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Does being culturally disadvantaged have a direct relationship to the entering behavior of first graders in the inner city?

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DOES BEING CULTURALLY DISADVANTAGED HAVE A DIRECT RELATIONSHIP TO THE ENTERING BEHAVIOR OF FIRST GRADERS IN THE INNER CITY?

by

Sister Elaine Wirth, O.S.F.

A RESEARCH PAPER SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN EDUCATION (READING SPECIALIST) AT CARDINAL STRITCH COLLEGE

Milwaukee, Wisconsin 1971
This research paper has been approved for the Graduate Committee of Cardinal Stritch College by

Sister Maria Clete (Adviser)

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Significance of the Problem

When one considers that almost one-sixth of the population of the entire nation resides in cities; that between 1940 and 1950 eighty per cent of the national growth in population occurred in metropolitan areas; and that between 1950 and 1957 ninety-seven per cent of the national growth occurred in those same areas, the dimensions and urgency of urban problems are readily apparent.¹

In 1950, approximately one child in ten in the fourteen largest cities of the United States was culturally disadvantaged. In 1960, the number had risen to one in three. Riessman estimated in 1962 that one in every two children will be labeled "culturally disadvantaged" by 1970.²

The number of culturally disadvantaged children has increased to the degree that they are a major portion of the school population. The present school system was essentially designed to serve the child of middle-class society.³

²Ibid., p. 2. ³Ibid., p. 3.
Schools are failing to reach the inner-city child. The problem, because of the above stated statistics, is becoming acute. The problem of these first-grade children and their entering behavior must be met by educators. Is cultural disadvantage directly responsible for their entering behavior? Is cultural disadvantage the cause of the abundance of failures the educational system is experiencing in this population of inner-city first graders? Does educational research have sufficient proof to place the massive numbers of failures and serious retardation at the doorstep of the disadvantaged culture of this group of children?

Limitations of the Study

The criticisms in regard to the existence of a disadvantaged culture and its effect, if any, on the behavior of inner-city children are opinions only. However, the opinions are those of experts. Their opinions are worth seeking out because they are authorities in the fields of education, psychology, sociology, and medicine.

The opinions presented are those which were gathered by this researcher through the facilities of the Cardinal Stritch College Library; the Columbus Public Library; the Ohio University Library; the Ohio State University Library; and the Xavier University Library, Cincinnati, Ohio.

The opinions found were both positive and negative in nature. They were in agreement that first graders of the
inner city do enter school with problems of cultural disadvantage. Basically, they agreed that the problems were due in various ways to the child's environment.

Statement of the Problem

Specifically, the writer investigated research dealing with cultural disadvantage and the entering behavior of the inner-city first grader.

The research is limited because most of the methods available for assessing entering behavior of these first-grade inner-city children are much more favorable to children of middle-class culture. These children's entering behavior is compared to norms standardized by the entering behavior of middle-class children. There does not seem to be an accurate way to assess behavior and relate it concretely to cultural disadvantage. The fact that the numbers of disadvantaged children are increasing rapidly and that education is not meeting their needs has made the writer want to ascertain whether experts agree that the basis of the problem lies in the cultural disadvantage of this group or in the way schools assess and deal with the disadvantaged.

Definition of Important Terms

*Inner city.*--The heart or center of the city where housing is expensive and inadequate is the inner city. There is high mobility. People who live here are hungry, on relief,
and often represent broken homes. Crimes, violence, sex, drug abuse and alcoholism flourish.¹

The culturally disadvantaged.--This term refers to a group or population who have in common such characteristics as low economic status and low social status, low educational achievement, tenuous or no employment, limited participation in community activities, and limited ready potential for upward mobility. They are referred to as "culturally deprived," the "socio-economically deprived," the "socially disadvantaged," the "chronically poor," the "poverty stricken," the "culturally alienated," and so on. These are people who are handicapped by depressed social and economic status. In many cases, they are further handicapped by ethnic and cultural caste status. They are more and more concentrated in the decaying hearts of our great metropolitan centers.²

Entering behavior.--This term describes the behavior a student must have acquired before he can acquire particular new terminal behaviors. Entering behavior describes the present status of the student's knowledge and skill in reference to a future status the teacher wants him to attain. Entering behavior refers to specific observable performances;

²Ibid.
it is of a generally comprehensive nature. We can simply call entering behavior readiness. This writer wishes for this behavior to mean a first-grade child's readiness for all types of learning, not simply reading readiness alone. There is a tremendous amount of behavior for learning that is not dependent on reading. Readiness to read is only one of a group of desirable, important behaviors. Among these would be auditory skills and verbal skills. This readiness or entering behavior is a product of maturation and training (or learning). Descriptions of entering behavior and terminal performances explicitly state the teacher's expectations and responsibilities; by using such descriptions we avoid the vagueness of the term "readiness" and the consequent irresponsibility. Entering behavior refers to behavior the student must have acquired before he can acquire a new terminal performance; it refers to the present status of knowledge of a particular student in relation to some future status the teacher wants him to attain. ¹

Design of the Study

This research paper is a descriptive survey of the literature concerning cultural disadvantage and its relationship to the entering behavior of first-grade children in the inner city.

The writer has limited the data gathered to experts' opinions in the United States, and has concentrated on children of first-grade age in the inner city.

There is only one clearly defined thought on the subject and that is that cultural disadvantage does affect these children adversely. The children are retarded in many ways because of conditions in their culture. They come to first grade already months behind their middle-class peers.

The writer has attempted to gather the existing materials available on the subject, analyze the data presented by authorities in the fields of education, psychology, sociology, and medicine, and to interpret their findings in clear, precise terms.

The data have been gathered from books, periodicals, professional journals, with emphasis on the most current material possible.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Authorities Who View Cultural Disadvantage as a Deficit

Roberts says that a child's potential to learn is affected not only by the culture in which the child is raised, by the ethnic sub-culture to which he is born, by the socio-economic position of his family in the social structure, by his early experience in learning activity, but also by the school and the teacher, who may, through inhibiting procedures, decrease the child's capacity to use his learning potential.¹

Deutsch says the disadvantaged child does come to first grade with a background that will affect his readiness for the demands of school.

The overwhelming find of studies on the relationship between social class and learning, school performance, and the like, is that children from backgrounds of social marginality enter the first grade already behind their middle-class counterpart in skills highly related to scholastic achieve-

mente. They are simply less prepared to meet the demands of the classroom situation.

For example, all peoples have difficulties in spanning cultural discontinuities, and the entrance of the child into school for the first time places him in an environment which, in many respects, is discontinuous with his home.

