

## BOOK REVIEWS

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JOSEPH HRABA. *AMERICAN ETHNICITY*. Itasca, Illinois: F. E. Peacock Publishers, Inc., 1979, 386 pp., \$11.50.

Hraba uses the social science disciplines--i.e., sociology, history, and psychology--to set the scope of his research on American ethnicity. Hraba combines the theoretical premises of assimilation, pluralism, and ethnic conflict theory as methods for viewing ethnic group convergence to and divergence from American society. "Each theory is only a partial explanation of societal modernization and ethnic evolution . . . and together they offer a fuller understanding of ethnic evolution in the modernization process" (p. 7). Societal modernization and ethnic evolution are keys for understanding the convergence (inclusion) and divergence (exclusion) process.

Hraba presents an in-depth literature review of assimilation, pluralism, and ethnic conflict theory from a social science perspective. These three different theories, as presented, indicate that historical changes have occurred within their theoretical makeup as well as illustrating the fundamental differences between the three. Hraba's review is an illustration of the fundamental differences between each theoretical perspective and shows, through his ethnic evolution conceptualization, the importance of using assimilation, pluralism, and ethnic conflict theories as a more comprehensive method for examining ethnicity and the modernization process.

Hraba includes an examination of the psychology of prejudice and discrimination in his research. Hraba points out that the psychology of prejudice compliments the sociological theories and forms a "partial explanation of intergroup relations."

According to Hraba, ethnic evolution is a historical process where different ethnic groups, depending on the amount and nature of prejudice and discrimination, have either converged or diverged from the larger society. This group inclusion and/or exclusion process is based on an economic pyramidal structure; i.e., entrance or nonentrance into the U.S. capitalist structure was and is based upon intergroup and outgroup prejudices and discriminatory practices. Hraba illustrates how the three theories of assimilation, pluralism, and conflict theory compliment one another because each presents an aspect of this converging-diverging process.

The author examines five colored ethnic groups. He presents an historical account of how each group economically survived in the United States. This illustrates the conflicts and contacts these colored ethnic groups faced in their attempts to "make it"

in "the larger society." Hraba shows that the Mexican American and American Indian, following their historical and present condition, are moving towards evolutionary divergence and intergroup exclusion from the larger U.S. society.

The case of black Americans shows both evolutionary convergence and divergence. There exists a black middle class, and, therefore, convergence is taking place to a limited extent. However, the poor black is still excluded from the "larger society," which consequently leads toward evolutionary divergence.

The Chinese and Japanese, according to Hraba, have experienced economic exclusion and inclusion, which has created ethnic stratification into what Hraba terms ethclasses. The Japanese Americans, in particular, exhibit continued ethnic convergence and intergroup inclusion.

Using these case studies, Hraba discusses the proposed reasons for evolutionary divergence for some ethnic groups and convergence for others. Hraba describes studies which indicate that blacks, for instance, suffer from a pathological problem and negative self-images because of the prejudice and discrimination they have suffered. Accordingly, blacks suffer from a "culture of poverty" and "the blocked opportunity theory" in which they are unable to secure satisfying jobs. Hraba contends that these beliefs and studies form a partial explanation for ethnic divergence. Hraba continues on and proposes that ethnic communalism has also played a role in the evolutionary divergence of ethnic groups. He believes that minority groups formed ethnic enclaves when they arrived in the United States and generally formed an internal system of protection as an economic necessity. Hraba is quick to point out that groups are not static and have experienced a diversity of changes. However, ethnic communalism is maintained as an internal system which gives meaning to its group members.

Along with communalism is a sense of group membership exhibited by the individuals who make up the group, which Hraba terms "the consciousness of kind." Group members are aware of their social position, both historically and currently. Communalism and consciousness of kind are two factors which explain evolutionary divergence.

Hraba believes that both social pathology and ethnic communalism are factors of evolutionary divergence for some ethnic groups. The diversity exhibited among the various colored ethnic groups concerning the amount of divergence a group has undergone depends upon the amount of continual oppression a group has faced. A second factor concerning ethnic divergence is the extent the group has regulated and insulated its members from prejudice and discrimination. Hraba shows how the Japanese Americans were able to insulate themselves from the prejudice and discrimination and set up a "subeconomic" system within their group. Blacks were

less able to insulate their members and, consequently, showed more evolutionary divergence.

