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Poverty and mental retardation

Mary Gemma Dupre

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POVERTY AND MENTAL RETARDATION

by

Sister Mary Gemma Dupre, SSF

A RESEARCH PAPER
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
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This research paper has been approved for the Graduate Committee of the Cardinal Stritch College by

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Chapter I

Introduction

Poverty and thus its consequences can now be acknowledged as one of the most significant causes of both mental retardation and pseudo-mental retardation. Often these effects are difficult to distinguish. Nonetheless, the destructive consequences of poverty are clear -- a tragic waste of human potential.

It is the judgment of Roger Hurley, and many others, when he states that "the supposed mental retardation of many of the poor is not mental retardation at all but environment deprivation, which includes being 'served' by institutions that do not perform in the way the public believes they do ... It appears that on many occasions we are not measuring mental retardation but our society's callousness toward the poor." ¹

Explicitly this means that most children called "retarded" are not suffering from an injury, genetic or inherited deficit, but from what might properly be called a kind of

social, political and moral retardation afflicting the rest of humanity.²

It follows then that the continued research on mental retardation be not restricted to medical investigation alone, but to comprehensive research by psychologists, biologists, educators, physicians and most particularly sociologists, to reveal what is to be done and can be done to attack the problems that result in mental retardation.

The conclusion reached by the President's Panel on Mental Retardation is similar: "the conditions which spawn many other health and social problems are to a large extent the same ones which generate the problem of mental retardation. To be successful in preventing mental retardation on a large scale, a broad attack on the fundamental adverse conditions will be necessary."³

²Ibid., x.
³"National Action to Combat Mental Retardation," President's Panel on Mental Retardation (October, 1962), p.8
Statement of the Problem

Just how serious is the problem of poverty in its relationship to mental retardation? What is the nature of poverty and environmental deprivation in relation to its result on mental retardation and on the Mentally Retarded? What is the nature of poverty and mental retardation particularly in the United States among various ethnic groups with special emphasis on the Negro? Finally, what can be done, what is being done, and what remains to be done to curtail the perpetuation of poverty and hopefully to terminate its tremendous toll on human potential?

The purpose of this paper was threefold: (1) to provide the reader with information essential to an understanding of the questions posed above. In view of the fact that poverty is historical in its reality, but a newly realized cause of mental retardation with many overtones, sociological and psychological facets yet to be explored by further research, the writer admits that this paper is not comprehensive in its entirety. The field of poverty as a causal factor of mental retardation is just beginning to make a profound impression and cause a whirlwind of awareness on the part of the greater society. Therefore, the following review
of studies and opinions is presented here to demonstrate that poverty does exist: that its results and consequences have robbed individuals of their God-given innate potentials, and likewise have robbed our nation and the world of the most precious and perishable resource -- human capacities. This condition of pseudomental retardation can and must be alleviated by the efforts of planners, educators, sociologists, political scientists, politicians and families—in short Society itself.

(2) The second and probably most important purpose of this paper was to present various research studies, opinions and facts which illustrate genetic versus the environmental deprivation, or in some instances genetic and environmental deprivation as both having an effect on mental retardation. Studies have been cited from developmental and comparative psychological research, but in particular from sociological investigations with biosocial aspects.

(3) Various current programs and projects have been cited and suggestions presented in the review of the literature, that society plans to use to attack and prevent mental retardation.

In reviewing the literature the writer found it necessary for proper interpretation to understand certain terms and their connotation. Therefore, the following definitions were deemed necessary.
Definition of Terms

1. **Pseudo-retardation** - apparent retardation but really "environmental retardation." Examples: physical, educational, psychological, nutritional, etc., deprivation.

2. **Culturally deprived** - generally, those among the poor whose culture and psychological backgrounds simply prevent them from performing adequately in middle class society. Specifically, there is a notion of absurdity when the view is taken for example that Afro-Americans, Puerto Ricans, or Mexican Americans are culturally deprived. There's is a culture simply not acknowledged.

3. **Culture of poverty** - a term coined by Oscar Lewis describing the attitudes of an under-class of people for whom poverty has become a way of life.  

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4. **Negro** - Blacks, Nonwhites, Afro-Americans, terms used interchangeably. Currently, the terms Blacks and Afro-Americans connote racial pride.

5. **Compensatory education** - programs which attempt to improve the educational opportunities and eliminate the deficiencies that some children bring to the classroom. The term was coined by President John Fischer of Columbia University.⁵

**Summary**

The existence of poverty and environmental deprivation was seen to have a significant relationship to mental retardation. The controversy of genetics versus environment was considered along with several approaches and programs to the study of the problem of prevention and eradication of mental retardation. Finally, definition of terms was deemed necessary and presented.

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Chapter II

Review of the Literature

A. Nature and Scope of Poverty

A number of studies and investigations have shown that there exists a relationship between poverty and mental retardation. This relationship is deemed serious when one considers the terrifying magnitude of poverty and its untold consequences. McNamara reported that:

One-third of mankind today live in an environment of relative abundance. But two-thirds of mankind--more than two billion individuals--are trapped in a cruel web of circumstances that severely limits their right to the necessities of life. They have not been able to achieve the transition to self sustaining growth. They are caught in the grip of hunger and malnutrition, high illiteracy, inadequate education, shrinking opportunity and corrosive poverty.

One-half of humanity is hungering at this very moment, and thousands will die today of that hunger; they will either simply starve to death or they will die because their diet is so inadequate that it has not protected them from some easily preventable disease. Most of the thousands who are dying are children, and they are dying needlessly. Perhaps, though, they are more fortunate than millions of other children who, suffering the same malnutrition, do not die but live languidly on, stunted in their bodies and crippled in their minds. We know that during the first four years of life, nutritional deficiencies can cause irreversible brain damage that can result in as much as a twenty-five percent impairment of mental ability.  

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The following studies were indicative of the impact that malnutrition alone has on human development. Although the prime focus is on malnutrition, there are other factors that consequently stem from the same problem. For example, the child's preoccupation with his hunger may make him inattentive and seemingly dull. This in turn may affect the attitude of parents and teachers and result in learning deficits.

