Book Reviews

Race Differences

Negro and White Children. A Psychological Study in the Rural South. E. EARL BAUGHMAN and W. GRANT DAHLSTROM. Academic Press, New York, 1968. xxiv + 572 pp., illus. $15.

For black or white, in North or South, the facts of race carry such a freight of emotion, of guilt and anger and defensiveness and wounded pride, that it is no surprise that scientific study of them remains sadly underdeveloped. Of course, action cannot wait on knowledge. But until the knowledge base is built more firmly than it is at present, well-intended action is likely to go astray. The circumstances unfortunately conspire against the careful, dispassionate effort required to produce the facts that are needed. We are therefore greatly in debt to Baughman and Dahlstrom, psychologists at the University of North Carolina, for their cautious, comprehensive, and in essential respects exemplary study of the black and white elementary school population in a rural area ("Millfield") of the North Carolina Piedmont—where Negroes somewhat outnumber whites and the segregated traditional pattern is still taken for granted.

Recently, the urban ghetto has captured our attention, as the main scene for the American racial drama. But one-fifth of American Negroes still live in the rural South, which remains the great supplier of the ghetto. The impact of impoverished rural life on Negro and white children is thus well worth study. In training their research skills on the children of Millfield, Baughman and Dahlstrom have more than redressed the balance: on no other population can one find a comprehensive multivariate analysis of race differences comparable to what they have provided. This is a classic monograph, one that needs to be matched with similar studies in the deep South and in the urban North.

The authors steer clear of the bugbear issue of innate race differences, which anyhow has little direct relevance to the social, political, and ethical issues with which observed race differences confront us. Their concern is with describing and understanding these empirical inequalities. They write,

> We believe . . . that there is no scientific way to prove racial inferiority, superiority, or a one-to-one equality. With respect to the behaviors that are peculiarly human, we are beginning to understand how the environment affects them. Contrary to the impressions held by many, however, no comprehensive and objective mapping of the intellective, social, motivational, and temperamental similarities and differences between Negro and white children growing up in the rural South has yet been provided. And, because the differences that do exist (especially those deemed undesirable) may well be attributable in significant degree to modifiable aspects of the social order in which they are created, we need to know about these differences with as much precision and objectivity as possible if we are to maximize the likelihood that planned innovations will result in less behavioral inequality. It is the purpose of this book, then, to contribute to the development of such a comparative behavioral map, and to make recommendations for action programs based upon our findings. In this way we hope to make our contribution to the achievement of a social order in which the question of race becomes truly only an academic question.

"As much precision and objectivity as possible" characterizes the authors' approach throughout. Full tabular documentation is provided for all descriptive assertions in the text. The methods used vary in the quality of data they yield, ranging from standard measures of ability and achievement (Stanford-Binet, Primary Mental Abilities Test, Stanford Achievement Test) to less adequate ones of motivation, personality, and socialization antecedents (the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, sociometrics, elicited fantasy scored objectively, teacher ratings, and comprehensive interviews with mothers and children). But the methods are generally as firm as the state of the art allows, the results are competently analyzed, and they are interpreted with scrupulous caution. Broad cross-sectional comparisons are supplemented with short-range longitudinal studies of changes in abilities and, in the evaluation of an experimental kindergarten program, with controlled comparisons. The biracial research staff evidently enjoyed unusual rapport with children, teachers, and parents. The book is interesting, even exciting, because of the findings reported and the questions raised, not because of its verbal style, which works through each body of data dryly and systematically. The reader may be reminded of Kinsey's productive entomologizing of a research area equally charged with human emotion.

As might be expected of such an approach, the trees emerge more clearly than the forest. Insofar as this follows from the authors' presentational strategy, the reader who is interested in substance rather than methodological detail can compensate by turning to the chapter summaries. These adhere scrupulously to the data. But the difficulty is partly inherent in the authors' cautious reliance on plural sources for their central data. Abilities are measured by two quite different tests, and key findings differ depending on the measure. Similarly perplexing differences follow from the alternative personality indices. Had the authors been satisfied with less comprehensive data, they could have written a clearer, more satisfying account, but one that would surely have been wider of the truth. As it is, many interpretative questions are left hanging, but premature closure on method-dependent conclusions is avoided.

What are some of the findings that make this book interesting and important? I must be arbitrarily selective, given the complexities just mentioned.

First, it is clear that "cultural deprivation" in Millfield is appropriately viewed in absolute terms, not relative ones. The rural whites in Millfield are mostly poor, the Negroes poorer. But in spite of the pervasive TV, the children seem quite unaware of their poverty and are generally content with life in Millfield. Their world is a narrow one. Evaluating their situations in local and race-specific terms, they do not *feel* deprived. Their intellectual, academic, and motivational handicaps—and these are substantial—thus cannot be traced to feelings of *relative* deprivation.

