THE DISADVANTAGED PUPIL

JESSE E GORDON
University of Michigan

Certain generalizations (with implications for schooling) about the psychological characteristics of inner-city disadvantaged children and youth in America are drawn *1* They are more motorically and less conceptually oriented than middle class children *2* They employ a different language structure serving different functions *3* They are oriented to the present time and not likely to defer immediate gratifications *4* They do not demand close matches between what they say and do *5* They are often creative *6* They tend to be person oriented *7* They are uncertain and fearful of the environment *8* They have difficulty in 'taking the role of the other' *9* They are less conscience-bound than middle class children *10* Peer culture is a more important source of values and security than to middle class youth *11* Sexual role learnings are in conflict with middle class norms *12* Poor children tend to stay within their residential areas *13* They are aggressive and hostile *14* School experiences often perpetuate the problems of the disadvantaged *15* Poor children learn contempt for themselves *16* Poor children need schools to serve as agents of social change

In this paper I will try to draw some generalizations from what is known about the psychological characteristics of inner-city disadvantaged children and adolescents in America These generalizations will be based on the existing research literature and on practical experience I believe that while both these sources are limited, there is enough which is known to draw some conclusions for action I will interpret these conclusions with reference to the juncture (or disjuncture) between the personality and behaviours of disadvantaged young people and schooling as it is usually arranged in the American classroom

Inner-city disadvantaged adolescents do not form a completely homogeneous class, nor are they so different from rural or middle class groups as to exist in another theoretical universe Nevertheless, they are more homogeneous than all adolescents in general, so that consideration of this sub-group can be productive A pure example of the group is as unlikely a phenomenon as a pure example of classical hysteria, yet a description of a modal character structure can be useful as a portrait of those who approximate it, of whom there are many

In describing this group, it is necessary to throw it into relief by comparing it with some other group Typically in the existing research, the foil for this comparison is the middle class Thus invidious comparison is necessary to the method of discrimination And while it is the lower

class youth who is to be examined, it is not necessary that the invidious-
ness be directed against him It would be possible to turn the entire
enterprise on its head, without changing the logic of the operation For
example, instead of discussing the supposed short-term gratification
pattern of the disadvantaged youth, and its consequences in failure to
plan for the future, to integrate present activities in an enduring context,
and thus to develop a stable sense of self as a continuity over time, it
would be possible to discuss the long-term gratification pattern typical
of the middle class, with *its* consequences (e g, inability to enjoy the
present moment, generation of guilt over immediate pleasures, expecta-
tion of long-term future punishment, and thus also a fear of the death
that may terminate the planning before goals are achieved, this fear of
death leading to what can only be called cowardice and fear of injury)
Both sets of conclusions can arise from the same comparison, if in
what follows it appears that the onus is on the lower class adolescent,
it should be kept in mind that each comparison could be so turned on
its head The reason for not doing so here is not that I wish to explore
deficiencies, but rather that my intention is to communicate something
about the lower class disadvantaged youth, to those unfamiliar with him
Thus diagnostic terms are used descriptively, rather than as imputations
of pathology which necessarily demand treatment

EXPRESSIVE STYLE

Compared with verbal and language behaviour, many observers have
noted the greater emphasis on sensori-motor activities in lower class
youth, which Gans (26) described as 'action-seeking' In general, it seems
true to say that lower class youths are more motorically oriented and less
conceptually oriented than middle class youths This orientation includes
a preference for action dramas over other kinds of entertainments (25),
over-estimation of physical prowess (2), greater skill at communicating
through body posture and poorer communication through abstract repre-
sentation (53) It may be seen in such matters as a tendency to score
relatively better on tests of manual dexterity (30), in emphasis on sports
and music and dance, and in relatively earlier development of co-
ordination and motor maturity
    This motoric orientation is probably related to several other factors,
many of which will be discussed in this paper restriction on range of
verbal expressiveness, immediate gratification pattern, present orienta-
tion, relatively lower impulse control, less inhibitions over self-display,

gratification of stimulation needs through interoceptor stimulation rather than through fantasy activity, need for immediate reality testing through action on the environment, emphasis on masculinity, the restricted nature of the opportunities available for developing a social and work identity, cognitive concreteness, and suspicion of verbal obfuscations ('snow jobs')

Whatever the source, the behavioural effect has been noted sufficiently often to give some confidence in the generalization that acting-out and body language are more likely to be expressive and functioning modes for the lower class than for the middle class Adolescents tend to act out more than adults, boys more than girls, and the lower class more than the middle class, so that the lower class adolescent boy is the most motoric of all There is evidence that this style is intrinsic to lower class status in industrial society, rather than uniquely American or even Western

This picture must be contrasted with the usual organization of classroom education, in which students are required to sit passively, to derive all their gratifications from cognitive and intellectual manipulations and stimuli, and in which only verbal forms of communication and problem-solving are tolerated, much less rewarded Students who can fix or build something are not evaluated as highly as those who can describe or write about fixing or building Teachers tend to fear and refuse to recognize motoric communications of feelings or attitudes although verbal expressions of the same feelings or attitudes are more likely to be tolerated, perhaps because such verbal representations are 'only' signs, rather than the realities which they indicate Thus schooling for the lower class adolescent appears lifeless, dull, and unreally disconnected from his world of experience and sensation It would be difficult at this point to estimate the extent to which these features are necessitated by the role and function of education, and the economy of its structure, involving buildings, rooms, chairs, and groups of students related to single teachers, there is suspicion that the structural constraints, which have led to the behavioural demands of the classroom described above, have spawned a set of values which are now disconnected from the constraints which initiated them, and function as values in their own right and without inherent necessity They therefore can be modified, and must be if the school is not to remain disfunctional and irrelevant to the educational needs of the lower class students (who are, paradoxically, most in need of the kinds of credentials, supports and skills and knowledges which schooling can provide, since they are less

likely to get them in their homes, and since they lack the kind of social power and influence which middle class families can command to establish secure careers for their children)

Thus some recommendations can be made (i) Teachers should learn to read, respect, and respond to non-verbal communications, or those who are familiar with such communications should be selected for teaching careers (ii) Education should include opportunities for trying out in behaviour verbal decisions, activities, and verbalized insights and abstract relations, and the opportunity to tie the content of talk to the direct action and experience of the students (iii) Acting-out responses to the school, such as resentment or disappointment in the teacher expressed through stealing or effacing school property, should be demoted from their current status as higher crimes against society than verbal attacks, distortions of truths, and gossiping as modes of expressing the same things (iv) Tolerance for long classroom periods of motor inactivity is low, so such periods should be reduced in length, and/or interspersed with opportunities for motoric behaviour (role-playing, recreation, carrying out experiments, etc) in a carefully programmed manner which attends to the balance between motoric and conceptual activity Noise is not as noxious to students (particularly lower class youths) as it is to teachers, whose needs ought to come second to the needs of students Intervals of motor activity, and positive evaluations of motor achievements, may be progressively reduced in favour of conceptual activities during the school years, subject to such limitations as the upsurge in motoric activity at puberty

LANGUAGE

Lower class youth employ a different language structure, serving different functions, than do middle class youths

It is now a cliché to say that the poor are relatively non-verbal, that there are 'weaknesses in the utilization of abstract symbols and complex language forms' (28) Like most cliches, this one is both true and false Riessman (70) has observed that deprived children do not verbalize well in response to words alone, as in a conversation, but that their verbal performance is markedly improved when talking about some action they have just seen—that is when they have something to talk about The implication for education is obvious'

It is clear that poor people do relatively poorly on verbal and vocabulary tests, but it is equally clear that the inner-city slum culture, like the southern Negro culture that gave us jazz and its vocabulary, is one of

the most fertile and imaginative sources of new concepts and language for which there are no equivalents in White English (e g , soul, cool, blood, cat, up, tight, etc) It is thus true that the poor are relatively non-verbal in middle class English, but it also is true that the poor are verbally expressive in their language in situations in which they both have something to say and want to say it (which does not describe the situation of being tested on a standard language test)

