Book Reviews

English Subcultures: An Overview

Samples from English Cultures. vols. 1 and 2. vol. 1, *Three Preliminary Studies: Aspects of Adult Life in England* (447 pp., $8.50); vol 2, *Child-Rearing Practices* (250 pp., $6). Josephine Klein. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London; Humanities Press, New York, 1965. Illus.

In explaining the title of these two volumes, the author also explains their purpose. "It was my purpose . . . to compare and contrast current patterns of living in England, in such a way that similarities and differences might offer themselves for further investigation for incorporation into theory. At the same time, it seemed to me that English urban sociology and social psychology were becoming increasingly handicapped by the lack of attention given to differences between different geographical regions and different social classes." But in practice it was not easy, the author writes, to select ". . . those facts which would be most representative of the ways of life under consideration." With Benedict's *Patterns of Culture* in mind as a model ". . . in aspiration at least," the author realized that this was "too ambitious a project." The subcultures of England shared too many culture traits and were not static enough "to merit the title *pattern* in the sense in which Benedict used the word. Moreover, in any single one of the subcultures under consideration, too many of the data were missing which would be needed to display a pattern convincingly. . . ."

Hence the title *Samples from English Cultures* was selected, and the *Shorter Oxford Dictionary* supports this use in both senses: *a relatively small quantity of material or an individual object from which the quality of the mass, group, species, etc., which it represents may be inferred* and, in the second sense, *a fact, incident, story or suppositious case which serves to illustrate, confirm or render credible some proposition or statement.*

Section 1, "Three Preliminary Studies," consists of three chapters, each about a specific locale. The first chapter summarizes and abstracts work from two studies of the same "residual area" in London (Paddington). These are Marie Penath's *Branch Street* and Spinley's *The Deprived and the Privileged*. The second chapter takes an area that is not dissimilar to Paddington, but this time from Liverpool. Here the material is, in the author's words, ". . . reproduced *verbatim* or in slightly abbreviated form from *The People of Ship Street*," by Kerr. The third chapter does yet another area, a Yorkshire coalfield, and again "much of what follows is reproduced verbatim or in slightly abbreviated form" from Dennis, Henriques, and Slaughter's *Coal is Our Life*.

Section 2, "Aspects of Adult Life in England," is divided into three chapters. In the first chapter of this section (chap. 4) there is an account entitled "Aspects of traditional working-class life" which is based on Bott, Young and Willmott; Mogey, Hoggart, Carter and Pephcott; and Zweig and Gorer. Chapter 5 deals with changes in working-class life and chapter 6 with aspects of middle class life.

Section 3 constitutes the second volume and deals with child-rearing practices. Instead of chapters, this section is divided by such subheadings as "Attitudes to conception" (certainly a convenient place to begin), "Parental discipline and the control of behavior," and "Successful socialization for high achievement"; it concludes with "Social class and child-rearing: The privileged extreme." The material for this section, like the others, is taken from specific studies and is reported in a verbatim, or close to verbatim manner.

If an anthropologist finds himself without a tribe and needs a really interesting one, I would commend these volumes to his attention. They will give him a good idea of what English life is like in a few different parts of England and at least among the middle and lower classes—particularly the lower classes.

Whether out of respect for her betters or because the natives are quite inaccessible (that means hostile) is not clear, but the only sources of information on the upper classes that the author used are novels and Mitford's. And this should interest anthropologists intensely. For where sociologists and social workers habitually sink to the very lowest levels of a society before they are able to work with the natives, anthropologists like to start at the top, with chiefs, upper castes, upper classes, aristocrats, and then, if it proves necessary, look awkwardly down toward some middle stratum. There is much good work that needs to be done on this tribe, and the anthropologist who needs a new tribe will be able to begin right at the top, where he belongs.

I say that these volumes would give the reader an overview of what life is like in England. This may perhaps be a bit generous, but they would serve as a useful introduction. But the reader should not take these volumes up with any more specific theoretical or practical aim. A general theoretical frame was in the author's mind when she began this work. This frame relates the general cultural situation to the child-rearing practices of the parents, and these are then related to the psychological effects on the child. But this theoretical frame was only used as the rudest kind of heuristic device, because the data available to the author were simply insufficient to exhibit the frame in its best and fullest light, much less to test it or develop it in any way.

And, of course, the student who wants to learn something about "culture," as the title of the book suggests, in any serious or theoretical sense, finds, on opening the books, that patterns of concrete behavior, frequency distributions, opinions, relations between groups, the specific experiences of purportedly typical people, and generalizations about change, and so on, are all lumped indiscriminately under the rubric of "culture." I do not doubt that the English have culture! But in this book "culture" is indistinguishable from social relations, social structure, history, and Mrs. McGillicudy's heavy hand on her small son's seat.

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