Rendon, Hurtado, and Arathoon state that it was estimated that more than half the world's population suffers some form or degree of malnutrition.7 Calder mentioned that seventy percent of the preschool children in undeveloped countries suffer protein and caloric malnutrition (most generalized nutritional problem), and in cases of surviving children their growth and development is altered, sometimes in an irreparable form.8

Cravioto, DeLicardie and Birch reported that malnutrition affected the central nervous system through protein deficiency which resulted in structural lesions of the nervous system affecting stature, weight, and learning capacity.9

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8 Ibid. p. 263.

The indirect effects of malnourishment was found in loss of capacity to learn through loss of learning time, interference with learning at critical developmental periods, and lessened response to environment. Available evidence indicated that in the preindustrial countries fifty percent of the deaths of preschool children were attributed to malnutrition, but that the great majority of children with protein caloric malnutrition do not die. Instead, they are survivors who are handicapped in a variety of ways and for varying periods of time. What is particularly tragic about this, McNamara commented,

... is that when such mentally deprived children reach adulthood, they are likely to repeat the whole depressing sequence in their own families. They perpetuate mental deficiency not through genetic inheritance, but because as parents they are ill-equipped to understand and hence to avoid the very nutritional deprivation in their own [children] that they themselves suffered.

Hunger and malnutrition forge a chain of conditions that spiral the total human performance dismal downward. Alertness, vitality, energy, the ability to learn, the desire to succeed, the will to exert an effort -- all these inestimable human qualities drain away.\(^\text{11}\)

Waisman, in a symposium on malnutrition in relation to mental retardation pointed out that the world's principal

\(^{10}\)Ibid. p. 265.

\(^{11}\)McNamara, "The Population Threat", p. 20.
health problem is protein caloric deficiency and that the most affected groups are infants and children.\textsuperscript{12}

A preliminary report by the U.S. Public Health Service National Health Survey indicated that the problem of malnutrition and its accompanying disorders was not confined to the undeveloped or preindustrial countries. It was reported further, that chronic hunger and malnutrition may exist in the United States, just as in Guatemala, Costa Rica, Panama, and other countries that were surveyed.\textsuperscript{13}

It was cited, the paradoxical fact, that there does exist in America, poverty-in-the-midst-of-plenty, a land that is fat with agricultural surpluses. According to a recent Congressional report, both malnutrition and starvation are by no means infrequent in the United States, and there is evidence that early protein deprivation may have lasting deleterious effects on intelligence.\textsuperscript{14}

Studies of humans by Craioto and Robles, Stach and Smythe as well as current research projects indicated that nutritional deficiency is a factor in the development of

\textsuperscript{12}Helen Wortis, "Poverty and Mental Retardation: Social Aspects." in Mental Retardation, ed. by J. Wortis, p. 265.

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., p. 265.

intellectual functioning of human beings. \textsuperscript{15} Comparative psychological studies pointed out that the effect of malnutrition on the development of both brain structure and behavior have been most rigorously developed through the study of lower animals. For instance, Dobbling, in a series of investigations, emphasized that in a variety of animals the effects of malnutrition on brain formation were rather marked. \textsuperscript{16} Low-protein diet in pregnant rats produced offspring with a higher mortality rate, poorer development, and less proficient maze-learning. \textsuperscript{17} Similar observations were made when newborn pigs and mice were given a very low protein diet; the earlier the malnutrition the less susceptible it was to correction. \textsuperscript{18}

Again in human subjects, Gravioto and Robles reported that the severe syndrome resulting from early protein malnutrition known as kwashiorkor tends to produce mental deficiency in later life. \textsuperscript{19}


\textsuperscript{16} Ibid. p. 21.


\textsuperscript{18} Ibid. J. Wortis. p. 272

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
A high incidence of nutritional anemia was found in poor children. Malnutrition was discovered to be especially common among the Negro population as reported by both Haughton and Mayer. It was observed more in the South than in the North, and most prevalent in the migrant Negro population. Among low income Negro infants in South Carolina more serious evidence of malnutrition was found, especially indicating protein deficiencies. 20

Generally in the United States, starvation, severe malnutrition and especially protein deficiency deserve more investigation and attention then they have received especially in the South, in Appalachia, among Indians, Mexican-Americans, and among migratory laborers. According to J. Wortis,

Special groups such as migrant families may have especially poor nutrition; but these accounts do not allow us to draw inferences about the general nutritional state of the poor. A review of the literature suggests that suboptimal nutrition may be widespread, but severe malnutrition probably infrequent, and it would be rash to surmise that it plays a major role in the general problem of the intellectual development of the poor in this country. 21

Leaders in the field of nutritional research point out that practically all the available data indicate that poverty and its accomplice, ignorance, combine to increase
the incidence of malnutrition among the poor, and malnutrition in turn is intimately associated with other health hazards: prematurity, physical growth and stature, susceptibility and resistance to infection, etc.

It was found that in spite of the wealth in America, medical care in the U.S. was poor. This country was eighth in the world in perinatal mortality, seventh in the world in frequency of congenital malformations, ninth in the world in infant-mortality rate. Infant-mortality rate was little better than that of Singapore. It was reported further, that of all 13 countries listed in a recent vital statistics report of the World Health Organization, the United States had the worst record for infant deaths due to birth injuries.\textsuperscript{22} Wortis commented that even the figures just mentioned do not tell the whole story, because the level of services to the middle class obscure the picture of the extremely inadequate services to the poor.\textsuperscript{23}

No doubt, the concept of poverty is a complex one. Coupled with the concept of mental retardation it becomes even more complex since both terms lack specificity and universally accepted definitions. Helen Wortis cited, for

\textsuperscript{22}\textit{Ibid.} J. Wortis. p. 273
\textsuperscript{23}\textit{Ibid.}
example, a poor child living in the ghettos or slums of New York City does not suffer from the same kinds of deprivation as a poor child in Costa Rica. For one, poverty may result in malnourishment while in the other poverty may mean deprivation relative to the standards of an affluent society and may be largely psychological in effect. The conditions differ in both kind and degree.24

Further research on the subject showed that poverty cannot be defined in terms of absolute standards, but only in relation to prevailing community standards. Galbraith said, "People are poverty-stricken when their income, even if adequate for survival, falls markedly behind that of the community.... they are degraded, for in the literal sense, they live outside the grades or categories which the community regards as acceptable."25

A rather restricted observation showed that one-third of all the Negroes in Chicago and on the West Coast, have more income per family than half of the white families in the same localities.26 Some information concerning the paradoxical plight of the Negro in America were also pro-