For the lower-class child, there is not the same contiguity or continuity that there is for the middle-class child.¹

Tyler, Director, Center for Behavioral Sciences, Stanford, California, made the following assessment of causes for disadvantage at the National Conference on Education of the Disadvantaged:

Educational disadvantages are of many sorts, and an individual child may suffer from one or more of them. Among the common handicaps to learning are: limited early experience in learning in the home and neighborhood; no encouragement given to learning; lack of confidence in one's ability to learn; limitations in early language development; lack of attractive examples of learning in the home or neighborhood that would serve to stimulate learning; lack of supporting materials and facilities in the home, neighborhood, or school, such as places for study, books, art objects, musical performances. Further common handicaps are imposed when values instilled in the home are in conflict with values assumed in the school, when the content of school learning is perceived by the child as irrelevant to his life, interests and needs, or when the child suffers from inadequate nutrition, ill health, or physical and mental disabilities. These educational disadvantages may result from various conditions such as poverty, a broken home, a low educational level in the home or

neighborhood, or the fact that the English language is not used in the home. Or, they may be caused by delinquency or neglect in the child's home or neighborhood, by family ill health, or by limited community services in the areas of education, health, recreation, and culture.¹

The patterns of problems are different among different schools, but the tragic impact on the child remains whenever he suffers serious educational limitations. The evidence obtained from current investigations indicates that for most disadvantaged children, the gap between their educational attainment and those of average children continues to widen with each school year. Children from a slum are commonly a year behind their more fortunate age mates at four years old; by age 12, they are commonly three years or more behind.

These children lack:

(1) experience in discriminating sense impressions, particularly those of sound and sight which provide a basis for language learning; (2) extensive oral language experience at ages two to five involving vocabulary and syntax as an important basis for learning to read; (3) positive parental and peer attitude toward school learning which is a factor influencing children's confidence and efforts; (4) early success in learning which builds motivation for continued learning.²

Deutsch definitely feels that the inner-city child is faced with educational demands that he cannot meet. Deutsch


²Ibid.
says that environment plays a major role in development of cognitive skills and of the functional use of intellectual capabilities, such as learning how to learn. The assumption is that processes develop as a result of either the interaction between the neural substrate and the environmental stimuli, or as a result of the impact of the external stimuli on the neural substrate.

The lower-class and slum environment contribute fewer, less well timed, or less adequate stimuli to cognitive development than do middle- and upper-class environments.

Cognitive development proceeds by stages and probably these stages follow a consistent order. In the lower class these developmental stages are found lacking when the child comes to school.

Some kinds of skills and abilities are basic to others, as visual discrimination must develop before reading can be acquired. The disadvantaged child lacks these basic skills on which to build.

The assumption is that the proper task of early childhood education of the disadvantaged is (1) the identification of the stimulation lacks in the environment; (2) the diagnosis of the areas of retardation in cognitive development of the children; (3) the prescription of particular stimuli, strategies, and techniques for their presentation in order to accelerate the development of the retarded functions;
and (4) the evaluation of the efficiency of the techniques used.

Identification involves some knowledge about slum environment, family structure in various disadvantaged groups, child-rearing practices, and the atmosphere in different homes.

Large groups of children from different background categories must be tested in order to obtain some picture of strengths and weaknesses to be found in different populations. On what level does one seek deficits? If only more complex areas such as reading are analyzed, then the factors which may contribute to deficits might be missed. On the other hand, if only smallest definable components such as visual perception of the diagonal are measured, then a great deal of time might be spent in seeking procedures to train a child in a skill that might not be important to overall functioning and perhaps would develop as a by-product of some other training procedure.

We must formulate curriculum techniques and diagnostic instruments to bring about stimulation of functions found to be retarded. Then disadvantaged children can produce performances that overlap the middle-class norms.\(^1\)

\(^1\)Deutsch, *Disadvantaged Child*, pp. 379-384.
Language deficiencies of the disadvantaged child

The following are language deficiencies of the disadvantaged child according to Raph. She says that research to date indicates that the process of language acquisition for culturally disadvantaged children in contrast to that of middle-class children is more subject to:

- a lack of vocal stimulation during infancy,
- a paucity of experiences in conversation with more verbally mature adults in the first three or four years of life,
- severe limitations in the opportunities to develop mature cognitive behavior, and
- the types of emotional encounters which result in the restricting of the children's conceptual and verbal skills.

Distinctive qualities of their language and speech include:

- a deficit in the auditory-vocal modality greater than in the visual-motor areas;
- a meagerness of quantity and quality of verbal expression, which serves to depress intellectual functioning as they grow older; and
- a slower rate and lower level of articulatory maturation.

Riessman also finds that disadvantaged children have deficiencies in language development. They are less able to make use of standard English in representing and interpreting their feelings, their experiences and objects in their environment. This occurs not only in speech articulation but in general language usage. Their perceptual styles and perceptual habits are inadequate and irrelevant to demands of academic efficiency. They fail to develop a high degree of dependence on standard verbal and written language forms.

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Children viewed as retarded merely fail to use language in a manner which facilitates school learning. Many children show marked lack of involvement with, attention to, and concentration on the content of their academic experiences. There are few academic experiences which commit them to deep involvement. They add to this less motivation to achieve high grades. But as important as attitudes toward school, are their poor attitudes toward self and other determinants of achievement toward upward mobility.¹

Loretan and Umans cite very specific lacks they have found in the disadvantaged child. They say the child designated as disadvantaged differs from the advantaged in language development, self-concept, and social skills as well as attitude toward schooling and society. He has fewer interests than the middle-class child. His forms of communication, unlike those of other children entering school, tend to consist mostly of gestures, sounds (non-words), and local words. Just as he has inadequate linguistic skills of expression, so has he inadequate receptive skills. He does not hear sounds as they are pronounced. He tends to "close out" many noises around him (including the teacher's voice). When he does hear voices, the speaker's words do not necessarily mean to the child what they mean to the speaker. He does not feel the need to communicate through language. In

¹Riessman, *Culturally Deprived Child*, pp. 73-80.
fact, language, like schooling, is for others, not for him. Perhaps the most serious characteristic of the disadvantaged child is his feeling of inadequacy. He devalues himself. He comes into school feeling that accomplishment and success are impossible for him.¹

The first aspect of deficits (in homes studied) is language facility. In these homes a dialect of English (not standard English) or a foreign language is spoken. These children have been exposed to a different system of speech sounds and to a syntactical structure of considerable simplicity, or one which may order words differently within a sentence.

