the two main groups which endowed one of them with the power to ostracise the other. It demanded, in other words, as a first step, a measure of detachment—of distancing—from both groups. The problem one had to explore was not which side was wrong and which was right; the problem was rather which structural characteristics of the developing community of Winston Parva bound two groups to each other in such a way that the members of one of them felt impelled, and had sufficient power resources, to treat those of another group collectively with a measure of contempt, as people less well bred and thus of lower human value, by comparison with themselves.

In Winston Parva this problem presented itself with particular force, because most of the current explanations of power differentials did not apply there. The two groups, as I have already said, were not different with regard to their social class, their nationality, their ethnic or racial descent, their religious denomination or their educational level. The principal difference between the two groups was precisely this: that one was a group of old residents established

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in the neighbourhood for two or three generations and the other was a group of newcomers. The sociological significance of this fact was a marked difference in the cohesion of the two groups. One was closely integrated and the other was not. Differentials of cohesion and integration as an aspect of power differentials have probably not received the attention they deserve. In Winston Parva their significance as a resource of power inequalities showed itself very clearly. Once one discovered it there, other cases of cohesion differentials as sources of power differentials came easily to mind.

How they functioned in Winston Parva was fairly obvious. The group of old residents, families whose members had known each other for more than one generation, had established among themselves a common mode of living and a set of norms. They observed certain standards and were proud of it. Hence the influx of newcomers to their neighbourhood was experienced by them as a threat to their established way of life even though the newcomers were fellow nationals. For the core group of the old part of Winston Parva, the sense of their own standing and of their belonging was bound up with their communal life and its tradition. To preserve what they felt to be of high value, they closed ranks against the newcomers, thus protecting their identity as a group and asserting its superiority. The situation is familiar. It shows very clearly the complementarity of the superior human worth—the group charisma—attributed by the established to themselves and the “bad” characteristics—the group disgrace—attributed by them to the outsiders. As the latter—newcomers and strangers not only to the old residents but also to each other—lacked cohesion, they were unable to close their own ranks and fight back.

The complementarity of group charisma (one's own) and group disgrace (that of others) is one of the most significant aspects of the type of established-outsider relationship that one encounters here. It deserves a moment's consideration. It provides a clue to the emotional barrier against closer contact with the outsiders set up by this kind of figuration among the established. Perhaps more than anything else, this emotional barrier accounts for the often extreme rigidity in the attitude of established groups towards outsider groups—for the perpetuation of this taboo against closer contact with the outsiders for generation after generation, even if their

social superiority or, in other words, their power surplus diminishes. One can observe a good many examples of this emotional inflexibility in our own time. Thus, state legislation in India may abolish the outcaste position of the former untouchables, but the emotional revulsion of high-caste Indians against contact with them persists, especially in the rural areas of that vast country. In the same way, state and federal legislation in the United States has increasingly eroded the juridical disabilities of the formerly enslaved group, and established their institutional equality with that of their former masters, as fellow citizens of the same nation. But the "social prejudice", the emotional barriers set up by the feeling of their own superior virtue, especially among the descendants of slave-masters, and the feeling of lesser human worth, the group disgrace, of the slaves' descendants, have not kept pace with legal adjustments. Hence, the swell of counter-stigmatisation in a balance-of-power battle with slowly decreasing differentials becomes noticeably stronger.

The mechanics of stigmatisation cannot easily be understood without a closer look at the part played by a person's image of his group's standing among others and, therefore, of his own standing as a member of his group. I have already said that dominant groups with a high power superiority attribute to themselves, as collectivities, and to those who belong to them, as families and individuals, a distinguishing group charisma. All those who "belong" participate in it. But they have to pay a price. Participation in a group's superiority and its unique group charisma is, as it were, the reward for submitting to group-specific norms. It has to be paid for by each of its members individually through the subjection of his own conduct to specific patterns of affect control. Pride in the incarnation of one's group charisma in one's own person, the satisfaction of belonging to and representing a powerful and, according to one's emotional equation, uniquely valuable and humanly superior group is functionally bound up with its members' willingness to submit to the obligations imposed upon them by membership of that group. As in other cases, the logic of the emotions is stringent: power superiority is equated with human merit, human merit with special grace of nature or gods. The gratification received through one's share in the group charisma makes up for the personal sacrifice of gratification in the form of submission to group norms.