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24 Helen Wortis. p. 262


26 J. Wortis. p. 271.
vided in findings by Miller, based on the completed census of 1960. He discovered that although Negroes are disproportionately represented among the poor, since they accounted for 10 percent of all families, while they contribute to 21 percent of all families in poverty; nevertheless, 78 percent of all families in poverty are white. Between 1947 and 1960, Negroes composed from 18 percent to 21 percent of the group of families in poverty ($3,000 standards in constant 1959 dollars). In the past six years, the Negro's contribution to poverty did not change, and since 1952, the proportion of poor who are Negro actually declined to some extent from 21.8 percent to 20.8 percent.27

Thus it was considered that with almost 80 percent of the poor being white, with the proportion of Negroes among the poor declining somewhat in the past, with the absolute standard of family income almost doubling (moving from $2,128 in 1950 to $3,921 in 1960), and with two in every three families not being considered as poor, there appeared some justification for the position that poverty was not the major problem of the Negro family. For the Negro, the most crucial problem was inequality. Inequalities refer to a person's position usually in income relative to other

27 M. Rein, p. 36
income holders, but regardless of the specific level. Negro families may live above the poverty line, however defined, but continue to suffer from inequalities because of the gap between their incomes and the income of white families compounded by a history of deprivation and abuse.\textsuperscript{28}

A report to the President by the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorder likewise pointed out the fact that most poor people in the United States are white, 20.3 million white as against 9.3 non-white.\textsuperscript{29} Gordon pointed out, however, that although Negroes do not constitute the largest number of poor people in this country, they receive most publicity in the literature. Poor whites, migrant workers, poor families of Spanish speaking and Indian background receive less attention.\textsuperscript{30}

Another feature in the study of poverty was the concept of the "culture of poverty". It was Oscar Lewis who created the term. It described an urban underclass of people who have their own rules, taboos, pride and scale of values—in short their own accepted way of life. According to an explanation given by Young, "It is by no means a prerogative of the Negro people (it was first recognized among

\textsuperscript{28}Ibid. pp. 36-37.
\textsuperscript{29}Ibid. p. 37.
\textsuperscript{30}H. Wortis. p. 266
Ordinarily, it was found to exist among all large, poor urban communities isolated in the midst of general affluence. Lewis discussed the concept as follows:

The concept of the culture of poverty may help to correct misapprehensions that have ascribed some behavior patterns of ethnic, national, or regional groups as distinctive characteristics. For example, a high incidence of common-law marriages and of households headed by women has been thought to be distinctive of Negro family life in this country and has been attributed to the Negro's historical experience of slavery. In actuality, it turns out that such households express essential traits of the culture of poverty and are found among diverse peoples in many parts of the world and among peoples that have had no history of slavery ... its practitioners (of the culture of poverty) exhibit remarkable similarity in the structure of their families, in interpersonal relations, in spending habits, in their whole systems and in their orientation in time.

In contrast to Lewis's opinion, the impact of racism in America figures heavily in analyzing the culture of poverty. Hurley declared that, "The heritage of slavery, racism as an aspect of American life -- along with the concomitant economic deprivation -- have produced misery for the American Negro on such a scale and in such depth that it is impossible for a white man to comprehend it fully." He added that,

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33 R. Hurley, Poverty and Mental Retardation, p. 21.
"The pathological impact on a human being of race prejudice alone, ignoring the added evil of poverty, is impossible to overestimate."34

James Weldon Johnson, an American Negro, supported the reality of Hurley's viewpoint by the following statement. He declared:

This (segregation and discrimination) is the dwarfing, warping, distorting influence which operates upon each and every coloured man in the United States. He is forced to take his outlook on all things, not from the viewpoint of a citizen, or a man, or even a human being, but from the viewpoint of a coloured man.35

Poverty though somewhat diversified yet was found to be similar in many ways and its end results were exactly the same -- human deprivation and psychological distortion. It was discovered that this psychological distortion was a significant contributor to the "self perpetuating" nature of poverty. Irelan explains that profound alienation from the larger society and from other people causes an intense feeling of powerlessness, and a belief in the meaninglessness to struggle. The degradation and spiritual depression of poverty affect every action that makes up the poor man's "life style".36

34 Ibid.


The social definition of the Negro as inferior particularly in American Society contributes to his inferiority. The assertion becomes a factor which aids to produce its own confirmation. The Negro is inferior, because he is ignorant. A question posed was "Why then, don't you give him an education?" Answer, "Because he is inferior," and so a vicious circle marks a complete turn which perpetuates the self-confirming definition. Discrimination means unequal treatment. Unequal treatment results in poverty, which in turn means poor education which produces inferiority, which then breeds discrimination. 37

MacIver and Merton described the situation as the principle of circularity. 38

According to Rein, it is Cloward's view that it is characteristic of our society to define human problems as resulting from personal rather than from institutional inadequacies. 39


38 Ibid. p. 184.

In reports to the President on National Action to Combat Mental Retardation it was stated that, "Many of the mentally retarded are persons who have been reared under conditions in which they have been deprived of the stimulation and learning opportunities necessary to the development of adequate intelligence. They are the product of the urban and rural slums of the nation." 40

The 1962 President's Panel on Mental Retardation stated further:

The poor performance of slum children is related to four broad influences in their development:

--Lack of motivation toward achievement and toward standards of high performance;

--A home environment that fails to develop the modes of thinking and perceiving common to the middle and upper class child;

--A family organization or structure that is emotionally crippling to the child;

--Lack of adequate social facilities in health, education, and welfare. 41

Birch, physician and psychologist at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, will present some highly relevant material on the relationship between poverty, health, and learning failure in a book to be published. 42


Conger stated:

We must make a coordinated, and ever more vigorous effort to attack the social roots, not only of mental retardation as such, but also of much ill health, malnutrition, psychological disorder, social alienation, crime, delinquency, despair, and sometimes revolt; in short an attack on the culture of poverty.43

Dunn said:

Existing behavioral science research indicates that an inadequate environment has a debilitating effect on intellectual development... Too, we have evidence that improvements in intellectual functioning of underprivileged children will be appreciable.44

B. Genetic Versus Environment Controversy

This statement by Dunn is one that portrayed the current recurrence of the ever popular heredity versus environment controversy as related to mental retardation, sometimes called the "battle of nature versus nurture." It would appear according to Brazziel, that the heredity-environment argument seems to errupt every twelve or thirteen years.45

The current controversy was in reference to Dr. Arthur Jensen, a professor of educational psychology at the University of California at Berkeley. His beliefs featured provocative theories such as (1) that there is strong evidence for an


inborn, genetic basis to an intelligence quotient score, and (2) that the failure of compensatory education to raise the IQ's of Black children may reflect a biological inferiority in those children's ability to learn. Jensen reported that Blacks, as a population, score significantly lower on IQ tests than the White population (namely a 15-point gap) or Blacks are born with lower IQ's than Whites. He attributed their lower IQs primarily to their genetic heritage, not to discrimination, poor diet, bad living conditions or inferior schools.