The extensive research on the language structure of the American poor has been ably rviewed by Cazden (10) In this paper I wish to refer only briefly to some of the major variables which seem to account for the seeming non-verbal nature of the poor, occurring in a context of incredibly verbal richness outside of standard English usage

Inner-city youth live in a culture which is overlapping but not identical with the general culture of the country in which they live (88) The language domains of these two cultural spheres are identical over much of the area, but there are sectors of each which are not present in the other It is the language of the middle class which is the standard for use in school, and in tests, as it is the middle class which controls these institutions and practices (21) Thus it is the only one of the overlapping domains which is sampled in school Such sampling will therefore include within it a larger portion of the language structure of the dominant culture than it will of the repressed culture, this failure to sample the domains equally is incorrectly interpreted as a restriction in the domain of the poor

To some extent, the above disparity between the languages of the two cultural groups reflects differences in experiences with cultural artifacts and events for which words are required as labels The irrelevance to the lower class child of the activities of Dick and Jane is the classical illustration of why poor children do not learn to read well How does one expect such a child to read about 'our friendly policeman' when there is no such thing in his world? A lower class child appears stupid to his teacher when he does not know what to do with a paper clip, which he has never seen before, while his middle class school mates have been making chains of those which their fathers have brought home from the office for years On the other hand, the lower class child has had experiences which are not matched in the middle class, he has played with a variety of discarded junk objects which the middle class child sees only as junk, he knows what a social worker is and does, , knows about rats, about landlords, about having babies, being 'busted ' Unfortunately for him these events and experiences are seldom if

ever admissable in the classroom, so he gets little opportunity to indicate
to his teachers the range and variety of his knowledge and vocabulary,
except for cursewords spoken in anger, which teachers are not likely to
take as serious representations of linguistic ability (although they express
shock at the size of the child's vocabulary[1])

Another factor refers to the use of available language Lower class
people tend to respond to situations of threat and to interactions with
power figures to whom they feel alien by practicing the ethic of playing
it cool—that is, they become verbally inhibited in precisely those situa-
tions in which middle class children try to shine by impressing with
their verbal facility Thus the lower class child speaks less, giving the
impression of low ability as he provides a more restricted sample of the
range of his knowledge One product of this is lower scores on IQ tests
(65) In short, where the middle class child defends from threat with a
'snob job' the lower class reacts by playing it cool, thus heightening an
apparent contrast in language facility

It is my impression that a relatively larger portion of lower class
language is devoted to aggressive functions than is true for the middle
class, this would explain why lower class youths tend to become verbally
inhibited in situations in which they are threatened by 'the man' who
represents the more powerful and punishing forces of the world The
aggressive function of language has a self-perpetuating effect, Hess and
Shipman (34) found that lower class mothers use more verbally assaultive
language in interactions with their children, which would account for
reduced motivation by their children to discriminate auditorially and
thus hear words (17), to imitate parental verbal behaviour (62), and to
expose themselves to opportunities to learn language as the child avoids
interactions with the mother who is, after all the closest source of
language learning Thus Wolf (87) observes that lower class parents
engage in less direct and indirect teaching of words and verbal concepts,
and do less coaching of correct usage than do middle class parents
Deutsch (17) adds that the tasks given to children in lower class homes
tend to be more motoric and thing-oriented while those in middle class
homes are more verbal-conceptual (it is the difference between 'Clean
up the mess you made,' and 'Pick it up ')

If words function so strongly as the media for hostility (witness such
highly verbal lower class games as 'playing the dozens' in which sexually-
aggressive quips and insults are traded between antagonists before an
audience of peers) it is logical that there should be a bias in the language

structure available for use in formal social situations, such as those obtaining in school, before a powerful teacher

A final factor concerning the apparent restriction on linguistic behaviour in the poor is the lower class adolescent's emphasis on masculinity Talk is feminine, and the verbal facility so valued and stressed in school is further perceived as feminine because of the identification of the American school with women and women's values (70)

There are thus several factors which mitigate any conclusion that the poor are non-verbal, it is more fair to say that their verbal facility is seldom if ever tapped in the normal course of events in school and on tests, as adequately as the verbal facility of middle class children is tapped in those situations

There is a good deal of evidence to indicate that within the language available to the poor, there is a bias in the kinds of things with which words deal, and thus with the kinds of experiences and events which are thought about (or perhaps the direction of the relationship is reversed) Several investigators find that the poor are relatively non-introspective in their talk (26, 31, 70) Their referents are largely external, concrete events, with the internal events represented by the concrete situations assumed but not verbalized A young man I knew illustrated this he described an experience he had in which a friend said something to him Unable to understand the significance of the remark, I asked him how he felt when she said that In astonishment he described the objective events again He seemed to be saying, 'I felt like you feel when someone says that to you'

This lack of a psychological frame of reference giving access to descriptions of internal states may be a product of a socialization which is not psychologically oriented Lower class parents respond more to deeds and their consequences, than to motivations and feelings associated with the actions They use direct physical punishment rather than deprivation of love and manipulation of shame and guilt They are more concerned with good behaviour than with psychological states, they want obedience cleanliness, and neatness compared with the relatively greater middle class emphasis on such psychic states as curiosity, happiness and consideration (9, 20, 43, 44) Thus Bernstein (5) describes lower class speech as poor in qualifiers, adjectives and adverbs, and words to describe feelings He describes this 'restricted code' of the poor as functioning to obscure discrimination of individual uniqueness and identity in favour of signalling one's submersion in a group sharing common elements which need not be explicitly formulated in speech Thus the speech is

telegraphic, and directed away from those elements which serve to mark uniqueness of self and experience He also adds that the restricted code arises in family contexts with strong and clearly marked authority relationships which obviate the necessity for exploration of mutual roles in social interactions Just such authority relationships tend to prevail in school, which therefore reinforces the use of the restricted code It goes without saying that that which is not verbally signalled is not systematically discriminated and explored In Bernstein's theory, the restricted code is the only one which the child learns in the context of his family and social milieu However, there is reason to think that this is not the case, that rather, the restricted code is the one which poor people have learned to use in certain social situations, but that given certain changes in those relationships (e g , absence of threat, self-confidence vis-a-vis the other), more extended codes may be available * Nevertheless the point remains that in the kinds of situations in which the lower class child is likely to find himself in school, the restricted code is likely to dominate, conveying the impression of low intelligence, and giving rise to the feeling in teachers that they cannot get 'close' to the child, that they have no notion of what he is experiencing or thinking, because he reveals so little of himself as an individual Should the well-intentioned teacher attempt to 'get close' to the child by probing into his feelings, attitudes, and thoughts, the child will tend to respond passively, which many may misinterpret as sullenness and negativism, and thus ultimately unrewarding as a relationship

One illustration of the failure of communication which arises from this restricted code is worth mentioning a vocational counsellor working with a group of unemployed and disadvantaged young adults responded to a question about the kinds of jobs he would get for the group members by saying that it all depended upon the nature of their interests 'Interests,' one of the group expostulated She quite honestly could not understand what was meant by the term Since little in her life had ever depended upon her personal interest, she held interests as being of little account, and thus not worth even thinking about When I relate this anecdote to White audiences, it is always necessary to explain why she expostulated, but on one occasion, when I related the same incident to a group of Negro students, they spontaneously laughed, understanding

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*This problem is being investigated at present at the University of Michigan by J Ludvinska (Dissertation proposal Linguistic coding as a function of situational context)

immediately what was funny about the young lady's reaction and the counsellor's irrelevant communication