They sometimes confuse meanings of words because of confusion of sounds in the two languages or dialects.

The word order and degree of complexity of the sentences which the teacher often uses overwhelm these children. Their vocabulary is woefully inadequate. They have learned labels which are unique within their culture for various concepts. They have no labels for some concepts or objects because they lack experience and opportunities to communicate much about them to anyone.

The lack of practice in verbalizing and the lack of practice in hearing and using standard English result in a negative effect on language facility in school.

A New York Medical College scientist studying school failures in the first five grade levels, discovered that the basic deficiency in these children was their inability to communicate.

They had no deficits of the nervous system, hearing, or vision. Their problems were that they had seldom been spoken to at home; their family life was such that the use of language was not encouraged. Lack of communication with parents resulted in lack of ability to communicate in school.

Areas of deprivation of the disadvantaged child

Eddy reports in her book the views of Jerome Bloom concerning the areas of deprivation of the inner-city child. They are as follows:

1. **Impaired intellectual functioning.** A large portion of the lower-status segment of the population is intellectually impaired. Typically lower-status persons score much lower on intelligence tests than those higher up on the socio-economic ladder. A high proportion of lower-status children perform poorly in school and are educationally retarded. In general, lower-status persons find mind activity arduous and have little energy for, or interest in, new thoughts and ideas.

2. **Deficient conceptual abilities.** Lower-status persons are dependent on or prefer concrete modes of problem solving. Conceptual performance is restricted. They are poor at handling abstractions, relationships, and categories.

3. **Inadequate verbal skills.** Lower-status persons have various language handicaps. Reading and writing abilities are defective. General linguistic retardation is common. Lacks in verbal facility are manifested by problems in ordering and connecting sentences, a restricted vocabulary, and a near-absence of qualifying nuances. These deficiencies restrict verbal expansion of thoughts.
4. **Cognitive restriction.** The cognitive process of lower-status persons is relative, unstructured. Ideas of what the "outside world" is like are garbled and hazy. There is negligible comprehension of the implications or possible alternatives to critical choices made (e.g., the job) during the life span.

5. **Defective self-system and low self-esteem.** The self-system of lower-status persons tends to be unintegrated and characterized by poor ego controls. Their self-concepts are only minimally shaped by social structures. They are not inclined toward introspection and appear to have defects in self-conceptualization ability. Lower-status persons commonly suffer from a severe degree of low self-esteem.

6. **Limited role repertory.** The lack of role models in the lower-status world results in a restricted role repertory, impeding articulation with the social system. Further limitations stem from inadequate role behavior skills. Lower-status persons appear restricted in the ability to take the role of the other. Complex role-playing may be beyond the capacities of most lower-status persons in view of their lack of subtleties in role-playing and difficulties in shifting perspectives.

7. **Minimal motivation.** The conditions of life of lower-status persons make planning and concern for the future unrealistic. They are preoccupied with a struggle to obtain basic necessities of life. In general, aspirations are geared to the exigencies of day-to-day living. The psychological state of the lower-status person—particularly the chronically unemployed—is characterized by hopelessness and apathy.1

Gordon and Wilkerson view disadvantaged children as bearers of cultural attitudes alien to those which are dominant in the broader communities they now inhabit. They come to school disadvantaged to the degree that their culture has failed to provide them with the experiences that are "normal" to the kinds of children the schools are used to.

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teaching. As a consequence, these children show a dispropor­tionately high rate of social maladjustment, behavioral
disturbance, physical disability, academic retardation, and
mental subnormality. Such problems are acute wherever they
are found, but they have been exacerbated and brought to the
focal point of public attention because of the recent
increasing concentration of this population in the center
city and because of increasing pressure on the school to
maintain and assure the academic success of these children in
the public school.

What is missing is systematic attention to the three-
unit conceptual model of approaching the pedagogical tasks
involved in the teaching-learning process, and their dialec-
tical relationship to each other. Some of these children
have problems because of their basic cognitive processes
which are defective and disordered. Some of these youngsters
have major disturbances in affect or their affective behavior
may be guided by the beat of another drummer. Some of these
youngsters simply have deficiencies in the mastery of basic
skills. Still others suffer from significant information
gaps--certain content is not in the information pool.¹

¹ Gordon and Wilkerson, Compensatory Education, pp. 41-43.
income homes, who have the capacity to achieve but who are unable or unwilling to communicate with the demands of the school. In her opinion, current literature explains this condition in terms of class and race discrimination. She believes that the nature of deprivation and cultural difference may be understood in terms of certain induced learning characteristics.

She contends that, though her studies are still exploratory, the following hypotheses are suggested:

1) that these learning characteristics have certain unpredictable social and psychological consequences;
2) that they are critical deterrents of many of the school performance and personality characteristics of pupils;
3) that these learning characteristics are formed and reinforced by social interaction in family and friendship groups.¹

Deutsch says:

We know that children from underprivileged environments tend to come to school with a qualitatively different preparation for the demands of both the learning process and the behavioral requirements of the classroom. There are various differences in the kinds of socializing experiences these children have had as contrasted with the middle-class child. The culture of their environment is a different one from the culture that has molded the school and its educational techniques and theory.

We know that it is difficult for all peoples to span cultural discontinuities, and yet we make little, if any, effort to prepare administrative personnel, or teachers and guidance staff to assist the child in this transition from one culture

context to another. This transition must have serious psychological consequences for the child and probably plays a major role in influencing his later perceptions of other social institutions as he is introduced to them.

It must be pointed out that the relationship between social background and school performance is not a simple one. Rather, evidence that is accumulating points more and more to the influence of background variables on the patterns of perceptual, language, and cognitive development of the child and subsequent diffusion of the effects of such patterns into all areas of the child's academic and psychological performance. To understand these effects requires delineating the underlying skills in which these children are not sufficiently proficient. A related problem is that of defining what aspects of the background are most influential in producing what kinds of deficits in skills. ¹

The existing educational system as it affects the disadvantaged child

Loretan and Umans feel the educational system, as it exists today, only compounds the problem of the disadvantaged child.

In this alien world of education, these children find perhaps their most perplexing problem that of finding their role: Who am I? Am I really different? Will I always be like this? Is it wrong to be like this? Am I guilty? This searching for self is subconscious, rarely verbalized. On the contrary, the disadvantaged child often gives the impression of not caring. All his behavior, however, points to the conclusion that he is searching for an answer, for an identity.