Zach commented that, "psychological, educational, political and racist groups are each interpreting the data to suit their own needs and prejudices..."

Research showed that McGurk of Villanova University, conducted a study with an unvalidated intelligence test of his own design and concluded that "Negroes as a group do not possess as much (capacity for education) as whites as a group."


48 Ibid.

Shuey, a psychologist from Randolph-Macon Woman's College in Lynchburg, Virginia, found Negroes lower in IQ tests than most whites. She unhesitatingly interpreted the facts as pointing "to the presence of some native differences between Negroes and whites as determined by intelligence tests. 50

In the forward to Shuey's book, The Testing of Negro Intelligence, Garret said:

It is a careful and accurate survey which should command attention. Dr. Shuey finds that at each age level and under a variety of conditions, Negroes regularly score below whites. There is to be sure, an overlapping of 10-15 per cent which means that some Negroes achieve high scores. But the mean differences persist and are statistically significant. We are forced to conclude that the regularity and consistency of these results strongly suggest a genetic basis for the differences. I believe that the weight of evidence (biological, historical, and social) supports this judgment. 51

Garrett, McGurk and Shuey all attempted to show that the impoverished environment of the typical Negro could not account for the differences. One study cited by all three was Tanser's 1939 investigation of intelligence among the Negro and white children of Kent County, Ontario, Canada. Tanser found that his white sample obtained a higher average IQ than his Negro sample, and the three "scientific racists" maintained that it was convincing evidence for their posi-

50Ibid. p. 112.

tions since in Kent County, "the social and economic conditions of the whites and Negroes were substantially the same.\textsuperscript{52}

Pettigrew said,

Since Negro Americans do not ever approach the status of a genetically pure "race", they are singularly inappropriate group upon which to test racist theories of inherent intellectual inferiority of the Negroid subspecies.\textsuperscript{53}

It was deemed necessary to investigate supportive evidence in research for the variations in the prevalence of mental retardation rather than to rely on comment exclusively. In the past and probably the present, it was found that those who favored the hereditarian point of view sought their chief support in research findings on three major arguments. First, on intergeneration regression toward the population mean \( \text{IQ} \). For instance Burt found that:

(1) The mean intelligence of the children belonging to each occupational class deviates far less than the mean of the parents from the average for the population as a whole and (2) the intelligence of the individual children within any one class varies over a far wider range than that of their parents.\textsuperscript{54}

This meant that the regression toward the mean and the greater variation of children's intelligence over that

\textsuperscript{52}T. Pettigrew, "Negro American Intelligence," Basic Education for the Disadvantaged Adult.

\textsuperscript{53}Ibid. p. 112,

of their parents contrasted with expectations drawn from an environmental interpretation. If environment were the main determinant of intelligence, the test scores of the children would not regress toward the mean for the entire population. Instead, the children of professional parents would move to higher levels of intelligence, while children in the lower socioeconomic groupings would either remain constant or decline further.\textsuperscript{55}

A second argument for the predominance of genetic factors in socioeconomic variations in intelligence is the relative constancy of IQ levels over generations despite improvements in the educational and economic levels of the general population. Conway commented after discussion on studies by Burt and Floud. She said:

Yet it seems clear that the improvement in social circumstances has in no way produced a rise in the level of intelligence tests. Hence there seems no cogent ground for supposing that the lower averages of children from the lower occupational groups are in any important degree due to economic handicaps.\textsuperscript{56}

The third argument refers to twin and family correlation studies. A favorite technique was to find identical twins (since they would have the same gene structure) who had been reared in different environments. If their IQ's were closely alike the heredity position was supported.

\textsuperscript{55}\textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{56}\textit{Ibid.} p. 81.
The heredity supporters held that since the IQ was genetically determined it should remain fairly constant throughout one's life, and it should also be relatively resistant to environmental changes.\textsuperscript{57} Twin studies which have strongly supported the role of heredity in intelligence have been done by Burt and Conway, Shields, Newman, Freeman and Holzinger.\textsuperscript{58}

Shields studied only identical twins who had been reared apart. His population included twenty-five female and thirteen male sets of twins, most of whom were over twenty years of age. They came from all parts of England, and twenty-five of them had been separated during the first year of life, most of them not long after birth. Information was obtained on the home environment, and according to Shields, often the environment was quite different for each of the twins. The correlations between twins were .77 on a non-verbal intelligence test and .74 on a verbal test.\textsuperscript{59} According to comments by Farber, the correlations indicated a great similarity in intellectual development despite the lack of common experience.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{57}Zach, "The IQ Test: Does It Make Black Children Unequal?" \textit{School Review}, p. 252.

\textsuperscript{58}Farber, \textit{Mental Retardation}, p. 81.


\textsuperscript{60}Farber, \textit{Mental Retardation}, p. 82.
Newman, Freeman, and Holzinger's investigations involved nineteen pairs who had been reared apart. Individual tests given to the twins resulted in a correlation of .67, while identical twins reared together were found by Newman and his associates to have a .91 correlation. The average difference between members of pairs reared apart was 8.2IQ points. IQ differences correlated .51 with judged discrepancy in social environment. For comparison, Newman and his associates found that nonidentical twins reared together also showed a .74 correlation in IQ, which was similar to the findings for identical twins reared apart. This investigation showed some contribution by the environment to intellectual development, yet it emphasized the role of heredity.