These factors combine to reinforce some of the implications for teaching which were mentioned earlier classroom discussion should be tied directly to current events and experiences of the disadvantaged child, the teacher will find that the child's actual behaviour is more revealing than what the child says about his behaviour The translation of verbal materials and knowledge into actions should be facilitated by providing opportunities for students to rehearse, with coaching, and to act out the behaviours for which the words are referents, the direction of activity may be more productive if it goes from action to verbal conceptualization than if it goes the other way around The child's tendency to compartmentalize the world of school as being separate from the rest of his world, and his proclivity to avoid applying words and concepts used to represent one world while he is in the other, may mean that the teacher will have to make special efforts to bridge the two worlds for the child Thus instead of relying on a carry-over from the events in school to the neighbourhood and home, it may be necessary to produce the carry-over by direct tutoring in connection with the experiences and events of the child's life outside of school This suggests that the use of tutors who work with disadvantaged children at home and in their neighbourhoods would be valuable, provided that the content of what goes on between child and tutor is purposively made relevant to what goes on between pupil and teacher in school Finally, the disadvantaged child's tendency to hang back, to avoid 'standing out' by volunteering or emphasizing his self as a unique identity should be recognized as both a norm for his culture and as a defence against the threat of authority by submerging one's self in the group, it should not be interpreted as a lack of ability, interest, or understanding For such children, group projects and activities are more appropriate than the usual individual competitiveness emphasized in Protestant-ethic classrooms

TIME PERSPECTIVE AND THE DELAY OF GRATIFICATION

Lower class children are oriented to the present time and do not think in terms of long term futures, they are therefore not likely to defer immediate gratifications

There is a close psychological connection between verbal-motoric style, time perspective, and tolerance for delayed gratification Deutsch (17) finds that lower class children have difficulty in making time estimates

As adolescents they engage in 'short-run hedonism' (74) Mischel (60) offered delinquent boys their choice between a modest immediate prize and a larger prize if they were willing to wait a week, and found that his subjects preferred the immediate reward more often than a control group

As in the case of the canard about being non-verbal, this absence of a delayed gratification pattern is both true and false It is true that it happens, it is false that poor kids are *unable* to delay gratifications As Miller, Riessman, and Seagull (56) point out, it is a matter of not choosing to delay gratifications for rewards which others control, and which are therefore only promised by others, rather than controlled by one's own actions Lower class people disbelieve promises of future rewards, and for the same reason that anyone else disbelieves a promise the past unreliability of similar promises from similar promisers (e g, of equality, of opportunity for advancement dependent upon effort alone, of rewards for good school work, of new clothes and toys when the money comes in) Such disbelief in promises of success as fair and just rewards for work and effort has been exacerbated by the failure of the War on Poverty which promised so much, raised hopes so high, and delivered so little that it is almost impossible to get poor people 'turned on' by visions of a new society or of new opportunities When promises are not redeemed, they lose their capacity to function as secondary reinforcers (29) Dollard and Miller (19) point out that to the lower class member symbols do not function to sustain behaviour toward some distant future goal because the redemption of such symbols by success is so rare in a society in which back-breaking work has been rewarded by poverty wages, financial insecurity and failure, and in which teachers' perceptions of their students (and thus their grading practices) are influenced by their knowledge of the pupils' social class backgrounds, occupational status of their parents, and the teachers' expectations regarding their pupils' probable future careers, so that the same performance by students of differing class receive differing evaluations

Thus Hyman (37) finds that there is less optimism about possibilities for advancement, less belief that personal effort is an important factor in who gets advanced, and less belief in the rewards of work

Cloward and Ohlin (13) point out that this does not mean that the poor do not value money and status as much as do the middle class, but rather that the poor do not believe that the sacrifice of time and energy in school studies and work are means to those ends in their society as they know it Other studies confirm a lack of measured

difference between poor and affluent in values held for income, status, education, and good jobs (11, 41, 76) Clark and Wenninger (11) note, however, that the values of poor respondents do diverge from middle class norms if the respondents live in homogenous lower class neighbourhoods with high concentrations of poor people This marks one of the dangerously divisive effects of ghettoization

It is factors such as these which connect intolerance of delayed gratification with a de-emphasis on talk as an activity in lower class culture poor people are suspicious of rhetoric which promises much but which is used as a *substitute* for action, rather than a stimulus or guide to action There is thus little patience for talking, and demands for immediate action in its place

Tolerance for delayed gratification implies the expectation that the future will be better than the present, a characteristic middle class (Protestant) attitude embodied in the notions of progress and upward social mobility For those for whom the future leads more directly to frustration, new problems, and further decline into poverty, illness, and hunger, thinking about the future is nonfunc ional and anxiety-arousing, and thus to be avoided The result is often a vagueness about planning The result is also a spontaneity and capacity for enjoying the unexpected pleasures which become momentarily available which is much less apparent in middle class children and adults In short, the lack of future time perspective and the consequences of this lack describe a habit rather than a disability, a habit with both advantages and disadvantages

These several lines of argument combine to indicate that with respect to middle class goals and motivations, lower class children are not inclined to delay an immediate gratification or to alloy present enjoyments with thoughts of future punishments This set of habits interacts with the acting out style described earlier, with resentment of the agents who disapprove of impulsiveness (schools, police, teachers and social agencies) with a need for testing the environment through direct action, with less emphasis on inhibitory self-control than in the middle class (to be discussed later in this paper), all tending to produce a picture of low impulse control—a picture which is deeply disturbing particularly to the marginal and lower middle class from which school personnel are most often drawn, a class which has sturdily sacrificed much of its pleasure and frivolity in the interest of respectability and socio-economic advancement

The implications for teaching which may be derived from this set of characteristics of the disadvantaged are as follows

a Children are more likely to learn skills and knowledges which are
immediately relevant to their needs than they are to be willing to store
information up for some possible future which they cannot visualize
Included in these needs are those for stimulation variation, thus this
principle does not rule out learning things which it is simply fun to
learn Rather, it emphasizes that learning is most likely to occur if the
teaching is closely connected to performing in situations which demand
the learned behaviour

b Teaching programmes for the disadvantaged should be broken
down into short segments with clear and discriminable goals, so that
achievement of the goal is neither in the long term future nor so
ambiguous that it is not experienced as an achievement by the pupils
Progress toward the goal should be marked at close intervals Month-
long marking periods are too far apart for many disadvantaged
youngsters, and in the lower grades, even weekly markers are too distant

c The reliability of the teacher's promise to the pupils is crucial
Failure to deliver will reconfirm the child's disbelief in the availability
and predictability of delayed gratifications When the teacher offers
choices, she must be sure that the alternatives are available A promised
plan (even simply an *intended* one, which many pupils may perceive as
promised) must not be changed, except by the decision of the pupils, if
they are to see promises as existing in an area over which they have some
control, rather than as arbitrary decisions of others Lower class children
do work for long term goals, and do delay immediate gratifications,
when the future goals are theirs, and they feel that they can control the
achievement of the goals

d Teachers tend to become nervous at the total physical involvement
of the lower class child in feelings of delight and pleasure, which he often
acts out flamboyantly and with all his body muscles For various reasons,
they often attempt to attenuate the pleasure by reminding the pupils of
work to be done, of some future difficulties, or they use the moment as
an occasion to administer a lecture on the rewards of work well done
Such ploys are ineffective and unnecessary, let the delight run its course,
even if the disadvantaged children lack delicacy in the way they express
such a feeling

MATCH BETWEEN WORDS AND ACTIONS

It is one of the most subtle, frustrating, and ultimately striking
characteristics of disadvantaged people that they are less responsive to
the commands of words and verbal logic, even when the words are their

own They do not demand close matches between what they say and what they do, thus their verbalizations may often bear little relationship to reality The weakness of the link between words and actions is suggested by the wide disparities between the reports by disadvantaged adolescents of their vocational aspirations and their current positions and prospects, and the dead-end jobs which they actually seek (37, 45) I once listened to a group of lower class unemployed people discussing for more than a half hour the kinds of clothes they should wear when they apply for jobs (the debate was between wearing business suits or working clothes) and finally polled the group members about whether they in fact possessed suits, none did

