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Desegregation

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BOOK REVIEWS

DESEGREGATION, by *M. M. Tumin*

Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1958. Pp. 270. \$5.00.

Reviewed by

JOHN R. NORTON*

This study of the problem of desegregation was made by a group of graduate students at Princeton under the direction of Professor Tumin and was conducted in accordance with the principles of scientific empiricism as embraced by Lazarsfeld, Stouffer, Dodd, and others.

Based upon a sample of 287 white people, eighteen years or older, who are members of the labor force in Guilford County, North Carolina, their attitudes toward desegregation, as revealed in interviews, were statistically examined. Eleven factors, variables, were held to account for the difference in white Southern attitudes, among these being age, education, occupation, income, residence, religion, exposure to mass media, and so forth. The selection of both the sample and variables was made in accordance with the approved principles of statistical inquiry.

Through the media of the interview and the questionnaire, the attitudes of the sample towards five components or dimensions of the problem were recorded. The five dimensions of the problem were the Image, *i.e.*, the mental picture of the Negro;

the Ideology, that is to say the type of relations the whites would prefer to have with the Negro; Sentiment Structure, *i.e.*, the feelings the respondent would have in a given situation; the General Action Set, *i.e.*, what the respondent would do in a given situation, and the Specific Act Set, *i.e.*, the approval or disapproval of specific ways to prevent desegregation of the public schools. The answers to the questionnaire were tabulated on the basis of the variables, statistically analysed, and conclusions drawn from the evidence.

From the evidence gathered, Professor Tumin's group arrived at ten major findings about the readiness for and resistance to desegregation. In general the findings show that there is not a uniform attitude toward desegregation; that there is a variation depending upon the status and the facet of desegregation considered. The findings show a fairly homogeneous and unfavorable view of the Negro and that there are neither extreme segregationists nor extreme desegregationists.

Considered as an example of the empirical approach to social science there is little that can be said for or against the study. It was conducted in accordance with the approved techniques of investigation and is

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therefore a good illustration of the philosophy and approach of this type of method. Considered, however, as a contribution to the literature of desegregation and to our knowledge of the problem, there is less here than meets the eye, in this reviewer's opinion. Indeed, the reviewer feels that the one merit the study has lies in the fact that it illustrates the limitations of this type of technique as an approach to social science.

A discussion of methodology in the social sciences, of techniques and their limitations, does not lie within the province of a book review. For such a discussion and an indictment of the approach to social problems as

exemplified in this study, the writer is content to refer his reader to the cogent analysis made by C. W. Mills in his *The Sociological Imagination*. An analysis of a social problem to serve as a guide for legislators, jurists, and teachers of the law, must obviously be made on a more comprehensive basis than can be produced by the techniques employed in this project. Such an analysis must deal with social value within an institutional framework, and in the reviewer's opinion, on an historical and comparative basis. Such an approach is manifestly beyond the scope of the empirical method.