The problems become aggravated as he proceeds through school. Although the "deprivation syndrome" is generally

¹Deutsch, Disadvantaged Child, pp. 31-32.
recognized by school people, little has been done to accommodate school experience to the needs of this child. Are the objectives to fit the youngster into the school at any cost or to bring the school into harmony with the child? The way things are going now, the cycle of defeat starts when he enters school. Instead of overcoming, or at least compensating for, cultural limitations, the school reinforces negative feelings and now adds educational deprivation to cultural deprivation.

Education appears to have spent most of its time and energy classifying these children, describing their characteristics, seeking to isolate the causes of deprivation, and warning society of the consequences if nothing is done.¹

The non-academic areas affecting the disadvantaged child

Carrol states that all human beings have the same basic needs: (1) identity, (2) stimulation, (3) security. In most cases the disadvantaged child comes from a home where there is probably no educational, financial, or family security, identity, or stimulation; he therefore comes to school lacking the basic needs necessary for success. Consequently, school becomes a threat to him, rather than a treat for him; and instead of gaining the necessary secure

¹Loretan and Umans, Teaching the Disadvantaged, p. 5.
feeling needed for academic success, he develops a sense of fear and inadequacy.¹

Asbell, in *The New Improved American*, writes:

The slum child is a child of another world, our laws do not bend him, our standard middle class ambitions do not inspire him . . . . Teachers in first to third grades feel the child slipping away. By the fourth grade he has fallen behind. By the eighth grade he may be as many as three years back, his mind closed, his behavior rebellious. By high school age, he is more than likely a drop out; headed for chronic unemployment, disdaining the "outside" middle class world that already disdains him, secretly contemptuous of himself, a waste of a human being, a failure.²

Maslow cites basic physical needs as a prerequisite for learning among the disadvantaged. It is his contention that basic psychological needs must be met before higher needs such as the acquisition of knowledge through curiosity can emerge. In short, the child in the classroom is not free to explore the intellectual aspects of his world until he has adequate food, sleep, exercise, and medical attention to fulfill his basic psychological needs.³

Eddy reports that in a talk given in Chicago, Havighurst said that the districts ranking in the lowest socio-economic third have pupils who are all approximately a year


below grade level. In districts serving deprived children, the achievements are two or three years below national norms and between thirty and forty per cent of the children are over-age for their grade placement. The most common contemporary diagnosis of the educational deficiencies is that the child of the urban poor is culturally and socially deprived, disadvantaged and underprivileged. This diagnosis is related to the environmental conditions in which the slum child lives. A great deal of research has focused on those attributes of environment which retard the child's ability to be as intelligent and to achieve as well as children from higher socio-economic levels.¹

In her book, Walk the White Line, Eddy discusses the following aspects of assessing cultural disadvantage:

From the summary of research findings pertaining to the characteristics of the poor which handicap them in acquiring an education, it is clear that the emphasis of much of the research is on environmental or personal attributes defined as negative and viewed in an atomistic way. Essentially the attributes are those in which the poor appear in an unfavorable light from the point of view of the dominant middle class in our society. The explanation of these attributes is typically based on social class measured by income, occupation, and educational level or some combination of these, and often there is an underlying assumption of economic determinism. The definition of culture as educational refinement omits any reference to its anthropological meaning as "the total way of a people, the social legacy the individual acquires from his group" or any recognition that to be human is to be cultured.

Although the research on the culturally deprived is making a contribution to our understanding of

¹Eddy, Walk the White Line, p. 51.
attributes associated with some in our society, it is extremely limited in its contribution to our knowledge of the relationship between the parts or the manner in which the attributes find meaning in the interaction between individuals in events. It typically lacks a careful systematic examination of negative cases and a longitudinal study of the school careers of children from different sub-communities of the new metropolis, or even comparative longitudinal studies of those who succeed and those who fail within schools in slum neighborhoods. A further difficulty arises from its systematic ignoring of culture as the socially repetitive, evolutionarily cumulative, individually learned, and symbolically transmitted personal activities and inter-personal relationship of human beings, and a study of the individual in site.

Additional problems with the theory of "cultural deprivation" emerge at a practical level when the literature on this subject is used by educators as the sole rationale for the failure of the school among the poor of our society, as an adequate description of all minority group children, or to bolster images of children, as those who came to school from homes which provide them with no culture, positive values, or experiences relevant to school life.¹

Disadvantage does affect the entering behavior of first-grade children in the inner city. Authorities on the subject agree that there is a mark made on the child by his disadvantaged circumstances. Some of these authorities view the disadvantaged circumstances as deficits in a culture, whereas others view the same circumstances merely as differences.

The following are criticisms of those who feel that cultural disadvantage is a deficit as it affects the entering behavior of first graders in the inner city. This point of view is substantially negative.

¹Ibid., pp. 51-52.
Deutsch acknowledges the fact that there is an existing disadvantage educationally for the child of the inner city. He states that it will be expensive and will require a maximum effort and much real social modification to make education an effective instrumentality for overcoming the social and psychological consequences of poverty and discrimination.¹

Grotberg believes that disadvantage is not being adequately assessed by research. She says:

Research studies with anything more than a broad description of the characteristics of disadvantaged children as the basis for research on learning disabilities are disappointingly few. Personal experiences on the one hand provide many beliefs about disadvantaged children; sentimental notions about disadvantaged children on the other hand obscure facts and lead the person to emphasize that there are only cultural differences between groups, thereby denying the concept of disadvantage. These approaches rely on a few isolated cases to demonstrate the equality, uniqueness, or even superiority of learning in disadvantaged children. While they dramatically draw much needed attention to the disadvantaged, they obscure the realities of the tremendous problems of learning disabilities and remediation among disadvantaged children.²

Ching believes that the disadvantaged child does have very specific deficits as he comes to school. Not all urban school children are affected in the same manner by the deficits in their home environments. Various lacks within

¹Deutsch, Disadvantaged Child, pp. 3-28.
the home environment may bring about a variety of negative factors which may be present in varying degrees in children, or in some cases, not present at all.

Their auditory and visual skills are likely to be less developed than those of their middle-class peers. The large number of people in their homes gives them little opportunity for quiet, and thus they have learned inattention to their surroundings. Having learned inattention, they are less likely to be stimulated by and to respond to their surroundings.

Because they have not had the opportunity to manipulate and organize various objects, their visual and tactical skills have not been developed to any extent. Lack of verbal interaction with adults and lack of corrective feedback in enunciation, pronunciation, and grammar have resulted in poor auditory skills.

A child's self-concept, what he thinks of himself, has an important influence on his ability to learn in the school situation. Many of these children enter school with a negative self-concept. Some of the reasons for poor self-concept are: they realize they are different in culture, language, and appearance; they have assimilated some of the reflected values of their culture from their family such as (1) the absence of a father in the home, (2) the lack of the development of psychological feeling that effort can result
in achievement, (3) low evaluation of their individual competence.

