

JOHN U. OGBU. *MINORITY EDUCATION AND CASTE: THE AMERICAN SYSTEM IN CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE*. New York: Academic Press, 1978. 410 pp. \$19.50 cloth.

In this comprehensive and well documented study on the minority education in America, Ogbu approaches the question of poor minority performance in school from a different but a powerful crosscultural perspective. His major hypothesis is that lower school performance on the part of blacks is an adaptation to their social and occupational positions in adult life, which do not require high educational qualifications (p. 213). The dominant white caste maintains the adaptation by providing blacks with inferior jobs. The adaptation is also maintained by certain structural and cultural features of the black environment which have evolved under the caste system. The job ceiling and other caste barriers influence the course of linguistic, cognitive, and motivational development of black children. He rejects categorically the explanation that attributes this academic retardation and asserts repeatedly that the parish caste-like status is powerful though subtle and hidden - determinant of behavior of black children. "What does affect black education is the fact that American society, through its political, economic, administrative, and other institutions, restricts blacks to menial social and occupational roles, low income, and poor residential status" (p. 214).

Ogbu draws illustrative material to strengthen his hypothesis from the discussion of America's other caste-like non-immigrant minorities (American Indians, Puerto Ricans, and Mexican Americans) (Ch.7) and from crosscultural studies of West Indians in Britain, Maoris in New Zealand, Schedules Castes in India, the Buraku in Japan, and Oriental Jews in Israel (Chs. 8-13). Three distinctive features of the minority groups cited in this section are that membership is permanently determined by birth; that the social and occupational role of its members are determined by caste, not by education and ability; and that the group occupies a permanent place in society from which its members can escape only through "passing" or emigration. These criteria, according to the author, describe the caste like social structure of Blacks in the United States.

The first part of this book introduces a new social structural framework for studying minority education in contemporary societies, clarifies the nature of caste like minority groups, and shows the false assumptions and explanatory failures of current proposed theories (the cultural deprivation theory, the cultural conflict theory, the institutional deficiency theory, the educational inequality theory and Jensen's heredity theory) that tend to blame the victims (Chs. 1-2). The solutions proposed to remedy the performance gap such as the school integration and the compensatory education strategies are reviewed, critiques and rejected as insufficient in themselves (Ch. 3), for they are based on a partial explanation of the problem and represent only part of the solution.

Ogbu argues that an adequate explanation of black school failure must take into account the influence of the caste system which requires an adequate conception of what education is and does in a given society (Ch. 4). Next, the author examines the structural and historical forces which have affected black access to formal education and job ceiling and other barriers to rewards of education, and in turn, how these processes affect the blacks' perception of school (Chs. 5-6).

Part two of this book describes the education of caste-like minorities in six societies, including the United States, and ends with a comparison and some generalizations about the educational experiences of the minorities in those cultural areas. Part three, the final chapter of the book, considers the policy implications of the alternative explanation of black school performance. In his conclusion, Ogbu argues that the principal causes of black academic retardation are schools which perpetuate inferior social and technoeconomic status among blacks and caste barriers that shape the lives of black Americans. Therefore, the lower school performance of blacks is not in itself the central problem but an expression of a more fundamental one, namely the caste barriers and the ideologies that support them. His emphatic statement on this problem reads as follows: "The elimination of caste barriers is the only lasting solution to the problem of academic retardation." (p. 357). To change this situation, there must be a total destruction of the caste system: that is the creation of a new social order in which blacks do not occupy a subordinate position vis-a-vis whites. Then both schools and blacks will begin to manifest changes compatible with the new social order, and academic retardation will disappear. Consequently, it will increase (a) black experience with equal chances for employment, promotion, wages, good housing, and the like; (b) their belief that they are judged for social and occupational positions as individuals on the basis of qualification; (c) their perception of equal chances to benefit from education; (d) their belief that more education and better education leads to better jobs; and (e) their belief that their chances in life depend, to the same extent as the chances of whites, on their individual competitive ability in school and society.

It appears that the author is optimistic about United States' ability to create a society free of caste barriers, based on three reasons: there is a constitutional basis for dismantling the caste system; some significant changes have occurred in that direction in the past few decades; and a growing proportion of the dominant caste is increasingly becoming ideologically committed to such changes. The apparent weakness of Ogbu's solution to the problem is that the creation of a casteless society is still hanging in the air. To a certain extent, this is an Utopian solution. The traditional Hindu society with all its constitutional backing has not been able to undo its caste system. The American society, especially stratified on racial lines, has not been able to achieve this goal, although it has been preached continuously by politicians,

civil rights leaders and ideologically committed religious leaders. The role of environment, prenatal factors and the poor diet that affects the intelligence of the children, are not discussed sufficiently to balance his arguments and, thereby, support his hypothesis.

The strength of this book lies in the author's comprehensive coverage of the main studies in the field of minority education, especially that of the black Americans. The originality, diversity, and richness of details of each of the topics discussed in this book reflect the author's superb knowledge and research background. Students as well as instructors, policy makers as well as social workers, and others interested in minority education will find this book useful, informative, provocative, challenging and enlightening.

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WILLIAM P. FRENCH, MICHEL J. FABRE, AMRITJIT SINGH, AND GENEVIÈVE E. FABRE (EDS). *AFRO-AMERICAN POETRY AND DRAMA, 1760-1975: A GUIDE TO INFORMATION SOURCES*. Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1979. 493 pp. \$22.00

This bibliographic guide is actually two guides in one volume, both of them quite useful to the student of Afro-American writing. Black writers have often published their work themselves or in limited editions through small and relatively unknown presses. The compilers of the bibliographic guides being considered here have attempted to make such volumes available to the student of Afro-American writing.

The guide to Afro-American poetry from 1760-1975, prepared by William P. French, Michel J. Fabre, and Amritjit Singh, may be where the student of Afro-American poetry should begin his research. Emphasizing "literary" rather than "folk" or "oral" poetry, the compilers indicate in their introduction that they "have tried to include all books and pamphlets of poetry by black authors born in the United States," as well as works by "foreign-born authors who have lived and published here."

The most valuable section of the guide is that listing of works by individual authors: for, used carefully, it can help prevent the student's overlooking significant work which he should consider. For major writers secondary criticism is also included, but is less valuable. Such criticism must be selective, but this reviewer has been unable to determine the basis for selection. The student would not be well-advised to depend heavily upon it.