Erlenmeyer-Kimling and Jarvik reviewed fifty-two studies based on intelligence test scores of the general population and have concluded that "the composite data are compatible with the polygenic hypothesis which is generally favored in accounting for inherited differences in mental ability." This group of investigators found that median correlations between parent and child, between siblings reared together, and between dizygotic (fraternal) twins were all around .50. The median correlation for unrelated

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61 H. Newman, F. Freeman, and K. Holzinger, "Twins: A Study of Heredity and Environment" cited by Farber, Mental Retardation, p. 82.
persons reared apart was -.01. However, the median correlation between monozygotic (identical) twins reared together was .87 and those brought up apart .75.62

Vandenberg also made a review of IQ studies. By computing heritability indices based on differences in correlations for identical and fraternal twin pairs, Vandenberg estimated heritability of most factors related to intelligence to be around .6. The estimate was somewhat lower than that proposed by other investigators (around .8).63 Again, the findings implied that heredity played a significant role in intellectual development and social structure.

Jensen did not fail to make use of those twin studies to a greater or lesser degree. He selected three of those studies and computed a simple heritability index involving an analysis of variance. He did not deny the influence of environment; on the contrary, he made continued reference to its significance. For example, he said, "The best we can ever hope for is that true merit, given equal opportunity, will act as a basis for the natural sorting process" among individuals. What he did emphasize, said Zach, is

62L. Erlenmeyer-Kimling and Lissy F. Jarvik, "Genetics and Intelligence: A Review," p. 142 cited by Farber in Mental Retardation, p. 82.

that too much stock has been put into educational environment as a means to overcome intellectual deficit. He then claimed to have proved environment accounted for no more than 20 percent of the development of the mature human's intelligence and that the other 80 percent was a product of heredity or biological influences.  

Jensen's colleagues pointed out inadequacies and cant in his claims. Deutsch and a group of associates at the Institute for Developmental Studies at New York University identified seventeen statistical transpositions in Jensen's -- all in favor of his heritability thesis. Other investigators noted that Jensen failed to analyze thoroughly one of the three classic co-twin studies namely that of Newman et al. Jensen had used this particular study as the mainstay for his heritability index.

Furthermore, some psychologists and educators claimed that Jensen's article supported a racist position. Two interpretations resulted. First, it is possible by misinterpretation, to obtain "proof" that, no matter what compensatory education the Blacks receives he remains basically inferior in intellect. Secondly, Jensen's claims would

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absolve the schools for the markedly poor academic achievement of the black child. The realization might serve to lessen efforts to improve education for black children.66

Zach said one conclusion of the Jensen furor was that Jensen presented some highly relevant, professionally sound material which does have important implications for education. It was unfortunate that it was presented within the context of a racial issue, since the emotional impact of this tended to obscure his significant contributions.67

White House domestic advisor, Daniel Moynihan, when briefing the President's Cabinet on who Jensen was and what he was saying, made several comments about Jensen. He said that Dr. Jensen was thoroughly a respectable man, that he was in no sense a racist--but that his theory was merely a hypothesis; that there was no direct knowledge of genetic basis of intelligence, only inferential knowledge; that nobody knew what a "smart gene" looked like.68

Nevertheless, Jensen was found to have many allies including the Noble prize Winner, physicist William Shockley, who has applied himself to promoting research into genetics

67 Ibid.
68 Neary, "A Scientist's Variations on a Disturbing Racial Theme" Life Magazine, p. 58D.
and intelligence, and who said, "There is a difference in the wiring patterns" of white and black minds.69

One fact that caused some embarrassment to racists theories was that the degree of white ancestry does not relate to Negro IQ scores. Among intellectually superior Negroes, for example, the proportions of those with varying degrees of white ancestry correspond closely with those of the total Negro American population. It was found that the brightest Negro child yet reported -- with a tested IQ of 200 -- had no traceable Caucasian heritage whatsoever. "Race per se," concludes Martin Jenkins, "is not a limited factor in psychometric intelligence."70

The environmental position was supported by studies of social mobility, social factors in IQ, changes in IQ of individuals over time, and findings on the amount of variance of IQ scores of children "explained" by parental scores.71 A brief exposure treating those various factors as evidence of environment were cited. Burt's position that social structure results from genetic differences was weakened by his findings on the relationship between intelligence and social mobility. For example, Burt and his colleagues

69Ibid.


71Farber, Mental Retardation, p. 90.
obtained data from about 200 children of normal intelligence as part of their longitudinal studies of children in London. With mobility data on intellectually superior and subnormal children, they found that first of all, those children whose intelligence was below the minimum estimated for the occupational class to which they were born indicated no upward mobility; instead, about a third of them dropped to a lower social class. In contrast, about 40 percent who had an intelligence above the maximum estimated by Burt for the occupational class rose above this class. It was indicated however, that intelligence was not the only factor involved in social mobility. Poor motivation contributed more to downward social mobility than intelligence did. Neither was it motivation itself sufficient to promote upward mobility. It was the combination of high intelligence and strong motivation that promoted almost all of the upward mobility.\(^\text{72}\)

A "good home background" was a secondary factor in upward mobility. Burt said:

In the case of the child of the lower classes what chiefly count are the social aspirations, the ambitious aims, and the constant urging that often characterizes the most earnest workingclass parents; with children from higher levels it is rather the intellectual and cultural character of the home that helps.\(^\text{73}\)

\(^\text{72}\) C. Burt, "Intelligence and Social Mobility," British Journal of Statistical Psychology, (1961), pp. 2-24, cited by Farber in Mental Retardation, p. 83.

\(^\text{73}\) Ibid.
Halsey questions Burt and Conway's analysis on several points. One being the importance of intelligence even as selective factors in upward social mobility. Halsey suggested that intelligence plays only a small role in determining social and occupational status. Instead, educational and economic opportunity appeared to be the major factors in the distribution of persons in the social structure.

Social factors in intelligence also supported the environmental position. It makes little difference to the environmentalists that individuals with identical hereditary traits tend to produce similar IQ scores on tests or to react to illness in similar ways. Farber commented that, in fact, only a small minority of the population consisted of identical twins, and these twins differ widely from other individuals in the population as well. Heredity accounted for only about one-fourth of the variance in comparisons between parents and children, between siblings, and between husband and wife. Heredity counted for even less explained variance in dealing with differences between social classes and racial and ethnic groups.