Social, emotional, experiential factors play an important part in the child's ability to succeed in school.\(^1\)

Bromwich believes that the disadvantaged child does bring deficits to the school. The early years of a child's life and the impact of what happens to him during those years are being given much attention and thought. The reason for much of this emphasis is the alarming deficits which the disadvantaged demonstrate when they come to school.\(^2\)

Riessman sees the cultural deprivation as those aspects of middle-class culture such as education, books, formal language, from which these groups have not benefitted. He refers to five reasons "Why Johnny can't learn":

1. The lack of an "educational tradition" in the home, few books, etc.

2. Insufficient language and reading skills.

3. Inadequate motivation to pursue a long-range educational career, and poor estimate of self.

4. Antagonism toward the school and the teacher.

5. Poor health, improper diet, frequent moving, and noisy, TV-ridden homes.

Implicit in the listing is emphasis on non-school


environment, parents, and the child himself as central determinants of failure to learn.¹

Deutsch writes:

The deficiencies which seem to exist in the slum child have to do in part with cognitive and concept formation behavior and these are skills which underlie many problem solving abilities, even in non-verbal areas. If it is impoverishment of experience which negatively affects the development of these skills, then that impoverishment is associated with a debilitation at the center of the growth of basic learning skills and not with more superficial and presumably more easily compensated skills.²

Conant supports cultural disadvantage as a factor in the entering behavior of the child. He says it has been established beyond any reasonable doubt that community and family background play a large role in determining scholastic aptitude and school achievement.³

Bloom lists the following areas of deficit in the disadvantaged child: (1) impaired intellectual functioning; (2) deficient conceptual abilities; (3) inadequate verbal skills; (4) cognitive restriction; (5) defective self-system and low self-esteem; (6) limited role repertory; (7) minimal motivation.⁴

¹ Riessman, Culturally Deprived Child, pp. 2, 4-5.
² Deutsch, Disadvantaged Child, p. 147.
Bruner believes that the cognitive consequences of sensory deprivation are a major factor to the disadvantaged child. In support of this he states:

Not only does deprivation rob the organism of the opportunity of constructing models of the environment, it also prevents the development of efficient strategies for evaluating information—for digging out what leads to what, and with what likelihood. Robbed of development in this sphere, it becomes the more difficult to utilize probable rather than certain cues, the former requiring more efficient strategy than the latter.¹

Deutsch says that it has long been known that some general relationship exists between the conditions of social, cultural, and economic deprivation and cognitive deficit. The environment having the highest rate of disease, crime, and social disorganization also has the highest rate of school retardation. Deficiencies in linguistic skills and reading skills are particularly striking. A large body of empirical literature supports the assumption that certain environmental conditions may retard psychological processes including intellectual development.

The obvious implication is that disadvantaged children who have a meager environmental basis for developing cognitive skills are often unprepared to cope with the formal intellectual and learning demands of school.²

Deutsch reports the results of a verbal survey of a

²Deutsch, Disadvantaged Child, pp. 31-38.
population core sample of 292, and an extended population of about 2,500 children of various racial and social class groupings. Negro, white, lower- and middle-class children were included in a relatively well-balanced sample.

In general, it was found that lower-class children, Negro and white, compared with middle-class children, are subject to what has been labeled a "cumulative deficit phenomenon," which takes place between the first and fifth grade years. Though these are significant socio-economic and racial differences seen in measured variables at the first-grade level, it is important to note that they become more marked as the child progresses through school.

Cultural deprivation, occasioned by the conditions associated with poverty, may result in some cognitive and learning deficits relative to the demands of the early grades. With early failure in academic tasks, the child's self-confidence may be impaired so that learning becomes more difficult and unrewarding.¹

Grotberg found that intelligence tests, as they are now used, do indicate handicapped entering behavior. Research consistently reveals that disadvantaged children generally have lower I.Q. scores, as measured by standardized intelligence tests. In a study using 543 urban public school children stratified by race and social class, the Level I

¹Ibid., p. 354.
Primary Battery of the Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence Test was used for the first-grade classes. The form is essentially non-verbal. Significant differences were found between Negro and white children and between class levels. The I.Q. rose with the class level of the child. The study found that being a member of a lower class was a great determinant of low achievement and low I.Q. scores.¹

Hunt, too, sees intelligence as affected by disadvantage. He has advanced and provided considerable support for the position that intelligence is not primarily a genetically determined phenomenon, but rather is a function which develops in and through the process of interaction with the environment. This position is reflected in much of the work in disadvantaged populations. Since many studies show differential functions favoring more advantaged groups, much effort has been directed at establishing evidence of social experience determinants of these differences.²

Authorities Who View Cultural Disadvantage as a Difference

The following are criticisms of those who feel that cultural disadvantage is only a difference as it affects the entering behavior of first graders in the inner city, that

¹Grotberg, "Learning Disabilities and Remediation in Disadvantaged Children," p. 413.

upon these differences education can start to build. This point of view is essentially positive.

The non-academic areas affecting the disadvantaged child

Webster firmly believes that the cultural disadvantage of the inner-city child need not be viewed as a negative factor in his education.

Many individuals from deprived circumstances, far from being deficient in experiences, are richly experienced. The socially disadvantaged are not lacking in knowledge, culture, and skills, but possess somewhat different understandings and abilities because of the circumstances of their lives. Those who work with the socially disadvantaged need to be aware of the adaptive strengths expressed in customary attitudes and behavior patterns among such children. Such workers must recognize and find a use for the particular strengths many of these children have acquired from the hardships and challenges of life they have undergone. As teachers, the need is to understand and appreciate elements of their sub-culture and traits of these personalities which enable them to survive in city streets and crowded and impoverished apartments. From poverty, insecurity, stigma, and discrimination, come fighting, pride in strength, distrust in schooling and bookish things, impulse expression, an emphasis on the concrete and the practical antagonism to authority, and loyalty to one's peers.
In addition to recognizing and respecting those aspects of culture which are appropriate adaptations to the life circumstances in which youth finds itself, teachers need to realize the special skills, understandings and appreciations which children in poverty acquire in the course of their out-of-school lives. Often overlooked, these skills and attitudes take the place of much book learning that other, especially middle-class, children receive. These disadvantaged children display a wide-ranging practical knowledge in many areas of public practice and private living. For example, a girl from this area may know how to take care of younger brothers and sisters.