Haggstrom, noting that the responses of poor people to surveys and questionnaires are often unreliable, suggests that the problem is not one of falsification, but rather that their responses represent desires in the absence of enough certainty to justify behaving in accordance with their wishes He says, ' the poor may not only pay lip service to middle class notions, but may, for similar reasons, say to any powerful person what they believe he wants to hear' (32, p 216)

I believe that this characteristic is the product of a great deal of socialization, particularly in schools, in which words fail to match reality One aspect of this socialization was implied in the earlier discussion of unfulfilled promises, which may be thought of as verbalizations which do not conform to reality and sense experience Poor children grow up in a world in which people often say things which they do not mean, perhaps out of politeness, and which are belied by their actions Teachers like all their pupils, but never touch poor children physically, they provide education for all children, but many of the attitudes and experiences which inform the school day are foreign to the disadvantaged youngster Yet he must act as if they are real, at least verbally, or risk the disapproval of the teacher If he likes the story he was assigned to read, his judgment is accepted, if he does not like it, the teacher 'educates' his judgment He is better off saying he liked it than being challenged by the teacher-authority or those classmates trying to curry favour with her On the other hand, much of the poor child's world is denied in school, as teachers often take the stance of minimizing or wholly ignoring those unpleasant, discomforting, and disquieting aspects of life which exist outside the official ideologies of justice and freedom for all, which they in their official positions feel constrained to maintain Thus even very young children know that there are certain things which one does not talk about to teachers, and these

things are more likely to exist in the life of the lower class child than in the life of the middle class child The lower class child therefore grows up with the clear impression that the world of talk in school, into which he must fit, need bear no particular relationship to the world of his experience It is in this sense that the lower class child does not learn to synthesize words and actions, particularly in formal situations in which he finds himself vis-a-vis a representative of social power, as he tries to say the socially accepted or expected things which will allow him to pass unnoticed or unremarked

Because of the diminished authority of words, the lack of introspection and the limited time perspective in which future and past are less potent than the needs and wishes of the present, the disadvantaged youth is also likely to appear inconsistent in his verbal behaviour from one day to the next, further confusing the teacher, and leading her to see him as untrustworthy and unreliable, just as he sees the promises of future rewards from her as untrustworthy and unreliable The result is a failure of rapport and mutual distrust

One of the implications of the reduced synthesis between words and actions is that disadvantaged pupils often have difficulty following teachers' directions, if there is much of a time delay between the giving of the directions and the occasion for carrying them out Again, the diminished power of words to evoke actions, and the restricted time focus operate against maintaining a set over the time interval These factors also increase the poor child's difficulty in solving those real life problems which involve delays in action (e g, locating misplaced objects, using help which is given verbally, etc) Thus he appears stupid, his lack of familiarity with many of the objects and events of middle class life with which the other school children are familiar combines with such apparent stupidity to reinforce his feelings of 'copelessness' and inferiority, and to develop a self-image which conforms to the perceptions of him held by his teachers

These considerations underscore earlier recommendations that the classroom day include opportunities for direct rehearsal and coaching of disadvantaged pupils in carrying out plans and actions discussed in the classroom Such acting out may have to be repeated, as the child comes to school the next day behaving as if whatever had been accomplished the previous day had not occurred This may also mean tutoring him in his neighbourhood and home A pupil's verbal assent in class that he understands some direction or plan is not a sufficient guarantor that he will at a later time be able to translate the plan into action

A further implication of the kind of synthetic functioning described here is to emphasize that the teacher concern himself more with the pupil's actions and behaviour, rather than with his words He should not be too beguiled by good intentions verbally expressed, nor too put off by offensive words not matched by action

Finally, of course, teachers need to 'tell it like it is,' which has now become one of the demands of the American underclass, implicitly recognizing the habitual effort of authorities and officials to slide over unpleasantnesses Poor people recognise and reject that effort Not every story has a happy ending, especially in the world of the poor, and our social problems are not isolated exceptions that 'prove the rule' of law and love All people are not necessarily good, nor are existing problems unsolved solely because there has not been enough time Teachers need to be familiar with 'how it is,' and they need the security in their status to be able to deal with unpleasant realities without fear for their jobs

CREATIVITY

The reverse side of the coin of freedom from the constraints of words is the unstereotyped thinking which leads to creative problem-solving (29) The use of nonverbal forms of communication and imagistic thinking provides the disadvantaged child with alternative response modes within which problem solutions may be located which are less easily discovered in standard language usage (70) Gordon describes disadvantaged youth as possessing 'ingeniousness and resourcefulness in the pursuit of self-selected goals and in coping with the difficult conditions of life peculiar to states of economic insufficiency and poverty, low social class status, and low racial-caste status' (28, p 195)

This ingeniousness and potential for creativity may manifest itself to the teacher in colourful and original figures of speech, and in unexpected and disarmingly different ways of approaching tasks familiar to the teacher She should not be put off by such unusual problem solutions simply because they are not *comme il faut*, she should recognize a difference between the manner with which a job gets done and the extent to which the job is accomplished Stereotypy and conventionality of manner need not be requirements for task success

PERSON-ORIENTATION

Lower class children tend to be person-oriented Bureaucracies, agencies and other abstract entities tend to be seen as existing only in

the persons of those who represent them, the school exists in the persons of teachers and principals (masters) Therefore the policies of the school, and the administrative constraints under which it operates are interpreted by the disadvantaged pupil as personal decisions of the teacher having direct relevance to himself He does not see that the teacher's capacity to respond to his needs and wishes is moderated by the necessity to deal with all the other pupils in the class, and so he interprets the teacher's inability to respond as a personal decision against himself (56, 73, 81) While it must be admitted that people in bureaucratic positions, such as teachers, often rationalize their unwillingness to adjust, change, or revise their activities by reference to the 'needs of the system,' it is also true that they are in fact limited One problem arises in that they also feel that their position requires them to act as if they either agree with the constraints and rules of the agency, or that they control those rules Thus the teacher's need to convey the impression of being autonomous and authoritative feeds into the disadvantaged pupil's tendency to personalize The result is that when the teacher indicates that she cannot accede to the student's request, he has already received enough communications of the teacher's autonomy and power that he does not believe her He interprets 'cannot' as 'do not want to' and develops a resentment against the agent of the institutional policy

I know of no solution to this problem, except for the teacher to dissociate himself or herself from school rules by indicating that he or she is not identified with those rules personally, though accepting and working within them The teacher who has demonstrated himself to be an active advocate of the pupil against those rules and limitations which are non-functional, irrelevant, or which limit the child's ability to make the most and best use of the school experience, should have little difficulty in dealing with students' tendencies to personalize

UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT

The baby born into a disadvantaged home, often to an unwed mother who may have had several other children, is born into an environment in which the characteristics described in this paper are learned as functional adaptations to the situations in which the child lives and grows

There may be only a brief period following childbirth in which the mother is able to remain home to take care of the baby before she must

return to work The baby is fitted into an already chaotic family schedule, marked by tension and insecurity, in a crowded and noisy apartment which may accommodate more than one family, and not have enough beds for all The new baby is likely to be taken care of by a shifting array of adults and siblings, relatives and neighbours, as the mother's work schedule and the siblings' school schedule permit To speak of stable and reliable mothering, of consistency in interpersonal interactions between the baby and mother-figures in such circumstances, is to deal in fantasy It is not surprising that disadvantaged children are often uncertain and fearful of the environment

The kind of early infancy experienced by disadvantaged children gives rise to two important products The first is uncertainty in comprehension, prediction, and therefore knowledge of the environment This results from the lack of reliable gratification from others which would function to direct the infant's attention to pleasurable stimuli in the environment and to the persons and objects in it from whom such pleasure is derived It is also a result of the irregularity and unpredictability of events in that environment (29) 'Communication is replaced by noise and information by chaos   ' (59, p 146)