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75 Farber, Mental Retardation, p. 84-85.
Another argument used by environmentalists was the effect of age on intelligence test scores. In his review of literature on Negro intelligence, Pettigrew pointed out that when thorough socio-economic controls are applied, there is little difference in intelligence test scores between Caucasian and Negro children through kindergarten. But, as the children progress in school, the difference between Caucasian and Negro children increases.\(^76\)

Research showed repeatedly that in the first two years of life there are no significant racial differences in either psychomotor development or intelligence. At the youngest, pre-school ages, race differences in IQ means are minimal. Racist theorists however denied the importance of the findings on two conflicting grounds. They had recourse to two opinions. They either claimed that infant tests had no predictive value whatsoever for later IQ scores, or cited an older study by McGraw that found Negro infants retarded in comparison with white infants. Neither argument was to be found adequate. Instead, two more investigations showed convincing evidence that properly administered tests did predict later scores. (Incidentally the 1931 McGraw study based on European test is no longer regarded as a critical experiment.)\(^77\)


\(^{77}\)Pettigrew, "Negro American Intelligence", Basic Education for the Disadvantaged Adult, p. 118-119
A second later Northern investigation showed little or no lag in intellectual development through kindergarten and five years of age when thorough socioeconomic controls were applied. 78

Since many Negro children drop noticeably in measured IQ after a few years of inferior schooling have passed, a partial reason was advanced. One factor was found due to the heavier reliance placed by intelligence tests at these ages upon verbal skills, skills that are particularly influenced by a constricted environment. For example, one Southern study of "verbal destitution" discovered that those Negro college students most retarded in a reading clinic came from small, segregated high schools and exhibited language patterns typical of the only adult models they had encountered--poorly educated parents, teachers and ministers. 79

Another factor cited for the declining test average over the school years was the nature of the school themselves. Deutsch gave the example of an assignment to "write a page on 'The Trip I Took'" given to lower class children in a ghetto school who had never been more than 25 city blocks from home. Deutsch believed, "The school represents a foreign outpost in an encapsulated community which is

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78 Ibid. p. 119.
79 Ibid. p. 119.
surrounded by what for the child, is unknown and foreign."  

Anastasi noted a tendency for IQ scores to diminish with increasing age among groups who had been considered as environmentally deprived, such as canal-boat and gypsy children in England and mountain and other rural isolated children in the United States. She also noted that the large number of children raised in families with reduced parental contact may influence performance on intelligence tests.  

Reduced parental contact and disrupted family life, in many cases was found to be the nature of many lower status Negro youths which added to the slum's lack of environmental stimulation. Besides reduced parental contact, many of them were from fatherless homes. Deutsch and Stetler each demonstrated that Negro children reared in such broken homes scored significantly below comparable Negro children from intact homes on intelligence measure.  

The relevance of family relationships for intellectual development was indicated in studies by Honzik. Persons were examined at the age of twenty-one months and (with intervening testings) again at thirty years of age. Her data showed

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80 Ibid.


82 Pettigrew, "Negro American Intelligence," Basic Education for the Disadvantaged Adult, p. 120.
the following family factors (reported at twenty-one months) to be predictive of high scores at thirty years of age: (a) a friendly relationship between mother and father (predictive for males); (b) parental concern for the child's educational achievement; (c) close father-child relationship (predictive for males); (d) parental concern with the child's health (predictive for females). Marital compatibility between the parents showed a significant decline in predictive effectiveness of IQ between the ages of eighteen and thirty years. The report showed that after the individual left his parents' home, the emotional problems in his family declined in their effect on his intellectual performance.83

It was noted by Reed and Reed that the major difference between the environmentalists and the hereditarians is their belief as to the extent to which the maximum of individual potentiality in intelligence is actually attained. The hereditarians held that people tended to approach their maximum intellectual development, while the environmentalists regarded individuals as capable of attaining much more than their apparent levels of intellectual functioning.84


in her study of the relationship between the home environment and the school, reported that the correlation between parental encouragement and the child's IQ was .60. The correlation between parental education and the child's IQ was in the same direction but somewhat smaller (.42).  

It was cited that although social aspects of mental retardation ought not be ignored, it would be a mistake to attribute retardation only to social relations as such. For example, Pasamanick and Knobloch found a greater dispersion of infant intelligence among Negro babies than among Caucasians. The finding was consistent with tendencies of Negro mothers to vary more widely in age, to have dietary deficiencies, and to have less prenatal care than Caucasian mothers.

A second major position taken by the environmentalists and supported by evidence from investigations of environmental influence on intelligence was that of instability of IQ. It appeared that most evidence concerning the instability of IQ scores was found in investigations of migration and special class training.

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85 Elizabeth Fraser, Home Environment and the School (London: University of London Press, 1959), cited by Farber in Mental Retardation, p. 86.

Klineberg's investigation offered a source of evidence relating to the instability of the IQ or of intellectual functioning. It concerned the performance of children who migrate. In the 1930's Klineberg evaluated over 3,000 ten-to-twelve-year-old Harlem Negroes on an array of intelligence tests. He found that the longer southern-born children lived in New York City, the higher their intelligence test scores were. Those children who had lived in New York City, for a number of years approached the levels attained by New York-born Negroes.87

In 1951, Lee replicated the Klineberg study in Philadelphia. He analyzed the scores of the children as they progressed through the schools. Although the southern Negro migrants did not quite reach the scores attained by the Philadelphia-born Negroes, with each grade they completed in Philadelphia they gained regularly in IQ. Moreover, the younger the children were when they entered the Philadelphia schools, the greater was their general increase in IQ.88

A third environmentalist's point is the low amount of variance in children's IQ scores explained statistically


by the scores for both parents. According to Erlenmeyer and Jarvik, "The average genetic correlation between parent and child...is .50." 89

Richardson in her review of studies of mental resemblance in married couples reported a range of correlation from .42 to .59 and a median of .49. Samples of the studies represented a wide range of socioeconomic characteristics. It was concluded that social and cultural factors predominate in determining the degree of children's intelligence. 90

A final conclusion to the heredity and environment controversy would seem to indicate that heredity does play a significant role in intellectual development and social structure.