They have a great deal more experience with life. Some of this could even be sordid and dangerous. The experiences they have with social disorganization, human failing, psychological and economic dependency, welfare programs, and law enforcement do not necessarily lead to cynicism though they do build an awareness and sophistication which are likely to be more realistic, poignant, and immediate than the treatment of social problems in school textbooks. Probably many of these children have more understanding and know-how about social realities than do middle-class children.

A powerful reinforcement in the life experiences of these disadvantaged groups is an impulse toward mutual aid, fellow feeling, or reciprocity. Those on the bottom or those driven into a corner by economic deprivation or ethnic
discrimination and injustice, sharing adversity and misfortune with others, are likely to learn to share also their resources of material and spiritual nature. The "down and out" often have a very deep and sincere fellow-feeling expressed in pervasive mutual aid. They have earlier and deeper identification with peer groups. Peer associations are the guidelines for values and attitudes of disadvantaged children and loyalty to the group is essential. This magnified sense of loyalty and mutual aid learned by such children in their difficult environment may be recognized, appreciated, and guided into constructive expressions by understanding administrators and perceptive teachers who see its validity and importance in human society.

Because of the less firmly structured patterns of family life characteristic of many of the disadvantaged, because of the absence of a reliable father figure in many homes, and because of the autonomous nature of their peer associates, many of the disadvantaged develop early in life a great reliance upon themselves and a sense of autonomy and independence. This makes for maturity and responsibility frequently found in these individuals.

There is abundant evidence that many parents and children of disadvantaged backgrounds initially have a positive attitude toward schooling and recognize that it
represents for most the only channel for improving one's lot in society.¹

Passow uses an address made by Eisenberg to tell of the hope that the strengths of the disadvantaged child can be used. In speaking to the elementary staff of the Baltimore Public Schools, Eisenberg described the attributes of the disadvantaged child in positive but not over-blown terms. His catalogue of virtues is largely speculative. Solid empirical support for his assertions is lacking. They are subject to systematic testing, however, and there is no doubt that objective evidence is desperately needed in this area. It is not yet known whether the most successful efforts to use lower-class cultural positives can compensate for the real deficits slum children bring with them to school. Poor language readiness and limited educational horizons are serious handicaps that cannot be easily offset. Eisenberg does not minimize the importance of these traditional school expectations while bringing to light the kinds of lower-class strengths that can and ought to be cultivated in the classroom.²

Loretan and Umans base their book, Teaching the Disadvantaged, on two basic assumptions: (1) Despite the


negative approach to school and school learnings, children
from disadvantaged homes have intellectual capacities far
greater than is commonly believed. (2) The school, operating
on the assumption stated above, and constructing curricula
based upon the new developments in behavioral sciences, can,
to a great extent, counteract the effects of cultural depriva-
tion.¹

Bruner defends the disadvantaged child's ability to
learn: "One must not assume that these children, simply
because they have not had the opportunity to develop cogni-
tive skills, are unprepared to cope with the cognitive
demands of learning."²

The need is to use programs utilizing these chil-
dren's strengths. For example, use these children's commu-
ication skill of gestures to combine with and build listening
and speaking so that communication becomes easier and more
interesting. Programs, emphasizing a variety of concrete
experiences, coupled with communication skills of listening,
speaking, and gesture can provide what Bruner refers to as
the "intervening opportunities" that provide children with
the cognitive and perceptual abilities needed for reading.
They will help compensate for what he refers to as "impair-
ment under a deprived regimen."³

¹Loretan and Umans, Teaching the Disadvantaged, p. 4.
³Ibid.
Passow discounts disadvantage as a negative factor in the inner-city child's educational potential. The key issue in looking at the strengths of the inner-city child is the importance of not confusing difference with defect. The family of the inner city is marked by a degree of cooperative-ness and mutual aid between family members that extends beyond the nuclear family typical of the middle class. The child has a sense of being part of a large and extended family which becomes as large as the community in which he grows up, and these people are available to him as a resource in time of crisis. Inner-city children tend to have collective, that is, family and group values, rather than individualistic ones. There is a feeling that, "If we are going to get anywhere, all of us have to do it at one time. We must act as a group." A kind of fellow-feeling is present among inner-city children which is in contrast to the attitude, "I'm going to make it on my own."

Inner-city children have more genuinely equalitarian values. They are not readily taken in by a person who has all the right credentials (such as the teacher) but is not a genuinely deserving person. The teacher has to prove himself.

Inner-city children are free from parental over-protection. They are more ready to accept responsibility, they start baby-sitting at the age of five, six, and seven: They learn to negotiate the jungle of the slums. They have a know-how for survival and this is an intellectual art.
The inner city has learned they are responsive, but the trouble is the school does not have a curriculum that pegs the things they have learned so as to start from where they are.

These children are less verbal and this is one of the school's serious problems. But it is also true that they are less wordbound--they do not sit around just talking and not doing.

These children show superior physical coordination and skills. They have had to learn to survive by doing instead of talking; they possess a kind of body language and grace, a style that is physical rather than verbal.¹

The existing educational system as it attempts to measure the disadvantaged child

Riessman is especially critical of what he calls "middle-emphasis" of the school. He believes that children from the disadvantaged culture have certain positive qualities and learning abilities that are overlooked by most educators; and that these children, in contrast to middle-class children, have a mental style that is physical and visual rather than aural; content-centered rather than form-centered; externally oriented rather than introspective; problem-centered rather than abstract-centered; inductive

¹Passow, Goldberg, and Tannebaum, Education of the Disadvantaged, pp. 79-83.
rather than deductive; spatial rather than temporal; slow, careful, patient, persevering (in areas of importance) rather than quick, clever, facile, flexible. He suggests educators should take account of these characteristics and build upon them, saying, "We must be careful not to try to make these children over into replicas of middle-class children. The educational system should be pluralistic enough, broad enough to find a place for a variety of mental styles."\(^1\)

Gordon makes the point that educators are incorrectly measuring this child's entering behavior by standards set for the middle-class child. They must consider his disadvantage as different rather than deficit, Gordon says in this study. Most of the investigators and observers upon whose work knowledge of the characteristics of socially disadvantaged children is based have developed their data against a background of experience with children from the homes of middle-class white U.S. nationals. The tendency has been to describe and enumerate these characteristics in terms of their deviance from the norms of this group and to view these behaviors as deficits. The present studies suggest their language, their styles, and their values are negatives to be overcome. There is no doubt that in many instances upward mobility may not otherwise be possible; however, to demean everything with which the child is identified may produce only immobility. This concern is seldom represented in these works directed at

