

RESEARCH REPORTS

Reviews of new research by public agencies and private institutions

"Choosing Elites."

Basic Books, 10 East 53rd St., New York, N.Y. 10022. 267 pp. \$19.95.

Author: Robert Klitgaard

At Harvard, 7.1 percent of all incoming freshmen are black. If the admissions committee were to choose students only on the basis of their Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores, that figure would fall to 1.1 percent.

So reports Klitgaard, former special assistant to Harvard president Derek Bok, in a statistics-laden study of the college admissions process. Indeed, being black was the biggest single boon to a candidate for Harvard; members of other favored groups enjoyed a lesser edge.

At Harvard, Klitgaard says, most applicants rated academically as "two" or "three" (on a scale of one to five) have about a 30 percent chance of being accepted. But the odds soar to 60 percent for the progeny of faculty members, to 64 percent for promising athletes, and to 73 percent for blacks.

Most topflight universities give blacks a boost, Klitgaard observes, because they seek racial and ethnic diversity. A Harvard faculty panel noted in 1977 that in selecting students the university "weighs an applicant's individual strengths carefully while also considering his membership in some broader constituency."

Black youths, Klitgaard suggests, need the helping hand. In 1983, 8.5 percent of all whites taking the SAT scored above 1,200—roughly the minimum score for admission to elite colleges. But only 0.7 percent (or 570) of all blacks did.

Critics have charged that such standardized tests are culturally biased in favor of whites. But blacks, on average, Klitgaard points out, do worse in college—and in graduate schools—than do their white counterparts who have the *same* test scores. He suggests that the

competitive ethos of many elite institutions may dishearten minorities.

Whatever the reasons for blacks' classroom performance, the author states, college administrators face "a trade-off between the benefits and costs of greater [black] representation."

Both, of course, are "vague and controversial" and difficult to quantify. A racially diverse student body, Klitgaard says, may "foster tolerance and understanding," both in school and in society at large. Preferential treatment may also encourage black initiative. Knowing that "the system is open to them," he adds, black youths may be motivated to "study harder, aim higher."

But affirmative action also exacts costs. If minorities are admitted with test scores and prior grades that are much lower than those of their white peers, they tend to be over-represented at the bottom of their college class. Hence, "because of preferential treatment, all members of the [favored group] may be stigmatized [by their peers] as second rate or not up to the white standard," Klitgaard says. Second, colleges that practice affirmative action also forgo the classroom presence of academically superior students who were *not* admitted. And third, when elite schools such as Harvard "stretch" to admit more blacks, they shrink the pool of black candidates available to other, less prestigious schools.

Klitgaard does not oppose affirmative action, but he urges college officials to make decisions systematically, based on costs and benefits—and not to gloss over the harsh realities. "The issue," he says, "is no longer whether to have [preferential treatment], but how much."

**“Woe unto the Defeated:
Political Executions in Vietnam, 1975–1983.”**

Institute of East Asian Studies, Univ. of Calif., Berkeley, Calif. 94720. 27 pp.
Authors: Jacqueline Desbarats and Karl D. Jackson

In 1975, President Gerald R. Ford warned Americans that the withdrawal of U.S. support from South Vietnam could result in a “bloodbath.” One Central Intelligence Agency analyst went so far as to predict the execution of 100,000 South Vietnamese in the event of Hanoi’s victory in the Indochina war.

Most American politicians and pundits dismissed such dire predictions. To find out what really happened, Desbarats and Jackson, both political scientists at the University of California, interviewed 615 randomly selected Vietnamese refugees, now living in Chicago and Northern and Southern California.

Twenty-six percent of the respondents said that they had spent time in a “re-education camp” or jail, and 60 percent reported that they knew about a friend or

relative who had been incarcerated. Thirty-five percent of the refugees said they knew about or had heard of political executions—usually of high-ranking members of the South Vietnamese government or military. One-third of those accounts were eyewitness reports. Additional interviews with Vietnamese refugees living in France produced roughly the same results.