According to an analysis by Farber:

The norms and values in the social structure determine what is considered "intelligent" or "stupid" and social status is based on these standards. However, birth and behavior do have genetic components, and individuals who are gifted genotypically have a greater probability of success, all other things being equal. Of course, all other things are not equal, and the relationship between heredity, general cultural environment, and social stratification is highly complex. 91


90 Helen Richardson, "Studies of Mental Resemblance Between Husbands and Wives and Between Friends," Psychological Bulletin, XXXVI (1939), pp. 104-120, cited by Farber in Mental Retardation, p. 88

91 Farber, Mental Retardation, pp. 90-91.
C. Projects and Programs for Prevention

The third purpose of this paper was to cite various comments, current programs and projects that society planned to use to attack and prevent mental retardation. It seemed feasible to mention aspects concerned with related factors of poverty programs, health and welfare programs and education.

Present welfare for the reduction of or accommodation to the problem was under attack for failures to deal adequately with the problem of poverty. What was said in Abel-Smith’s critique of the British welfare state, a program presumed to be far more advanced than the American service state, could be aptly applied to the American welfare system. He concluded:

...that the major beneficiaries...have been the middle classes, that the middling income groups get more from the State than the lower income groups, that taxation often hits the poor harder than the well-to-do, and in general that the middle classes receive good standards of welfare while working people receive a Spartan minimum.92

In an analysis of American’s social services Hacker supported the conclusions formed by Abel-Smith. He commented:

Urban renewal programs tear down slums but they have

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not been notable for raising low-rent housing after the bulldozers have left the scene. And price supports go chiefly to upper-income farmers rather than to those at the marginal level. Activities such as these tend to benefit well-organized interest groups or at best the middle class as a whole.\textsuperscript{93}

New training programs under the Federal Manpower Development and Training Act, as well as the Job Corps under the Economic Opportunity Act, were aimed at rooting out the hard-core poverty-stricken who are marginally employed, unemployed, or underemployed and provide them with skills and jobs. Preliminary reports issued by the Labor Department indicated that the retraining program under the Manpower Development and Training Act had favored those with the greatest amount of education -- perhaps those who were most able to secure jobs on their own initiative. A number of programs had been designed to assure minimum wages, compensate the recently unemployed, provide transfer payments in the form of social security and other insurance programs, and the residual program designed to make financial aid available when all other programs have failed; namely, public assistance, and the more recent efforts to reverse poverty by retraining. Assessment of those programs indicated they were distressingly

inequate to deal with the scope of the problem of poverty. Rein said, the most telling characteristics that the programs shared in common was their failure to reach those groups which really were in poverty. 94

According to Miller of the Bureau of the Census, "poverty in its truest sense is more than want; it is want mixed with a lack of aspiration." He stressed the many physical amenities the poor enjoy -- homes, television sets, washing machines, telephones, etc. It is the failure of the poor to have hope for themselves and their children. The American attack on poverty, consequently, is not committed to protecting the security of personal income against job loss due to old age, illness, and temporary loss of work, or to "raising the levels of the poor, as was the case in the Thirties." Its underlying rationale is a search for new approaches which will "increase the opportunity for the children of the poor to improve their status." 95

Laura Foreman, in a series of yearend articles dealing with top problems facing the State of Louisiana and elsewhere in the 1970s was in complete accord with Miller. She said millions of dollars are being poured into the prob-


lem of poverty. But even optimistic experts admitted the methods now in use, though necessary, are stopgap measures to alleviate poverty, not end it. 96

Vincent, director of Total Community Action, the OEO antipoverty agency in New Orleans, answered the following questions put to him. "Why haven't the combined governmental millions solved the poverty problem? What are the future prospects of the poor?" Vincent replied:

I can't be too optimistic about solving the problems of poverty. Taking one agency and calling it a poverty agency does not solve the problem of poverty. It does not get at the root causes of poverty. The solution lies with changes in institutions, a change in the attitude of the community. You can't put more money in a man's pocket and change poverty. Money alone won't solve the problem. I remember when public housing projects were built in New Orleans. They were beautiful examples of public housing---they didn't change the people.

They are still getting $110 a month on welfare,... No one ever did anything about the educational level in the neighborhood. No one ever tried to deal with the basic problems that were bothering these people. The city, the state, the nation, must bring the poor---especially the racial minorities --- into the mainstream of the economic system if the dismal poverty cycle is ever to be broken.

There is no real movement to bring low income individuals into the employment picture, and unemployment continues to be twice that in the low income areas as it is in the city as a whole.

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The schools need to be integrated. They are, in fact segregated. Schools you find in the poverty target areas are 100 per cent black and they're just as poor as they were 10 years ago...

You've got to give preferential treatment to minority groups...I know the kind of radical changes that are needed, but the community just doesn't have the commitment it needs at this time... The commitment isn't there. It's not there on the local level. There's not a national commitment. And until we have a national commitment, we'll play a round with the problem of poverty.97

Programs to overcome the abyss of hope and the abyss of aspiration to which the poor have succumbed should be supported. Therefore, to reverse the problem of poverty, what is needed is skill in economic participation, which can only be achieved through expanded education for the poor, motivation for economic participation, and opportunity for economic participation.98

One major approach for the reduction of poverty was found in the preparation of youth for work. Emphasis on training and education was also found in the Grey Area Projects sponsored by the Ford Foundation and in the delinquency-prevention program sponsored by the Presidents Committee on Delinquency and Youth Crime.99

97 Ibid.
99 Ibid.
Recommendations such as training, job referral but most important of all creating new jobs, the need to reverse the equation of public squalor and private affluence were deemed necessary. Equitable distribution of resources, reassessment of the Social Security System and a mechanism of redistribution without stigma was a critical issue but a possible solution to the problem of poverty: breakup of the poverty cycle that often initiates mental retardation. In New York City, the Mayor, in 1968, established a municipal Office of Mental Retardation, to increase the effectiveness of city agencies in serving the mentally retarded and their families and also to open employment opportunities for retarded persons in city jobs.\textsuperscript{100}

Young announced in 1967 that the National Urban League, the National Association for Retarded Children, and the Family Service Association were working on the formulation of a program to combine the expertise and knowledge of each of the agencies in a special effort directed at the mentally retarded and their families. He said the over-all objectives were (1) to help families in low-income areas with mentally retarded members to utilize existing services,

\textsuperscript{100}City of New York: Report from the Mayor's Committee on Mental Retardation. (New York City, New York, 1968) cited by L. Lippman in Community Organization: USA, in Mental Retardation by Wortiz, p. 245.
to lessen the high incidence of prematurity and poor health habits.