\(^{1}\)Riessman, *Culturally Deprived Child*, p. 80.
identifying and understanding the socially disadvantaged child. Even if the primary characteristics of this population were essentially unwholesome, the research effort to establish these observations would still be inadequate. In the first place, such research tends to generalize with respect to a population which is probably infinitely variable. There is probably no typical "socially disadvantaged" child but, instead, a wide variety of such children with widely varying characteristics. To describe them and plan for them as a group is hence an error; differential psychology is as important here as in any other area. Secondly, to establish the fact of correlation between certain conditions and poor school adjustment or certain characteristics and underdevelopment is not to establish the fact of causation. Efforts at documenting the characteristics have not identified the cause, nor have they pointed toward remediation.¹

Pettigrew points out that the learning potential of any child is a result of the interaction of both heredity and environment. Where the environment does not contain the objects and opportunities necessary for maximum learning, measurement of intelligence reflects this lack in lower

scores, thus giving inaccurate estimates of the child's capacity to learn.¹

Schaar agrees with Pettigrew that the intelligence tests given to first-grade children are governed by middle-class standards and are no measure of the deprived child's ability. She says the severely deprived environment of the disadvantaged child can lower his I.Q. in two basic ways. First, the environment can act to deter his actual intellectual development by presenting him with such a constricted encounter with the world that his innate potential is barely tapped. Second, the environment can act to mask his actual functioning intelligence in the test situation by not preparing him culturally and motivationally for such a middle-class task.²

Gordon agrees with the other authors that existing measures of I.Q. are no criteria for judging a disadvantaged child. He has said that available research in the area of intelligence and achievement measures for disadvantaged children permits the description of certain measured levels of function in comparison to some reference group, but it does not permit us to understand the processes involved.


Emerging from careful analysis of research is the clear impression that static measures of function or status are inadequate in dealing with disadvantaged children.¹

CHAPTER III

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Restatement of the Problem

Does cultural disadvantage have a direct relationship to the entering behavior of children in the inner city according to recent research of authorities on the subject?

Description of Procedure Used

The writer reviewed research on the problem which was published between 1954 and 1969. The material on cultural disadvantage and its effect on the entering behavior of first graders in the inner city was categorized according to the views of the various authorities. These views were gathered by the authorities in first-hand observation.

The facilities of the Cardinal Stritch College Library, the Ohio University Library, the Ohio State University Library, the Columbus Public Library, and the Xavier University Library were used by the writer.

Principal Findings and Conclusions

The writer feels that all the material gathered would make a contribution to the study of the effects of cultural
disadvantage on the entering behavior of first graders in the inner city.

One group of authorities\(^1\) says that these children are definitely disadvantaged. They come to school as first graders suffering all the deprivations of their background. This group of researchers lists the nature of the deficits as assessed by the formal educational criteria of the school.

The second group of authorities\(^2\) says that the child comes to school with the same background as seen by the first group. But instead of assessing this background as composed of deficits, they see it as marked by differences. The second group challenges educational research to make use of these differences to teach these children effectively. They are convinced that with the right approach they can learn.

Both groups of authorities base their findings on experiments and individual diagnosis over a period of years. Their research has been observed and recorded. Both groups see the same children but the first group views the problem negatively, the second positively.

The conclusion of the writer is that the studies of both groups contribute significantly, but at the present time neither can be accepted totally. The writer feels strongly,


\(^2\)Webster, Passow, Eisenberg, Loretan, Umans, Goldberg, Tannebaum, Bruner, Riessman, Gordon, Pettigrew, Schoor.
however, that if education is to be successful with culturally disadvantaged children, teachers must see the children as possessing differences, not deficits. Education must use the child's differences as the springboard for his learning; remedial teaching is not the answer. This child's culture must be utilized as the beginning of his learning. As Havighurst has theorized, the basic disagreements will probably be resolved in the next few years as educators experiment with a variety of ways of helping the culturally disadvantaged child and as social scientists learn more about the mental development of children.¹

A solid foundation has been laid upon which further studies can build in the hope of presenting a more realistic measurement of these children's behavior and the best methods of developing their educational potential. It will be necessary to know which particular difference or combination of differences characterizes each individual, in what way it affects his learning process, and how to cope with it. The writer believes this can be done and, in fact, must be done to help these children reach their learning potential.

The writer would, in all honesty, have to admit there is much research of a very nebulous nature, due to the fact that such research is not scientifically measurable. However,

it would seem, with the great problem of educating this ever-increasing number of children from the inner city, research must get down to the concrete problem and find ways of solving it. Specific suggestions for further research are set forth below.

**Suggestions for Further Research**

It is the suggestion of the writer that more concrete and specific measurement of cultural disadvantage be employed. The behaviors of these children must be measured more scientifically. Researchers can no longer use measuring devices to assess these children's entering behavior with the same devices used to assess that of the middle-class student. Educators are trying to find an answer to the problems of this ever-increasing segment of population. A great deal of money is being used to try to find the answer to a desperate situation but, first, investigators must find a way to measure the problem more scientifically.

Passow states that educators lack needed guidance for assessing the potential of the disadvantaged child. Problems related to testing must be carefully weighed. There is need to measure aptitude and achievement in terms of socio-cultural factors affecting performance. There is need to improve tests and to use them more intelligently.¹

Deutsch speaks in this way to the crying need for research:

We really have no external criterion for evaluating the characteristics of milieu in terms of how well it is designed to foster development; as a result, we might actually be measuring one area of social failure with the yardstick of social catastrophe.¹

Roberts also recognizes the problem. She says: "There is need for more research. We are only beginning to apply scientific inquiry to the problem of the poor in our society."²

Deutsch tells of the need for greater utilization of existing research by educators. Use must be made in curriculum and development and teacher training of the new and enormous knowledge, techniques, and research in the social and behavioral sciences. Similarly, social and behavioral scientists have, in the school, a wonderful laboratory to study the inter-penetration and interaction of fundamental social, cognitive, psychological, and developmental processes. Close and continuing collaboration thus should be mutually productive and satisfying and is strongly indicated in the efforts to educate the disadvantaged.³

Gordon writes in direct contrast to Deutsch's views of the value of the research available as of 1967. In the

¹Deutsch, Disadvantaged Child, p. 41.
²Roberts, School Children in the Urban Slum, p. 19.
³Deutsch, Disadvantaged Child, p. 57.
available research literature on the education of disadvantaged children and youth, there is found a virtual cafeteria, with a wide range of offerings. But as is true of most cafeterias, one finds it difficult to get a gourmet-type or even substantive meal. The quality of research and depth of research information are simply not outstanding. This may be due, in part, to the fact that the problems of underdevelopment and educational handicaps in the disadvantaged have not been appropriately conceptualized. The great majority of investigators who have worked in this field have viewed the disadvantaged as a great homogenous mass. Insufficient attention has been given to the wide variety of persons, conditions, problems, and potential assists which are represented by this all too popular euphemism "the disadvantaged."\(^1\)

Karp and Sigel stress that:

> if psychological appraisal is to speak meaningfully to the problems of education and social planning for the socially disadvantaged, efforts should be concentrated on the development of instruments and techniques to evaluate potential for learning, styles of learning, and patterns of learning disability and facility, making the appraisal process one of qualitative analysis rather than quantitative assessment.\(^2\)

They take their point of view from Riessman who also says it

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is from qualitative appraisal that the educator will gain perspective and direction.

