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RACE ATTITUDES
of
CHILDREN IN A SUBURBAN TOWN

AN ABSTRACT OF
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by
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Do the citizens of Monroe, Connecticut believe in extending equal opportunities to persons of all groups? When we concern ourselves with the welfare of all our people, we are bound to consider the problem of racial and cultural minorities and especially the cumulative wastage of our largest minority group, the Negro. With the statement, "There is no Negro problem in Monroe," citizens have kept the race relations problem out of their minds.

What kind of attitudes are held toward Negroes when there are only four Negro families in town, and only five Negro children attending the public schools? This question was the starting point for an inquiry into race attitudes in the suburban town, Monroe, Connecticut. About thirteen miles from Bridgeport, Monroe is located on the eastern boundary of Fairfield County. Some 15,000 Negroes reside in Bridgeport, as compared with twenty-five Negro residents in Monroe.

Since, with the exception of the family, the public schools potentially have more influence over, and reach more people over a longer period of time than does any other social institution, especially in a town with so large a school-age population, the Monroe schools were chosen for study. In order to determine the relationships between white and Negro, three different sets of questions were asked of public school children in grades one, six, and eleven. Although in this inquiry discussion is confined to Negro-white relations, the students in grades six and eleven were questioned on their willingness to associate with three other minority groups as

well. Are there attitudes of white supremacy dominant, or do the children express belief in the essential dignity of every human being and the right to equal opportunity? The responses of the youngsters reveal that all people are not granted respect and equality, nor does fair play extend to everyone. Rejection is along racial and socio-economic class lines, with Negroes and Puerto Ricans receiving the greatest rejection.

The manner in which race relations is related to the planned educational program and the social studies textbooks used in the Monroe schools was investigated. No planned attention is given to the Negro problem in the United States, as such, or the Negro problem in Monroe. No attempt is made to develop insight into students' attitudes toward interracial relations in a time when official, legal, and unofficial discrimination towards Negroes is a matter of national and worldwide concern. The nearly 20,000,000 Negroes in the United States, for whom equal opportunity is not a reality, are not given special emphasis or coordinated attention by the Monroe schools. In the social studies textbooks used the Negroes' position in contemporary society was largely ignored.

A library study of pertinent findings in the social sciences and predominant trends, nationally, in intergroup education is an essential part of this inquiry. Research indicates that information alone is not successful in developing good intergroup relations. New efforts to change pupils' behavior are being made through an analysis of their own and other peoples' experiences in intergroup relations.

The child's ability to creatively resolve intergroup tensions through insight development with new skills and knowledge is the result of conscious effort, coordination and planning, and the proper business of the schools. Not merely prejudice reduction towards Negroes, but the development of tolerant personalities which express and demonstrate multigroup loyalty within our pluralistic society, seems to this author, the necessary aim of an effective intergroup educational program.