The other related product of such an environment is a failure to establish basic trust in nurturant figures, and by generalization, in other adults (22) Thus from the very beginning, the disadvantaged infant is prepared to be suspicious of people and objects, to be doubtful about their expected behaviour, and thus to need to engage in repeated checking on them through manipulating and touching objects at hand and avoiding those that may be avoided, through acting out, testing and provoking, in search of a reduction of ambiguity and in an attempt to make the environment do some things reliably and as expected

This initial uncertainty is given added impetus through the growing years by the lack of contact with toys, objects, manipulanda, and the cultural artifacts through which children ordinarily learn space and size relations, size constancy, conservation, and other aspects of the psychophysical world There is a paucity of manipulable objects, of blocks to stack, of kitchen utensils to put one inside another, of pictures to touch and discriminate from real objects (17) Such paucity of learning experiences make it difficult for the slum child to develop the basic notions of the physical world upon which ability to understand, predict, and control the objects of his environment depends However, it must also be pointed out that this also means that the slum child is less limited in his perceptions by what he knows to be traditional uses of objects,

and more explorative of the potentials of objects for new and innovative uses Inner-city poor children also have opportunities to play with a large variety of discarded objects and junk in vacant lots This early training in making toys out of whatever stray objects come their way, and their lack of restriction to the 'proper' uses of objects, probably forms some of the background for the resourcefulness and ingenuity mentioned earlier in this paper

Nevertheless, it seems fairly clear that a lack of contact and experience with the traditional cultural objects, and their 'proper' uses, which in generalized and related forms constitute much of the content of school learning, particularly in the early years, produces a child who is uncertain about the middle class environment of objects and events, fearful of it, and who appears stupid to his teachers Paradoxically, the richer the school is in modern educational toys and objects, based on generalized forms of the manipulanda with which middle class children are familiar in their homes and neighbourhoods, the more stupid the lower class child may appear

It must be pointed out that the disadvantaged youngster's uncertainty about the logic and predictability of the environment is matched by the environment itself, he lives in a world of arbitrary brutality, subjection to prejudice and rejection masked by pious sentiments and patriotic rhetoric, without logic or order, in which words do not in fact match actions and meanings approach double-think It is a world in which people say one thing and do another, in which every communication is therefore an object of suspicion, in which urban renewal turns out to mean Negro removal, in which food stamp plans for the hungry turn out to make poor people poorer than they had been when they were directly given food commodities, in which food distribution is really designed as a way of getting rid of farm surpluses rather than a way of providing the necessary nutrients to the poor, in which the virtues of work and family are extolled, while the welfare rules penalize those who work by taking away from welfare payments every dollar earned, and also penalize families which remain intact by denying payments to mothers with husbands

ROLE-TAKING ABILITY

One of the elements in the tendency to personalize which was noted earlier in this paper is the lack of an alternative to personalizing The alternative is to try to put one's self in another's place and to imagine how he sees things This entails covert role playing, but in deprived

neighbourhoods, children have few opportunities and less motivation to learn about the social roles characterizing the variety of statuses and positions which people in middle class society occupy They do not visit and know their friendly fireman, our helpful policeman or the dairyman who delivers our milk Those with whom they do interact are often enough objects of fear and resentment, so there is little desire to imitate them Thus poor children have limited opportunity to learn, through play imitation, to take on a variety of social roles, on the other hand, they are also exposed to some roles which are disvalued in middle class culture, and with which middle class people are unfamiliar social workers, juvenile judges, prostitutes, pimps and hustlers Here, then, is another example of the way in which class-cultures become self-perpetuating and distinct from each other, as the lower class child fails to become competent in the middle class world, and the middle class world on the other hand disvalues or remains ignorant of the knowledges he has acquired

Theoretically, role-taking ability is associated with early identification with the parents from whom middle class children derive much of their sense of status and identity However, in lower class American life, identification with parents is limited by a variety of factors, some of which have already been cited For one thing, lower class parents tend not to use those psychological control techniques (51) which foster identification (85) Secondly, lower class parents tend to use direct physical punishment, which drives the child away from them Such parents must also be absent from the child's environment much of the time Combined with the low level of basic trust described earlier, this absence of the parents and their use of physical punishment operate against the child's view of the parents as models They are not available enough to be imitated, and when they are available, their punitiveness motivates the child against imitating them Finally, lower class children become children of the streets at an earlier age than do middle class children (3, 33), again reducing the opportunities for identifying with parents Thus the basic experience of taking over the behaviours and attitudes of another person, as the child's first extended practice at taking others' roles, is minimized, leaving the child with less ability to acquire and use role-playing skills easily and automatically as a means of seeing himself and the world in alternative perspectives

CONSCIENCE

Disadvantaged children are less conscience-bound than are middle

class children The processes that reduce the opportunities and motivations for internalizing the parents are the same ones which, theoretically, are responsible for a low level of superego inhibitions and the tendency to experience guilt Thus 'superego lacunae' have been cited as characteristic of many disadvantaged youth (68) It may also be suggested that the process of early desatilization from the parents before conscience-producing internalization and identification have been completed leaves the child with only the initial form of internalization shame before one who has discovered a transgression Thus we have the familiar trait of anxiety about being caught, but less inhibiting guilt, and an ethic which honours 'getting away' with a transgression without disapproving the transgression itself It should be pointed out that this appears to be a common response to any authority which is seen as punitive and arbitrary, it is the response of prisoners of war to their enemy captors, of children toward adults and teachers in particular, of army conscripts toward their officers The generality of this response in the life of the lower class youth simply marks the pervasive extent to which the world as he sees it is arbitrary and punitive Feelings of powerlessness against arbitrary and punitive forces further operate against the development of guilt feelings, for guilt implies the perception of oneself as the agent of one's own actions and circumstances One who feels that one is the object of forces outside one's control does not see one's behaviour as chosen by oneself, but rather as provoked and explained by the behaviour of others

There is also another side to this coin, it is the side of freedom from the anxiety, inhibition, self-punishment, and dread which come from overdeveloped superego functions, which make it so difficult for middle class Americans to experience joy without worrying about eventual punishment for their pleasures The modal mildly neurotic middle class American is one who sees himself as his own worst enemy, the psychological control techniques with which he was raised operate so that he perceives himself as the agent of his difficulties, and of his punishments He therefore doubts his own goodness, or experiences vague expectations and intimations of disaster and setback, arising from who knows what unexpected source (in this day and age, that source is usually located in 'international communist conspiracy') On the other hand, the lower class child, victim as he is of direct physical punishment, knows his enemy, can locate him outside of himself, and thus place his anxieties in external reality referents with which he can cope through action on identifiable parts of the environment This dynamic appears

likely to be related to the relative absence of a psychological frame of reference in the thinking and speech of lower class people, it is the other half of the attention to external referents which was discussed earlier in this paper

PEER INFLUENCE

The peer culture and loyalty to it is a relatively more important source of values and security to the disadvantaged youth than to the middle class youth

The frustrations of life in the home and the unpleasant interactions with parents combine to make the street a more gratifying and freer place for the poor child Thus, despite the fears and wishes of many lower class mothers, the peer group takes over much of the family's socializing role, becomes the child's source of values, and the society from which he derives his status The process is aided by the sharing of an enemy—the school—in a continuing battle in which the parents align themselves with the school which they see as the only hope for their children's advancement, but which the children see as a source of frustration, boredom, irrelevance, and arbitrary use of middle class power over themselves

The school as it is usually structured is the enemy of the peer group The peer group demands loyalty, cohesiveness, and joint effort, while the school demands individual initiative, competition, and distinctive achievement Thus the peer group must oppose the school's efforts for, like other organizations, the gang functions to try to maintain itself It therefore becomes, for the disadvantaged youth, both a source of hostility toward the school and a refuge from the classroom

SEX ROLE

Sexual role learnings in the lower class are appropriate to and supportive of loose, shifting, and informal marital arrangements, and are therefore in conflict with middle class norms