Karp and Sigel further state that:

The bulk of psycho-educational appraisal research has been concerned with the disadvantaged student who fails to achieve in school. Research must turn to finding information concerning the behavioral characteristics and cognitive functioning of disadvantaged children who can work at the level of their more fortunate peers. Further study is needed of developmental and socio-cultural process variables that may account for differences in achievement and learning styles within the disadvantaged group. Appraisal and evaluation in such non-cognitive areas as interests, aspirations, special abilities, and motivation are essential to facilitate and augment understanding of how the disadvantaged child interacts and copes with his environment.

The disadvantaged learner has been identified largely through social class parameters, demographic considerations and intelligence test scores. Since the test no longer occupies the position of prime decision maker in the educational process for disadvantaged children and identification by social class and social status tells little about the "how" of learning, the question as to who are the disadvantaged remains unanswered. Future efforts to characterize, identify, and select the socially disadvantaged child should be directed toward devising tests and screening devices that are concerned with appraising patterns of learning facility and learning difficulty. Identification of the learning task needs of the disadvantaged is of primary importance. This process is basic to and a prerequisite for implementing new curriculum developments and experimentation with diverse approaches to teaching the disadvantaged. A curriculum formulated to meet the educational needs of the disadvantaged must accommodate the child's level and style of functioning while stimulating potential for learning; tests and trained observation should take on new meaning and different diagnostic significance. In addition to appraising learning difficulty, measurement and observation should lead to remedial and compensatory techniques which can be incorporated readily into the curriculum and translated easily into work in the classroom. Psycho-educational appraisal of the disadvantaged pupil...
confronts us anew with the need to develop assessment procedures that both clarify the mechanisms by which learning occurs and guide the teaching-learning process.¹

Gordon discusses the need for measuring devices. Sociology probably has fewer instruments for measuring what it perceives to be the appropriate variables than any other discipline with pretensions of rigor, except perhaps cultural or social anthropology. Operational definitions of variables that have been translated into reliable ordinal measures, let alone cardinal measures, are scarce. Even the most cursory review of the measuring devices that have been used in cultural research suggests that conclusions must be tentative.

Scholars have conventionally surveyed existing knowledge in order to discover what they need to know. They are concerned with a question or hypothesis and they hope to devise an appropriate set of operations that will furnish a reliable answer or test. Serious scientific research must continue to be concerned with fundamental questions of understanding the whole urban education phenomenon.²

Raph says that in view of recognized communication difficulties of lower-class children, there is a pressing demand for both developmental and cross-cultural studies on the multiple factors related to their language and speech.


²Gordon and Wilkerson, Compensatory Education for the Disadvantaged, pp. 78-95.
Methodology needs to be developed which will make possible age and group comparisons through carefully controlled standard-stimulus situations. These situations should be sufficiently simple and practical to be easily used in a variety of settings and with many types of disadvantaged children. Techniques for obtaining and transcribing accurately taped recordings of language behavior among children rather than to elicit only the more stereotyped responses obtained through adult questions are needed. Procedures need to be developed which will enable researchers to investigate the various modes of verbal functioning and adaption employed by a child, including context of his activities with peers. The gesture accompaniments of his talking should be studied. This suggests the possibility of combining narrative and descriptive methods of describing total behavior with use of mechanical recording devices. Investigation is needed into the influence of adult models on child language and the extent to which the patterns and expressions of the parents are imitated and modified by the child.

Gordon believes research is being challenged to find the cause for the disadvantaged child's poor adjustment to school and to find ways for remediation. It remains for research to determine the nature of learning facility and disability in this population; to determine those circumstances

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under which certain characteristics and conditions result in success and which others result in failure; to develop more sensitive and accurate procedures for the assessment of potential for development as well as for behavioral change; and to determine those conditions necessary for appropriate development where existing pedagogical principles and technology are inappropriate to the learning experiences required for a wide variety of underdeveloped learners.\footnote{1}{Gordon, "Characteristics of Socially Disadvantaged Children," pp. 377-389.}

Wilkerson writes of the need for research in the attempt to give the disadvantaged the ingredients in education his background lacks. Not nearly enough research is available on pilot projects or compensatory programs for teaching the disadvantaged. Lack of research often results in adopting a pilot project that has unduly optimistic interpretations of apparent but meager gains. On the other hand, the lack of clear-cut evidence that certain programs are significantly improving pupil development may strengthen tendencies toward their abandonment.

Wise educational policy would seem to call for considerably more research in the area of compensatory education for the disadvantaged. Programs need to be conceived in the light of such theoretical insights as are available and in the development of which there is rigorous control of the quality of educational experience provided. Wise policy
would seem to call also for much more and better research evaluation of these programs than has thus far been developed. It is through theoretically guided practice and technically competent research that the still open questions about compensatory educational programs and practices are most likely to be answered.¹

Grotberg tells of specific needs for research. She says a new theoretical framework is necessary to provide guidelines for further research and to permit more accurate interpretation of present research, in the area of learning disabilities and remediation among disadvantaged children. Many reports on remediation programs are incomplete and limited in research data. The tendencies to be excited, committed, and deeply involved in the problems of disadvantaged children often obscure the need to provide research evidence for others who wish to build on past research. Much wasted time, money, and effort have been invested in activities which have had little value, if any, to those outside a given project, primarily because little effort was made to maintain high quality in research designs, controls, and analysis. Research on the role of the teacher in remediation of learning disabilities among disadvantaged children is meager. Research needs to provide a clear view of what

qualities or combinations of qualities are best in a teacher and what methods or techniques promise best results in learning for the disadvantaged.¹

¹Grotberg, "Learning Disabilities and Remediation in Disadvantaged Children," p. 422.
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