Book Reviews

Lonely Crowd 10 Years Later

Culture and Social Character. The work of David Riesman reviewed. Seymour Lipset and Leo Lowenthal, Eds. Free Press, New York, 1961. xiv + 466 pp. $7.50.

When *The Lonely Crowd* first appeared, literary critics praised it more than social scientists did. It pleased European "interpretive" sociologists more than American "empiricists," to use Kecskemeti's terms. Europeans are more impressed than we by such "sociologists" as Toynbee and Spengler—whom we call "social philosophers," and not very good ones. We like specific, repeatable research projects. Many Europeans (and some Americans) tend to derogate such research as being "atomistic" and "positivistic."

Space prevents evaluating each of the 19 chapters by 26 authors, but most of them concur in giving *The Lonely Crowd* quite a beating. Too much space is given to restating Riesman's thesis; at least two chapters are almost unrelated to Riesman's work; one or two treat the book more harshly than it deserves, and one almost resorts to name-calling. In his "Reconsideration," Riesman gives these four chapters more attention than they merit, and he does it with marked gentleness and courtesy.

The chapter by Parsons and White is one of the best, especially their "Alternative proposal" (pages 98 to 122) and their "Empirical cases" on peer groups, consumption, personality as a resource, and family relations. Lipset's "A changing American character?" practically destroys Riesman's main thesis by a scholarly review of the literature. The only empirical research is Sofer's study of 42 college freshmen in relation to inner-direction, other-direction, and autonomy, and the study by Riley, Riley, and Moore of 2500 middle-class high school students. Neither study finds much evidence to support the thesis, and some of the findings indicate that it should be rejected or modified considerably. The Rileys, in common with most of the nonempirical critics, suggest that the differences in the type-responses are due to institutional rather than to characterological factors.

Riesman and Glazer say, "We asked ourselves what we would change, were we to write such a book again. Much now strikes us as amiss" (page 419). Specifically, they state that (i) the population linkage is clearly wrong; (ii) treatment of politics and mass media is one-sided; (iii) the study is too ethnocentric; (iv) the authors are now less interested in character and more interested in politics and society; (v) they gave too little place to persistent American values; (vi) no society is a simple reflex to technology; (vii) it is difficult to separate character structure from behavior; (viii) they overemphasized character, (ix) underemphasized the role of institutions, (x) overemphasized the role of specific other-direction, and (xi) overestimated play and leisure as a basis for developing autonomous personalities.

These are commendable and necessary changes, I think, but the critics should have made it plainer that Riesman entered many caveats in the original work and never claimed *all* people in the upper middle classes were *wholly* other-directed. Riesman made many reservations on points for which he is now being criticized. As he says, the thesis of the book was "open-ended and open-minded"; the authors of *The Lonely Crowd* certainly were modest, tentative, and self-critical—as they still are.

However, they still believe that some basic changes occurred in American character from 1929 to 1949 and that change is still going on, but they concede that they may have exaggerated the changes. "Young well educated Americans . . . [show] . . . an enlargement of the circles of empathy beyond one's clan, beyond one's class, and sometimes beyond one's country as well" (page 432), though there is still plenty of Parsons' "instrumental activism." With this conclusion, I fully agree.

I think my review of *The Lonely Crowd* (in the *American Sociological Review,* April 1951) was fair and somewhat prophetic of the present evaluation of the book. However, I am surprised that none of the critics mentioned the paucity of empirical evidence (which *Faces in the Crowd* promised to supply, but did not), the semantic pitfalls that come from the literary language (figures of speech and so forth) and the neologistic style, the dubious nature of "ideal-type" analysis, and the difficulties and shortcomings of pencil-paper and interview research. I agree with most of the critics most of the time, though I would like to argue with Dahrendorf, Birnbaum, Naegele, and Bell, but I think someone should have at least touched on the points mentioned in this paragraph.

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Primitive Artists

Indian Art in America. Frederick J. Dockstader. New York Graphic Society, Greenwich, Conn., 1961. 224 pp. Illus. $25.

That phenomenon of modern publishing, the colorful, king-size picture book, is a very effective medium for interpreting North America's only indigenous artistic traditions—the picturesque arts and crafts of the Indians and Eskimos. For this volume, Frederick Dockstader, director of the Heye Foundation's Museum of the American Indian, has carefully selected, from the rich collections of his own and other American museums, some 250 masterpieces which illustrate the wide range of these people's artistic achievement over a period of some 15 centuries. In superb photographs, 70 of them in full color, these fine museum specimens speak very eloquently for themselves. Individual captions, which include a statement of size, tribe, or location of