The lower class disadvantaged family is often a female-headed one (15, 36, 58) In one study, the natural parents were living together in only 39 per cent of the families of boys in a vocational counselling programme (69)

This family structure is a culturally established response to the conditions of life, in much the same way as the extended family was an established response to the agricultural and cottage system prevailing

before industrialization In poverty groups within industrial societies, in which unemployed men cannot support families, and in which women can only have children and obtain welfare aid when there is no male head of family, it is functional for men to avoid stable marriages It is also a pattern for which the dynamics of the disadvantaged male suit him The young male child growing up in a family life which includes a succession of men with marginal or tenuous commitments to the family as a unit (although their commitments to their parental families may be stronger), learns that when a man comes to the house, it often means that there will be a fight between the man and his mother in response to his demand to share in the woman's money or to her demand that he earn money, or it may mean that the child will be abused or rejected in order to get rid of him Soon enough the man leaves the family, to which the mother responds by becoming even more resentful of men and disdainful of them, especially if she has been able to maintain some employment when they have not Thus in addition to the absence of a male model, the boy learns that men are bad, and by implication, he is bad if he acts like one This is the background for the boy's deep ambivalence about being a male, attenuated somewhat by his early desatilization from the family in favour of the peer group, but still revealed in almost obsessive attempts to prove his masculinity and to dispel the doubts produced by an initial identification with a female model in a female-dominated household (57)

This ambivalent sexual identity may account for the quasi-homosexual nature of gang loyalty in a context of desperate efforts by the group members to assert and demonstrate their masculinity to each other (49), again an exaggeration of middle class adolescent processes Such masculinity needs provide further impetus to the adolescent entrancement with cars, power, speed, strength, size, long hair, and clothing which is both feminine in colour and fabric, and designed to emphasize male body contours

Is the flamboyant sexuality of such boys really a product of underlying uncertainties and weakness of masculine identification, or are these myths designed to reassure the envious middle class? Middle class reactions to lower class sexuality range from outraged morality to romantic idealization and idolization of the presumed sexual freedom and spontaneity of the poor, compared to the presumed sexual inhibition of the American middle class Such reactions suggest the possibility that the ascription of an underlying weakness and ambivalence in the lower class is really only a projection by the middle class, an attempt to

take away from the underclass that which is envied and feared (often at the same time) by the sexually conflicted middle class It is a charge made by many Negro writers, beginning with James Baldwin and LeRoi Jones, I suspect that it is a valid one in many cases, and that the theme of the lower class boy as latent homosexual has been much overdone and exaggerated Nevertheless, one cannot ignore the findings reviewed by Rainwater (66) which indicate that while early sexual experience is more frequent among lower class youth, such sexual experience has a competitive, driven, anxious quality about it, furthermore lower class people are more inhibited in the varieties of sexual activity which they tolerate, and they express more moralistic attitudes, and report less enjoyment of sex than do middle class subjects These findings could be another case of the lower class respondent saying what he thinks the authority-figure interviewer wants to hear, but I do not think that explanation entirely adequate It does seem to be a case of 'smoking more and enjoying it less' As with the other cliches about lower class people presented in this paper, the one about sexual freedom is both true and false The pressure to test and enjoy oneself sexually is there, as is a lack of inhibitions against sexuality, but there is also the anxiety, the rigid feudal moralism, and conflicted identification with the mother The White racism which uses these dynamics for its own psychic (and economic) purposes is another story

The sexual identity problem of the lower class boy is further complicated by the positions of girls in his society Especially in segregated Negro communities, there is an open preference of mother-dominated families for girls Girls do better than the boys in school They get along better socially and have higher aspirations and achievement levels They use better grammar, read better, and are more polite and conforming They advance further in school, and when they do drop out, it is at a later age than boys (3, 18, 78, 84) At the same levels of actual/tested achievement, girls are more likely to receive higher grades from teachers than boys, to be preferred by teachers, and therefore to enjoy school more (75) The boys therefore have reason to resent girls, to feel inferior to them, and to avoid any enduring but humiliating relationships with them

As mentioned earlier in this paper, schools and school-related objects are perceived as feminine, and as supporting feminine values (38, 75) In the context of the disadvantaged boy's attempts to reassure himself of his masculine identity, it is clear that he should resent and oppose the school's efforts to feminize him, as he sees it, and reassert his mas-

culinity in ways which middle class—and especially marginally middle class—teachers find particularly abhorrent, fearsome, and threatening The teacher thus even further removes herself from the possibility of serving as an available model to the boy, while her rejection of him reinforces the lower class girl's tendency to denigrate males in imitation of the teacher The implications for the recruitment and selection of male teachers is obvious

Thus school and family combine to complete the cycle for the next generation of men to relate to women in the same fashion that produced the matriarchal family structure which gave rise to the cycle in the preceding generation—a pattern which is uniquely functional to the economic and social psychological pressures operating in the homes, schools and communities of disadvantaged people

GEOGRAPHICAL MOBILITY

Uncertainty about the interpersonal environment and withdrawal from those parts of the environment which can be avoided result in a restricted range of geographical mobility One study (48), for example, found that disadvantaged adolescents looked for jobs predominantly in their own neighbourhoods Many did not know their way around the city in which they lived, and so could look for work nowhere else (many were also afraid of going through another gang's 'turf')

Many poor youths have never been beyond the bounds of their ghetto areas, have never been in locales where they expect to be rejected, and which therefore might stimulate the fear and hate which they sense within themselves It is an irony, then that the poor often participate in their own ghettoization—another example of the fineness with which characteristics of the poor become appropriate to or reciprocate the social and economic conditions which created those characteristics Thus there is a fear and avoidance of the outside world (35) which, combined with gang and peer loyalty and the search for a reduction of ambiguity, lead to a polarization of the world into 'us' vs 'them'

AGGRESSION

Implicit in much of the foregoing, and primary in the minds of many teachers who face contacts with the disadvantaged, is the problem of aggression No doubt for very complex reasons, among which are probably guilt, projection, and inhibitory socialization leading to a fear

of aggressive impulses, middle class people tend to be hyperaware of and frightened by their overwhelming expectation of free-wheeling aggression and hostility in lower class people, including children—a stance which is entirely complementary to the resentments that disadvantaged students feel Such expectations readily become self-fulfilling prophecies, as defences and wariness are maintained, leading to coldness and rejection, to which the pupil in turn responds with tension and resentment

In many ways, the aggression of disadvantaged pupils is a summing up of all the dynamics and personality structures described thus far motoric style, low impulse control, the need for boys to prove masculinity, the lack of introspection and low levels of guilt which lead the poor youth to lay blame for his situation on the personal agents of society, training in aggression implicit in the harsh and arbitrary child socialization practices which many have experienced, the tension and irritability produced by unsatisfied needs, imposed failure, powerlessness, as well as by the internal conflicts between masculinity and femininity, between feelings of failure and the need to feel that one has identity as a self-owned agent of one's own actions and experiences, between the fact of imposed dependency and independence strivings Finally, aggressiveness also functions as one of the few modes of relating to people which is safe and acceptable to the lower class adolescent, who in many ways presents an exaggeration of typical middle class American adolescent rejection of tenderness and positive sentiment—a rejection which boys enforce by making positive feelings with a gruff and bantering aggression which may turn to desperate anger and rage at attempts to stimulate the positive feelings which are only tenuously repressed Thus the aggressive stance functions as a way of holding others off, of preventing them from arousing uncomfortable and dangerous feelings, of resisting invasion of the self, of protecting oneself from hope and the disappointment and hurt to which hope in others has led in the past At the same time the aggressiveness also permits gratification of needs for interpersonal contact, for resolving ambiguities in the relationship, for expressing real feelings, for controlling others by frightening them and thus rendering them predictable and safe, for emasculating others in order to bolster one's own masculinity or feminine dominance and superiority