Extrapolating from these and other findings, Desbarats and Jackson estimate that between 1975 and 1982, at least 850,000 South Vietnamese were incarcerated (in jails or re-education camps) and that at least 65,000 were *executed*. Little wonder, the researchers conclude, that one million South Vietnamese have chosen to flee their homeland since the fall of Saigon in 1975.

“Underdevelopment Is a State of Mind.”

University Press of America, 4720 Boston Way, Lanham, Md. 20706. 192 pp. \$16.95.
Author: Lawrence E. Harrison

The Caribbean nations of Haiti and Barbados have much in common. Both are islands with tropical climates. Both are populated by descendants of slaves from West Africa. And the economies of both have long depended on several cash crops, such as cotton, tobacco, and sugar.

Yet today, the 250,000 Barbadians enjoy a much higher standard of living than do the six million Haitians. In 1980, Barbados’s gross national product per capita was \$3,040, compared with just \$270 in Haiti. In Barbados, 99 percent of all adults are literate; only 23 percent are in Haiti. The average Barbadian can expect to live 71 years—18 years longer than his Haitian counterpart.

Some observers blame Haiti’s impoverishment on a lack of resources or on First World exploitation. Others point to the country’s politics. For 29 years (1957–86), Haitians suffered under the harsh dictatorships of François Duvalier and his son, Jean-Claude.

Harrison, veteran former field officer with the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID), does not entirely discount these factors, but he does believe that economic development is a matter of culture—“the values and attitudes a society inculcates in its people.”

“What makes development happen,” Harrison says, “is our ability to imagine, theorize, conceptualize, experiment, in-

vent, articulate, organize, [and] manage." Some cultures, Harrison believes, nurture these skills; others do not.

To prove his point, Harrison contrasts the histories of Nicaragua, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, and the two extremes, Haiti and Barbados. Barbados, he asserts, owes much of its modern success to its three centuries under British rule. The British settled the island in 1627 and proceeded to shape Barbadian society until the achievement of independence in 1966. They abolished slavery (in 1834), established representative government, and slowly transferred political power from the affluent planters to the black middle and lower classes. Most importantly, he says, they instilled in Barbadians "the values of fair play, cooperation, social responsibility and achievement."

Haiti's experience, by contrast, has been less happy. The French plantation

owners who controlled the country from 1697 to 1804, observes Harrison, were "fundamentally aristocratic and anti-democratic." After independence in 1804, the reigning mulatto and black elite adopted Francophile attitudes, remaining indifferent to the needs of middle-class blacks. As a result, Harrison says, Haitians have never really enjoyed the benefits of nationhood. "Haiti is a country," he says, in which "the extended family largely describes the radius of trust."

Not incidental to Haiti's problems, Harrison adds, is Vodun, or voodoo, a magical quasi religion whose adherents focus on spirits and their ancestral past. Vodun at once helps Haitians survive daily life and stymies progress. The religion, says the author, "explains worldly phenomena" and "propagates the view that existence is essentially static and the world unchangeable."

"International Capital Flows and the United States: Palliative, Panacea, or Pandora's Box?"

International Economic Policy Association, 1400 Eye St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.
62 pp.

Author: Stephen E. Thomsen

In 1984, foreigners invested roughly \$100 billion in the United States. That statistic impressed Ronald Reagan. It showed, the President said, that foreigners recognize the U.S. as "the best and safest investment in the world today."

But Thomsen, an economist with the International Economic Policy Association, argues that high interest rates—not the promise of future U.S. economic growth—have lured record amounts of foreign capital to the United States. Outside investors, he says, are pursuing short-term, high-yield securities, not long-term investments.

Foreign direct investment, for example, sank in 1982 and 1983 before climb-

ing modestly to \$22.5 billion in 1984. And foreign holdings of corporate stock decreased by \$3 billion in 1984.

Meanwhile, international sales of high interest-bearing U.S. Treasury securities have jumped from \$8.7 billion in 1983 to \$22.4 billion in 1984, with Japanese investors (\$6.1 billion) leading the way.

Thomsen stresses that the situation is a risky one for the United States, which now depends on foreign capital to finance the federal debt. These capital flows are highly volatile. "A sudden change in foreign investors' expectations," he warns, could "send billions of dollars out of the country, wreaking havoc on the domestic economy."