

Hubert M. Blalock, Jr. *Race and Ethnic Relations*. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1982) x, 133 pp., \$11.95.

In the field of race relations, particularly in the United States, many scholars have turned their attention to the area of government policy and its implication for American racial relations.¹ *Race and Ethnic Relations* by Blalock is concerned with this issue, but not exclusively. He makes the point that racial and ethnic conflict is not simply an American problem but indeed exists as a problem for most societies and emphasizes the desirability of comparative analysis whenever possible. Blalock also wants to rescue us from the naive assumption that it is possible to view race and ethnic relations in isolation.

Blalock discusses various theories which explain the psychological and structural factors that create and maintain racial and ethnic cleavages and conflicts. Throughout, he provides us with some thoughtful insights on how these variables work at both the individual and group levels. Thus, by the end of the book, the complex nature of behavior surrounding conflicts existing between the individual, groups, and the nation-state is made clear even to a newcomer to the field of race and ethnic relations. Much of this discussion is not new but Blalock does a good job of bringing it all together in a concise manner accessible to any audience.

For scholars in this area of study, Blalock's last chapter entitled "Some Policy Implications" might prove to be the most interesting. I find in this section what I believe to be a minor weakness of the book. Most social scientists who attempt to address policy questions surrounding race and ethnic conflict do so by arguing for: (1) more, and clearer, theoretical formulations in the field; and (2) the need for programs which are not race-specific, single-issue oriented, but which take into consideration overall governmental policy in this as well as other areas.

It is well and good to argue for lucid theoretical perspectives and to suggest that race-specific, single-issue policies sometimes lead to trivial attempts at solutions to complicated larger issues. But to recognize these problems without taking into consideration the methods by which public policy is carried out is to address only one side of the dilemma of government activity in this area. Scholars concerned with policy implementation must consider not only the clarity and adequacy of the theoretical perspective but also the same question most activists and organizations involved in promoting policies must face, i.e., the feasibility of particular programs. In other words, will policy makers buy only a small portion of a large, theoretically developed program, or will they endorse an entire program calling for major revisions in the society? The latter is rarely economically and politically safe. As Troy Duster put it:

. . . imagine what it would take to get a public policy package through a single session of a state legislature or the congress that included, simultaneously, desegregation, compensatory preschool education, bilingual instruction, daycare for working mothers, and reform of testing procedures to minimize class bias.²

There needs to be a dialogue between scholars and those executing policy in order to bring about balance which allows both for formulation of such needed policies and their implementation.

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Notes

¹See, for example: William J. Wilson. *The Declining Significance of Race: Blacks and Changing American Institutions*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); Nathan Glazer. *Affirmative Discrimination: Ethnic Inequality and Public Policy*. (New York, Basic Books, 1975); Jack Rothman. *Issues in Race and Ethnic Relations: Theory, Research and Action*. (Itasca, Illinois: F. E. Peacock Publishers, Inc., 1977); Graham C. Kinloch. *The Dynamic of Race Relations: A Sociological Analysis*. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1974); Thomas Sowell. “*Sidestepping the Facts*,” *Journal of Contemporary Studies* (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies) Vol. IX, No. 1, Winter 1981, pp. 91-92.

²Troy Duster. “The Ideological Frame of ‘Benign Neglect’,” *Journal of Contemporary Studies*. (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies) Vol. IV, No. 1, Winter 1981, p. 88.