EXPERIENCE IN SCHOOL

It is obvious from much of the foregoing that poor children are ill

prepared to cope with the demands of formal education in schools and classrooms organized around a middle class model of verbal facility, delayed gratification, impulse control, and reduced motor functioning, ' alternatively, the school is equally unprepared to deal with and educate poor children The result is that school experiences often perpetuate disadvantagement

Adding to the child's initial lack of readiness for reading and verbal development in the middle class English language structure, and his unfamiliarity with the manipulanda and common concepts of middle class society (many are not even sure of their family names), is the typical inferiority of the schools in slum areas This inferiority in the United States is partly a product of the property tax base which, in many jurisdictions, is used to support the schools only within the districts m which the taxes are collected The result as in Chicago, is that where the property tax base is declining because of the deterioration of the ghetto, the amount of money available to support education is far less per pupil than that available in richer districts with fewer children

Further, teachers tend to have a low level of expectation for the disadvantaged child, which becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy as the teacher provides fewer learning opportunities and encouragements, derives less gratification from the disadvantaged child, and is less set to perceive good performance The child therefore learns less (86) and receives low grades even when performing adequately Rosenthal (71) describes a recent study in which children in a school were tested by an experimenter on a test which was purported (to the teachers) to identify the 'late blooming' child After administration of the test, children of various measured IQ levels were randomly selected by the experimenter and identified to the teachers as having been found to be 'late bloomers ' At the end of the term it was discovered that the children so identified actually increased in their academic achievement scores more than did control children, demonstrating the extent to which teachers' expectations become self-fulfilling prophecies

For most disadvantaged children, the prophecy is of failure, and as failure experiences rapidly accumulate, along with increasing resentment of teachers and of the educational process and institution, the disadvantaged child is more and more strongly set to respond on the first day in a new classroom with hostility, sullenness, and fearful, self-protective withdrawal He is thus on the road to dropping out While

the national drop-out rate in the United States is around 50 per cent,
the rate in many ghetto areas rises to 90 per cent (45)

Lack of home support adds to the process While lower class parents
tend to have high values for education, they also tend to expect disap-
pointment and to have their expectations established by the norms in
their neighbourhood, which are for early school-leaving Further, they
do not provide indirect supports to learning, their children do not see
them reading or writing, there are no books or magazines in the house,
the parents' language cannot serve as a model for school language, the
parents do not inquire about and follow their children's school progress
They must often move from one location to another, so that their
children must frequently shift schools Work schedules do not allow
them the opportunity to get their children to school on time, and they
are often not able to provide enough nourishment to keep their children
awake and alert during school (7) Low motivation to achieve through
educational excellence leads to lowered performance (39), to failure,
and thus to lower achievement striving

Thus the high drop-out rate, especially among boys However, it
should also be noted that in many cases the high drop-out rate is really
a high rate of school push-out In one study, at least 24 per cent of the
so-called drop-outs were clearly pushed out (83) Another unknown
portion were only slightly less obviously encouraged to leave at the
earliest opportunity According to Stripling,

> School administrators, teachers, and counselors are threatened by
> the presence of the potential dropout and often encourage him to
> leave school   The potential school dropout, in most of our
> schools, creates a threat to the school staff because they recognize
> that they cannot meet his needs   Such a student threatens the
> faculty's sense of adequacy as professional people, since they have
> neither the time, the skills, nor the specialized services available
> to assist him This causes the staff to become hostile to the student
> or to reject him in some other fashion such as ignoring him,
> ridiculing him, or just leaving him alone without encouragement or
> help In many cases, one or more members of the staff might sug-
> gest to the potential dropout that he would be better off outside
> the school program (82, pp 213-4)

Other factors also play a role in dropping out One study (63) indicates
that the drop-out tends to be far too old for his grade level, and more
physically mature (which further tends to frighten teachers) It was
estimated that many students over age for their grade in school would

be 21 years old by the time they were graduated, if they did not drop out

Thus the disadvantaged youth has a history of educational failure, and of institutional rejection In the context of the school's emphasis on individual achievement, and its stance of being fair, the disadvantaged student must conclude that he is the cause and source of his own failure Far from preparing such a student for life and work, the school has not only failed in its mission, but has also therefore made the situation worse by adding to the youth's burdens a sense of inadequacy and worthlessness which he would not have, had he not attended school at all[1]

SELF-CONCEPT

Poor children learn contempt for themselves, consciously or unconsciously Sharing the major American values regarding income and status, they see themselves as failures They accept the social and political philosophy of a society which prizes individual initiative and upward mobility, and states that failure to move up can only be the result of internal lacks and deficiencies in themselves—a view which much of this paper has attempted to describe as a self-fulfilling prophecy This myth of individual responsibility for failure is one in which affluent America has an investment, for it not only justifies the affluence, but also displaces responsibility for failure away from the structures in society which continue to reward and maintain the affluent, and on to the individuals who have failed, thus protecting the society and its institutions from criticism and change It is part of the American myth, which was responsible for the great European emigration to the New World, that in the American environment each man's station in life would be determined only by his ability The Economic Opportunity Act, which launched the War on Poverty, is an excellent example of the way in which the myth is maintained, for the contents of the Act are almost entirely concerned with psychological manipulations of the poor, in order to change them, thus implying that their failure is their fault, despite the title, only one section of the Act, and that dealing with the smallest of its programmes, is an *economic* measure in any sense directed at the creation of employment *opportunities* in the society This kind of double-think is not wasted on either the affluent or the poor, both have accepted the illogical premise and conclusions that where there are poor people who are not making economic progress, the fault lies with themselves

Thus poor people are self-rejecting, and such self-concepts are related to many of the factors already discussed avoidance of introspection and self-analysis, difficulty in developing an identification with anyone of prestige, status, and power, powerlessness, externalization of problems, etc The self-image of Negroes is even more severely affected by the class-caste system to which they are subjected in a racist society The Ausubels (3) point out that because of the low social and economic status of his parents in American society, the Negro child is denied the self-esteem that comes from sharing in parental status, and instead must suffer shame at the sight of his parents' powerlessness and degradation in the eyes of the controlling white society Thus Negro children resist identifying with their own racial group, prefer white to Negro playmates (18, 80), prefer white skin colour, and assign negative roles to Negroes (12, 27, 46, 80) These attitudes run from childhood at least through to young adulthood, and were to be found in Negro college students (79)

Negro children are tempted to identify with whites, to be white, they are resentful of their skin colour, or of the fate that made them be born black, and they tend to accept the white racist view of Negroes (1, 8, 16, 24, 40) Clark and Clark (12) found that Negro children tend to blame themselves for their skin colour Of course, strivings to identify with whites are doomed to failure, often leading to either further self-blame for failure to make it in a white society, or a reaction-formation rejection of whites as models and an additional impetus to already adequately justified feelings of hatred

The problem of identity for the adolescent is that of finding a social role which fits the summed up experiences and dynamics of his life, in such a way as to integrate and make sensible in the world the feelings, wishes, fears, and habits he has developed Vocational-occupational choices become the grounds upon which middle class young adults locate such integrative identities in a social context Given the restricted opportunities available to Negroes for making such vocational choices, and given the kinds of characteristics described in this paper, which are unsuited for the structure of vocations in American industrial society, the Negro was until recently in a forced identity moratorium throughout his life as the only alternative to a basically masochistic identity as a scapegrace-failure-primitive However, the achievement and genius of Malcolm X (52) created in the world a social role where none before existed He gave a form, meaning, and martyr to the concept of Black Power This was a departure from the easier job of building an

identity around an existing occupational role What Malcolm X did
was to structure an identity and then impose on the world a social role
for it, an act of brilliance which can only be compared with Luther's,
as described by Erikson (23) And in that act, Malcolm X has created
a model for American Negroes which both integrates their experiences
and characteristics into an identity, and transforms those characteristics
at the same time Part of this is done through the rediscovery and
recognition of Negro history, achievements, and talents, through a con-
ception of beauty which converts Negro features from dark distortions
of white standards to beauty in their own right, and through an emphasis
on the valued and valid sides of many of the psychological and social
characteristics described in this paper For many Negroes today, the
transformation is accomplished through identification with Malcolm X-
inspired Black Power models These models function in the same way
as other heroes function as sources of identification through their power,
love, and effectiveness If one of the problems of the Negro underclass
is feelings of powerlessness and lack of the kinds of political and social
skills acquired by imitation from capable others, then it is clear that
the advent of Black Power is a major step forward in providing role
models with whom Negroes can identify, whom they can imitate, and
in relation to whom they can see themselves in a new light, a light which
develops at the same time as it illuminates their capacities, their self-
respect, their sense of pride in being who they become through such
imitation and identification

