

ANNOTATIONS

STERILIZATION IN NORTH CAROLINA¹

IN THE Foreword to this book, Dr. R. L. Dickinson says: "This study represents the most inclusive, practical, and important consideration of sterilization since the active days of the Gosney-Popenoe Human Betterment reports from California." North Carolina has had extensive experience in this field since the enactment of its present law in 1933 and the review of the experience provided by the author should be highly valuable to individuals and groups in other States with less well advanced programs.

The background that the author brings to the analysis—that of psychiatric social work—appears responsible for some of the strengths and some of the weaknesses of the study. Also, the nature of the problem dealt with imposed severe limitations on the design of the field research involving the follow-up study of forty-eight married sterilized women. These evaluations will be illustrated after a brief summary of the content of the book.

The book contains an interesting and careful account of the history of sterilization in North Carolina, the background, the laws, the allocation of responsibilities, the actual program, the difficulties impeding wider acceptance, and recommendations for improvement of the program. This account was based on central sources, interviews with individuals or agencies having responsibilities for various parts of the program, and consultation with various informed people including members of the medical profession. Also included in the book is a 35-page chapter entitled, "A Follow Up Study of Forty-eight Married Sterilized Women," with very interesting illustrative case ma-

¹ Woodside, Moya: *STERILIZATION IN NORTH CAROLINA; A SOCIOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY*. Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 1950, 219 pages. \$2.50.

terials. The main weakness in the integration of these two parts of the study is that they do not relate to the same groups of sterilized persons. The records of persons sterilized by the Eugenics Board authority are protected from public inspection and so the follow-up study is of women who had been sterilized by private physicians or through other avenues than that provided by the law, which is the focus of attention of the major part of the book.

In both parts of the book there are instances of uncritical acceptance of certain generalizations made by the author or cited from other works. These appear to arise more from lack of rigorous training and experience in research method and evaluation of research than from deliberate purposeful bias of the author. For example, the description of North Carolina on p. xiv of the Introduction is oversimplified, to say the least, and includes sentences that could be challenged. Citations relating to the extent of mental deficiency (p. 6) are not appraised in relation to the validity of the statistics underlying them. Statements on such matters as the role of heredity in intelligence (p. 102) and the effect of contraception on quality of population (p. 104) are generally accompanied by references to earlier studies, but they are not accompanied by any critical appraisal of the studies or by references to later studies that throw grave doubt on some of the generalizations rather naively accepted by the author as proven beyond the shadow of a doubt.

In fairness, Miss Woodside's book should be appraised from two points of view. As a descriptive analysis of a program that has practical importance but that in recent years has had relatively little attention, the book is to be commended. As an example of social research, it has serious defects.

MARGARET JARMAN HAGOOD

• • •

HUMAN ECOLOGY¹

MUCH of the credit for the development of the ecological approach to the study of social problems belongs to the

¹Hawley, Amos H.: HUMAN ECOLOGY. New York, The Ronald Press, 1950, 466 pp., \$5.00.