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*Research on the African-American Family: A Holistic Perspective.* Robert B. Hill. Reviewed by Dorcas D. Bowles, University of Texas at Arlington.

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formula for peace, but the "new perspectives" of its title shed light on the complexities of political discourse in a divided society, the inconsistencies of British government policy, the status of the military and the police, working class unemployment, the evolution of a mainly quiescent Catholic middle class, biculturalism and segregation, the role of education on both sides of the border, and the limits to conflict and accommodation. At times the discussion widens to other parts of the globe, but for the most part readers are left to draw their own conclusions on how the lessons learned from Northern Ireland can apply to regional conflicts elsewhere.

For those unfamiliar with the situation in Northern Ireland, *New Perspective* is an excellent introductory text. Even for those who have some knowledge of the politics of the province during the last three decades the book has important insights to offer. Here is a fine case study of communal strife and the search for a solution.

John F. Jones  
University of Denver

Robert B. Hill, *Research on the African-American Family: A Holistic Perspective*. Westport, CT: Auburn House, 1993. \$47.95 hardcover; \$15.95 papercover.

This book, one of four, produced for the project, "Assessment of the Status of African Americans," coordinated by the William Monroe Trotter Institute at the University of Massachusetts at Boston, should be read by every person interested in doing and understanding research on African-American families. The book offers that the causes and nature of the current crisis among African American families must be understood from a holistic perspective. Such a perspective must necessarily explore the separate and combined effects of societal trends, community, family and individual factors and social policies.

The first chapter provides a framework for understanding what is meant by a holistic perspective. It then recommends that any study of African-American families must give priority to themes of diversity, dynamism, balance, solutions and empiricism. Each of these dimensions are explored to demonstrate how

each serves to enhance understanding of the problems and solutions related to the functioning of African-American families. Chapter two examines the recent social and economic trends that impact the contemporary structure and functioning of African-American families. Economic trends explored include: employment and occupational changes, income trends and welfare patterns. Social trends examined include: single-parent families, out-of-wed-lock births, child care, informal and formal adoption, foster care, child abuse and housing patterns.

Chapters three and four focus on external and internal factors that impact African-American families. The authors thoughtfully examine societal forces that adversely impact black families including the four "isms"—racism, classism, sexism and ageism. They further examine the adverse impact of recessions, double digit inflation, a shift from higher-paying manufacturing jobs to lower-paying service jobs, and increased job competition from legal and illegal immigrants on African-American families in contrast to white families in this country.

Negative factors at the community, family and individual levels to include joblessness, poverty, crime, delinquency, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, AIDS, homelessness, out-of-wedlock births, adolescent pregnancies, low educational attainment are addressed with special attention paid to how these factors intersect and influence each other and must therefore be understood from a systemic perspective. While various organizations and institutions in the black community serve to buffer negative factors for many black families, far too many black families, particularly those families with few internal and external resources, are severely crippled. These families require comprehensive programs based on holistic understandings.

The authors end by offering recommended strategies for the nation if we are to seriously work to strengthen Black families and communities. These strategies include: (1.) rededication to the goals of achieving full employment; expanding job training; expanding subsidized jobs; expanding child care; reforming AFDC enhancing child support; reforming foster care; enhancing education, physical health and mental health; enhancing public housing; and expanding low-income housing.

The holistic perspective offered in this book provides a solid understanding of the causes and nature of the current crises among black families that can lead to their address if, indeed, this country is serious about making a difference that will positively impact all citizens of this country. The holistic perspective will require careful examination of the separate and combined effects of societal factors, social policies, and factors at the community, family, and individual levels. This book must be read by all persons who are seriously interested in positive change for African-American families and communities and inevitably for all families and communities in this country.

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James B. McKee, *Sociology and the Race Problem: The Failure of a Perspective*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993. \$39.95 hardcover, \$16.95 papercover.

As a new century approaches many sociologists have thought about, or been asked to speculate on, new social patterns and changes lying ahead. Before saying much about future developments in U.S. race relations, they would be well advised to read James McKee's analysis of how specialists in race and ethnicity failed to accurately perceive or interpret race relations during most of this past century. McKee begins in the 1890s and early 1900s, when most scholars and "progressive" whites omitted "the race problem" (black subordination and exploitation) from their agenda of social reforms. He carefully and critically scrutinizes the subsequent conceptual and empirical twists and turns sociology took in its analysis of black-white relations through the mid-1960s. Reading this book takes you through sociology's attic, showing you all the "old stuff"—some of it long forgotten, some of it well remembered. McKee summarizes and explicates each decade's sociological work on race (by Odum, Hankins, Park, Reuter, Warner, Frazier, Johnson, Myrdal, Williams and many others). His commentaries on the quotes from these force us to decide what's worth keeping, what we should recant, what we're