Assuming that the development of such self-pride, political alertness,
and sense of commitment represent a desirable behavioural change, then
it appears that a useful strategy of the white society is to encourage
imitation and identification with Black Power leaders by Negro children
and adults On the basis of what is known about imitation learning and
role modelling (4), it is possible to spell out what such encouragement
means The existing research suggests that imitation learning is likely
to be maximized in those situations in which the model is seen as pos-
sessing power, and is observed to be rewarded for his actions Under
such circumstances, children will imitate both the task relevant and
irrelevant behaviours of the model (72) In the context of American
social forces today, what this means is that white society ought to
arrange for Black Power leaders to be perceived as powerful by their
constituents, this means that such leaders must engage in the politics
of conflict By the exercise of power in conflict, the black leader gains
goals surrendered to him by white society thus demonstrating his power

to his constituents and modellers If he is to be reinforced in such a way that his followers can observe it, the granting of political and social concessions must be public and clearly tied to the black leader's demands And if the responses and behaviours which his followers are going to learn through imitation of the leader are to be socially functional and positive behaviours, then the white structure must arrange to make those concessions in response to socially useful and positive behaviours by the black leaders—behaviours such as those which effectively and cohesively organize their followers, responses which demonstrate knowledge, clear thinking, and effective strategies in solving social problems, and behaviours which emphasize peaceful and productive means for achieving social and economic progress It thus becomes the task of the white society to be prepared to make public concessions to black leaders when the demands are made in a context of such positive behaviours, rather than refuse concessions until the only response which does get rewarded with concessions is violence, for that response will also be imitated by the followers and become part of their identities as capable and effective people

One of the implications of this position for education is that, wherever possible, classroom teachers for Negro poor children ought to be Negroes, to function as potential models These potential models need to be able to command real power not over their pupils, but in relation to other teachers and particularly vis-à-vis other power figures, such as school administrators and politicians For it is only in the contest between the teacher and such other authorities that the teacher's own power, used in the interests of the pupils, can be tested and demonstrated to his or her pupils in such a way that they will see him as powerful and able to command rewards for mature and socially useful behaviour

THE SCHOOL AS AN AGENT OF SOCIAL CHANGE

The characteristics of disadvantaged children presented in this paper comprise what Linton has described as a 'status personality' (50) That is, they are the kinds of behaviours which are products of the life experience of people who occupy a particular place in the social structure They are the responses to that social status, and function adaptively within it In short, we are not dealing here with individual psychopathology, but rather with the intersections of sociology, social psychology, and personality development, defining a modal personality pattern which, like every other personality, is uniquely integrated into the con-

ditions which created it, which maintain it, and which it in turn
maintains The traits I have described are, in my judgment, necessary
and lawful responses to the conditions of life, to the status of the poor
youth in present American society and indeed in any society which tends
toward rigidity of class structure and restriction of economic opportunity,
and in which maturity and status are dependent on the individual's
direct contribution to the productive economic life of the community
Unlike neuroses and maladjustments, they are not pathologies arising
from individual and fortuitously unfortunate accidents of traumatic ex-
perience, or from birth to atypical parents Rather, they are functional
and adaptive responses to the socio-economic facts of life Indeed, there
is a good deal of cross-cultural evidence which suggests that almost
wherever there are poor people, the kinds of personality attributes de-
scribed in this paper arise (6, 26, 35, 42, 47, 49, 61, 64, 67, 77, 89) For
where there is lack of money with which to purchase decent housing,
to buy adequate food, to pay for medical care, almost all the rest fol-
lows powerlessness, ghettoization, inferior schooling and consequent
inability to compete for jobs, apathy, illness, lack of energy, absence
of hope, broken families and matriarchy, and all the psychological
characteristics to which these conditions give rise

However adapted to the conditions of poverty, joblessness, depend-
ency and powerlessness, the characteristics described are unfortunately
ill-suited to the demands and needs of middle class life And, as the
behavioural styles described in this paper have created a 'problem' for
the middle class (welfare expenditures, labour shortage, aggression,
crime and delinquency) there is pressure to change the lower class But
if lower class behaviours are responses to the conditions of lower class
life, it would appear that middle class behaviours are only likely to be
elicited as responses to the conditions of middle class life If the poor
are not suited to that life, it is because they have not had the oppor-
tunity to develop adaptations to it, for it has not been a life which was
available to them To provide the poor with the living conditions of
middle class life even if they are not adapted to it beforehand, is no
more illogical than it is to expect an adaptation to middle class life
before the conditions of that life are encountered as realities We cannot
deal with motivations without dealing with the incentive conditions (or
their absence) to which motivational arousal is a response

However, schools as institutions, and teachers as their agents, generally
assume that the locus of handicaps is in the individual student, rather
than in the conditions to which he and his family have adapted This

kind of teaching, especially as it is represented in compensatory education programmes, will at best have an uphill battle because it seeks to make pupils *maladapted* to the conditions of their lives, while those conditions themselves remain unchanged Such education is at best a palliative, helping a few individuals to move a little, but if there is no enduring structural change in the factors creating an infinite future supply of pupils 'needing' compensatory education, there can be no possibility of anything but limited success, and the burden of change still rests inappropriately on the shoulders of those who are least able to change their situations Thus what success is achieved will be at the price of deepening the self-blame for failure which is already so deeply enmeshed in the problems of the poor

It is my position that though change through education is necessary for those who are already the products of the forces indicated in this paper, the more important task is structural socio-economic change to end the production of disadvantagement, and that this goal represents a more productive use of educational resources than a continued palliative effort to patch up the mistakes of the past without preventing the mistakes from recurring If teachers are to be seriously concerned with the plight of the disadvantaged, they should bend their efforts toward changing the societies in which people grow up disadvantaged

Teachers and administrators stand at the crucial intersection of individual behaviour and the structure of opportunities available to people If they see their jobs as primarily working with individuals as victims, so that they become presumably better able to take advantage of the limited opportunities that are available, they will be doing only half their jobs, and that the easier half for they will be manipulating the weak and powerless while leaving the dominant majority and its institutions safe, unchanged, and protected in the preservation of the better opportunities for itself and its children

Thus it seems to me that it is only if teachers see themselves as agents of social change in the wider community of which they are an influential part that they can take pride in carrying out the mandate of their profession For it is only then that they will be stimulating natural and adaptive growth in their pupils, instead of engaging in psychological manipulations of them, it is thus the precondition of honesty in the profession

I might also add that the solutions to the problems of poor children are not likely to be found by concentrating one's attention on their characteristics alone, what is needed is an equal concentration on the

characteristics of the dominant society which create and maintain poverty and disadvantagement And within that society, it becomes incumbent upon its members each to examine and deal with those aspects of the larger whole over which they have the most direct influence and control For it seems likely that they cannot be effective in producing change in others, or in getting others to change, if they have not changed themselves and the parts they play in maintaining a disadvantaging system For teachers and other educators, this means an attention to what and how they teach, and to the ways in which they relate themselves and the educational institutions which they control to the disadvantaging society as well as to the society of the disadvantaged

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