To grasp these handicaps, one must look at the data separately by race, sex, and age, as well as by the specific measures employed, and the analyses presented follow this pattern. Generally, the white girls are the least disadvantaged, particularly in academic achievement, where they reach national norms. Negro boys are in all respects the problem

group, lower in ability measures, progressively lower in achievement measures, lower in peer popularity, and most disturbed in MMPI profile. Negro girls share in the general Negro deficit in intellective measures—a deficit that is present from the beginning of the school years—but by the age of 14 they approach the scores of white boys on the overall Stanford Achievement Test battery. At about age 11, white boys seem to drop in school achievement for motivational reasons; Negro boys are off the track from the beginning.

Interviews with mothers of kindergarten-age children suggest some plausible reasons for race differences in children as they approach school. According to their mothers, many more of the Negro children were unwanted—especially the boys. The interviews also show Negro mothers as more confident in the value of whippings, less likely to use praise, and less tolerant of a child's self-assertiveness in his contacts with adult authority. Had the resources been available to supplement the mother interviews with systematic home observation, conjectures in this area would rest on firmer ground.

In the sphere of personality, the book provides the first systematic and reasonably comprehensive data on a definable Negro population, and the comparable data on white children are, of course, an essential aspect of their value. The MMPI indices suggest a degree of disturbance among the eighth-graders not indicated by teacher ratings and other sources—especially on the part of Negro boys. There are, of course, serious problems of which the authors are well aware in interpreting the personality profiles of members of a Southern rural subculture in terms of white Minnesota norms. The authors suggest, plausibly, that there is indeed underlying disturbance, which does not emerge in problem behavior in the generally unstressful and unchallenging Millfield environment. Transplanted to the ghetto street corner, the same predispositions would be expected to have more serious behavioral consequences.

A controlled before-and-after evalution of an experimental kindergarten program—the first free kindergartens in the state—showed perplexing results dependent on the intellective measure used. On the Stanford-Binet, white kindergarten children showed gains over their nonkindergarten controls, but Negro kindergarten children did not. But on the Primary Mental Abilities, the gain of Negro kindergarten children over their controls was much greater than that of the whites; the rate of gain of Negro kindergarten children matched that of the white kindergarten children. One is grateful for the authors' employment of more than one measure of ability; one is perplexed by the lack of agreement between measures; and one regrets that the study was not extended to follow the children into their school years.

The news value of the Baughman-Dahlstrom findings also lies in what they did *not* find. They did not find evidence for matriarchy in the rural Negro family. Although the extended family pattern was more frequent among Negroes than among whites and father substitutes were also more common, Negroes were more likely than whites to see the male adult as the predominant source of authority. But there was pervasive evidence from several sources that the Negro male is devalued by the people most significant to him from early boyhood on; male authority in the family as compensatory may be especially arbitrary and unwelcome.

They also did not find evidence for deflated self-concepts among the children. The children's interview statements about themselves were markedly positive, especially the Negroes'. The unrealistically high educational and occupational aspirations, in which the children, especially the Negro girls, agree with their mothers, also do not directly accord with low self-esteem; and the authors, with due tentativeness, prefer an explanation based on the shieldedness of the Millfield educational setting to one in which defensive distortion figures.

The authors' recommendations for social policy stem from their findings. In view of the pronounced deficits of Negro children from the very beginning of elementary school, they call for extension of kindergarten training wherever there are substantial numbers of disadvantaged children, and for experimentation with home visit programs for still younger children. (The book describes a trial run of such a program in some detail but does not evaluate it formally.) In view of deficiencies observed in the elementary schools, they call for professionalization of the teacher role, the addition of educational specialists, and the attraction of men to elementary teaching. They also call for new curriculum development to make the children more aware of their environing biracial society and of how to maximize its opportunities and minimize its limitations. The fact that most Millfield children would like to stay in the area but expect to leave—virtually no one, black or white, sees a future in farming—leads the authors to support an experimental program of industrial development in the rural South. With characteristic caution, they recommend that all innovations be carefully evaluated in pilot version. They stand on principle for school integration, but see no realistic basis for expecting effective local initiative from either blacks or whites to bring it about.

Here, then, are unwelcome facts, about race differences that we are bound to evaluate on a dimension of better or worse, superiority or inferiority, differences that a democratic society must be committed to try to reduce by the intelligent extension of opportunity. Here are more helpful facts, about correlates of these differences, which suggest directions in which remedy may be sought. Here is a fine example of basic research on a socially important topic that deploys quite modest resources in ways that subsequent research can confidently build on. Here is a study of children in the rural South that has much broader relevance.

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Rumford Republished

Collected Works of Count Rumford. SANBORN C. BROWN, Ed. Vol. 1, The Nature of Heat. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1968. xiii + 507 pp., illus. $10.

The works of Benjamin Thompson, Count Rumford, were last published, by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, between 1870 and 1875. The appearance of the first volume of a new edition, published with the cooperation of the Rumford Committee of the Academy, was therefore to be welcomed. That new edition is, however, essentially a reprint of the 1870–75 edition, and this has imposed limitations and anomalies on the text. The material has been regrouped so that volume 1 now contains only papers described as relating to "The Nature of Heat," and a new paper, improperly excluded from the previous edition as "redundant," has been added. Sections 2 and 3 of the previous "Experimental Investigations Concerning Heat" have,