Services of voluntary agencies were cited as important for diagnostic and remedial services. For example, the National Association for Retarded Children, the National Urban League, and the Family Service Association were enlightened that:

They could assume the tasks of screening target populations to determine individual needs; of locating families in distress because of the presence within the family unit of a retarded child; of awakening legitimate desires for help; of directing children to the proper diagnostic and testing facilities; and later making referrals to appropriate special education classes, to training facilities and special medical services. They could undertake programs for counseling and educating parents for proper attitudes toward the retarded child, which should always accompany actual care for the child. Where adequate services are lacking, the voluntary agencies should advise parents on how to organize themselves to petition for services they are entitled to under the law and how to form pressure groups, the most efficient way for citizens to ensure their rights.\textsuperscript{104}

Young said that it was in that latter area in which the National Association for Retarded Children had functioned most effectively in the past and brought immeasurable relief to distressed families.\textsuperscript{105}

Research in the area of poverty and mental retardation has shown that education is of paramount importance.

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.
in the war on poverty or at most a necessary pre-condition to breaking that cycle. As recent researches have shown, adequate education alone -- without parallel gains in overcoming barriers to opportunity in employment, housing and political participation -- will not, in and of itself, guarantee to end the vicious cycle of poverty. Nevertheless, it was felt by some researchers that "Although the systems of public education in America are certainly not solely responsible for the failure of the poor to learn and for their over-representation in Special Education classes for the mentally retarded, they are more responsible than any other single institution in our society." 106

Deutsch supported this view:

The responsibility for such large groups of children showing great scholastic retardation, the high dropout rate, and to some extent the delinquency problems, must rest with the failure of the schools to promote the proper acculturation of the children. Though some of the responsibility may be shared by the larger society, the school, as the institution of that society, offers the only mechanisms by which the job can be done. 107

MacIver likewise declared:

The school's function is to educate and where the family and the community fail to promote the social adjustment and the psychological development necessary

106 Hurley, Poverty and Mental Retardation, p. 91.

to prepare the young to receive the education the school offers, it must step in to provide it within the area of its capacity. 108

The late Senator Robert Kennedy stated, part of the problem is one of educational methods: "We pass bills and appropriate money and assuage our consciences, and local school systems keep right on doing things the way they've done them for decades. The kids in the ghetto will never recover unless we do something right now." 109

Wilkerson, a professor of education said, "Away with pseudoscientific theories about why children cannot learn, forward with the meaningful teachings that makes learning possible. 110

Responses to comments such as those are becoming evident through early childhood programs, compensatory education, and programs for the disadvantaged. Passow and also Weikart have done extensive research in accumulating information on some of the current projects. 111 - 112


112 D. P. Weikart, "Preschool Programs: Preliminary
A new concept of intelligence is evolving. The studies of the learning process conducted over the past twenty years have made it abundantly clear that those who are not now learning properly -- the bottom 30 to 50 percent of the public school population can in fact learn, and can learn a great deal, if they are properly taught from the beginning.113

Research indicated that the most important experiences are those of early childhood. The richer the experiences in those early years, the greater the development of intelligence. The Swiss child psychologist Jean Piaget said, "The more a child has seen and heard, the more he wants to see and hear."114 And the less he has seen and heard, the less he wants -- and is able -- to see and hear and understand.

For minority groups, particularly the Negro in America, said Wilkerson, the school's responsibility is to win the cooperation of its ghetto clientele. Home visits by teachers could contribute greatly, and also to the needed re-education of professional staff. Sincere efforts to make black parents welcome in the school and to involve them in its program could help. Most fundamentally, of course, is for school people genuinely to respect their black pupils and to educate


114 Ibid.
them effectively.\textsuperscript{115}

The development of relevant curricula and appropriate instructional methods, positive expectations by teachers, and cooperative relations with the home -- are a few solutions for improved education by the schools.\textsuperscript{116}


\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.
Chapter III
Conclusions and Summary

In a provocative analysis of the relation of poverty and mental retardation, Hurley saw lack of cultural opportunity as only one aspect of an interrelated group of factors, others include bad physical environment, lack of medical services and exposure to disease. He suggested that the middle-class orientation of investigators had tended to minimize those factors in the etiology of mental retardation and suggested further that the problem had been improperly centered in the field of medicine which actually was concerned with only the smallest part of it -- the severely and profoundly retarded who comprised only a fraction of the retarded population. The rest properly should be the concern of social scientists since the great majority of the retarded group are those whose conditions was due to an inadequate and unbalanced distribution of services.

Duhl said, "Poverty is not to be seen as merely a passive condition. It does not simply fail to provide the stimulation essential to healthy development, but actively imperils the physical well-being of the individual." Duhl also saw mental retardation as an end product of a whole series of processes that took place not only in the individual
but also in society as a whole. 117

A wide variety of studies indicated that children were most vulnerable to the varied stresses created by poverty. In the most critical period of early development they were exposed to a variety of insults which affected both physical and mental growth. When they reached school age, a significant proportion performed poorly, either because of cerebral deficit, lack of opportunity, lost learning time and inadequate experience, or a combination of any or all of these. Inadequate educational experiences and continued exposure to environmental stress raised the number of those performing under expected limits until a maximum number is reached in early adolescence. Then, through continued maturation, accumulated experience, better opportunities, or adaptation, most often the somewhat retarded individuals born poor became indistinguishable from most of their age peers of similar background. But in the years of exposure and stress they lost years of normal development and the opportunity to grow and to learn at their highest human potential. Their individual loss was also the community's loss. 118


118 Ibid.
Duhl concluded:

The problem is not doing something just for the patient who is retarded, but to do something about the total society which either makes the retarded or controls the inadequate system in which he lives. ¹¹⁹

Summary

In summary, it has been the purpose of this report to present data from a variety of sources, all of which point to the fact that poverty is related to mental retardation in various aspects.

The data lend support to that school of thought which contributes to experiential as opposed to solely genetic factors. Finally, predicting the shape of educational and health changes on youth as well as on society as a whole is a difficult one, primarily, because of one great unknown: the fate of programs currently being developed and implemented. The field of mental retardation is in a new era, ripe for further research. The problem of poverty and mental retardation is a challenge as well as a legitimate concern for humanitarians.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.
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