Hraba goes to great lengths to present documented sociological and psychological data to support the theoretical premises of assimilation, pluralism, and conflict theory, as well as the psychology of prejudice and discrimination. The combination of these perspectives and Hraba's evolution of divergence and convergence perspective is a more accurate representation of what the future has in store for ethnic minorities. However, Hraba's book has several shortcomings.

*American Ethnicity* typifies traditional sociology in Hraba's attempt to categorize human groups into boxes using traditional historical data and psychological analyses of sample populations. He mentions group divergence from a particular category only passingly without realizing that ethnic group members reflect greater regional similarities across ethnic boundaries than differences. He fails to realize the diversity exhibited by so-called minority group populations. For example, this reviewer met a Japanese American woman from Colorado who exemplified black cultural characteristics because she had been raised in a black community. Other examples exist when one examines the syncretisms which occur in Stockton, where Blacks, Filipinos, Japanese, Chicanos, and Chinese live in close proximity to one another. Consequently, the broad generalization that Black, Native, Mexican, Chinese, and Japanese Americans move and act as an entire cohesive group and have together participated in an evolutionary divergent process is inaccurate.

Hraba is only concerned with one aspect of American ethnicity, and that is in the area of economics. His entire social, historical, and psychological analysis covers the reason for economic success and/or "marginality" for ethnic groups in the United States. It should be stressed that American ethnicity encompasses a great deal more information, especially in the area of culture, where retention, reinterpretation, and change is viewed from the perspective of the ethnic group.

Finally, ethnic groups, especially colored ethnic groups, are getting tired of being categorized and told who they are, what their history and culture is, and what their problems are from an outsider's perspective. For example, Hraba presents black history from a traditional textbook point of view. He points out that blacks suffer social pathological problems, which is a factor for his evolutionary divergence theory for blacks. He talks about the nontransmission of the cultural characteristic of a rotating credit system and fails to discuss the whole panoply of black culture. The intricacies of culture are left to a few broad generalizations. These kinds of generalizations for a whole group of people mystify and cloud the reality and experiences black people have had. The complexities of our society cannot be reduced to a few gross generalizations and still have a realistic foundation.

It is time that people be allowed to define themselves. All groups have diverse experiences which cross ethnic boundaries and which cannot be attributed to a particular ethnic group.

These drawbacks indicate that Hraba needs to rethink through his position and begin reexamining the methods used to study human groups. Hraba needs to look at history from the perspective of the people. He needs to examine cultural syncretisms and changes that have and still are taking place in ethnic groups.

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JESSE E. GLOSTER. *MINORITY ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT*. Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1978, 555 pp., \$16.75.

*Minority Economic, Political and Social Development* is a comprehensive document on the experience of discriminated minority groups in the United States, covering a wide range of minority issues which include poverty, aging, unemployment, housing, health, financial institutions, politics, and minority experiences in professional athletics, the military, and mass media. Few other books could surpass the scope of this ambitious work.

The book does an excellent job of revealing the pervasive and institutionalized nature of discrimination existing in the United States. Under this discriminatory system, minority members are shown to have suffered in various social spheres and to remain in victimized conditions, even with possession of rich natural resources (American Indians).

For each issue, data are presented in a variety of forms. Gloster utilizes numerous descriptive statistics. The richness of statistical data undoubtedly strengthens his arguments. At the same time, his book is filled with various anecdotes and biographical sketches of black mayors, congressmen, and other prominent minority leaders. He also discusses geographical distribution of minority groups and related problems (e.g., "In the South is found the heaviest incidence of poverty."). Utilization of this data makes the book highly readable for both the layman and the scholar.

The above data are, however, neatly organized and dissected in a scholarly fashion by the following three perspectives: economic, political, and historical. Throughout the 24 chapters in his book, Gloster is deeply concerned with the economic plight of minority groups. Even in the chapters on professional athletics, the military, and the mass media, his primary focus is on minority members' occupational entry, subsequent mobility and career, and