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As a matter of course, members of an outsider group are regarded as failing to observe these norms and restraints. That is the prevailing image of such a group among members of an established group. Outsiders, in the case of Winston Parva as elsewhere, are—collectively and individually—experienced as anomic. Closer contact with them, therefore, is felt to be disagreeable. They endanger the built-in defences of the established group against breaches of the common norms and taboos upon whose observance depended both a person's standing among his or her fellows within the established group and his or her own self-respect, pride, identity as a member of the superior group. The closing of ranks among the established certainly has the social function of preserving the group's power superiority. At the same time, the avoidance of any closer social contact with members of the outsider group has all the emotional characteristics of what one has learned in another context to call "the fear of pollution". As outsiders are felt to be anomic, close contact with them threatens a member of an established group with "anomic infection": he or she might be suspected of breaking the norms and taboos of their own group: in fact he or she would break those norms simply by associating with members of an outsider group. Hence contact with outsiders threatens an "insider" with the lowering of their own status within the established group. He or she might lose its members' regard—might no longer seem to share the higher human value attributed to themselves by the established.

The actual concepts used by established groups as a means of stigmatisation can vary according to the social characteristics and traditions of the groups concerned. In many cases they are quite meaningless outside the particular context in which they are used, and yet they hurt the outsiders deeply because the established groups usually have an ally in an inner voice of their social inferiors. Often enough the very names of groups in an outsider situation carry with them, even for the ears of their own members, undertones of inferiority and disgrace. Stigmatisation, therefore, can have a paralysing effect on groups with a lower power ratio. Although other resources of power superiority are needed in order to sustain the power to stigmatise, the latter is itself no mean weapon in balance-of-power tensions and conflicts. It may, for a while, cripple the ability of groups with a lower power ratio to strike

back and to mobilise power resources within their reach. It may even help to perpetuate for some time the status superiority of a group whose power superiority has decreased or disappeared.

In English-speaking countries as in all other human societies, most people have at their disposal a range of terms stigmatising other groups and meaningful only in the context of specific established-outsider relationships. "Nigger", "yid", "wop", "dike", "papist" are examples. Their power to bite depends on the awareness of user and recipient that the humiliation of the latter intended by their use has the backing of a powerful established group, in relation to which that of the recipient is an outsider group with weaker power resources. All these terms symbolise the fact that the member of an outsider group can be shamed because he does not come up to the norms of the superior group because, in terms of these norms, he is anomic. Nothing is more characteristic of a highly uneven balance of power in cases such as these than the inability of outsider groups to retaliate with an equivalent stigmatising term of the established group. Even if they possess such a term in their communications, with each other (the Jewish term "goy" is an example), they are useless as weapons in a slanging match because an outsider group cannot shame members of an established group: as long as the balance of power between them is very uneven its stigmatising terms do not mean anything to them, they have no sting. If they begin to bite it is a sign that the balance of power is changing.

I have already said that stigmatisation of outsiders shows certain common features in a wide variety of established-outsider figurations. Anomie is perhaps the most frequent reproach against them; one can find again and again that they are regarded by the established group as untrustworthy, undisciplined and lawless. This is how a member of the old Athenian aristocratic establishment—the so-called Old Oligarch—spoke of the *demos*, the rising Athenian citizens—free craftsmen, merchants and peasants—who, it seems, had driven his group into exile and established democracy, the rule of the *demos*:

Throughout the whole world the aristocracy in a state is opposed to democracy; for the natural characteristics of an aristocracy are discipline, obedience to the laws, and a most strict regard for what is respectable, while the natural characteristics of the common people are an extreme ignorance, ill discipline and immorality . . . For what you consider