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Maternal influences in the socialization of the culturally deprived child

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ABSTRACT

SOCIOLOGY

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Maternal Influences in the Socialization of the Culturally Deprived Child

Adviser: Professor John D. Reid

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The purpose of this thesis is to evaluate the researches of Robert D. Hess and Associates. This investigation is concerned with some of the socializing agencies that influence the child in the early years of his development. The findings reveal that the mother has the greatest influence upon the child's behavior. The influences of the mother tend to be more essential to their learning processes.

The first chapter deals with a review of current research that have been done on the socialization of the child. The results of these studies show different aspects of the socialization of the culturally deprived child.

The second chapter deals with reading readiness among urban Negro children. The lack of facility in reading is very damaging to the culturally deprived child. Maternal attitudes and behavior play a major part in the ability of the child to read.

Chapter III reveals that maternal attitudes toward the school play an essential role in the socialization of the child. The mother plays a constructive role in socializing the child to meet the expectations of the school system. This role is considered to be almost a necessity in the educational advancement of the culturally deprived child.
Chapter IV indicates that the behavior which leads to social, educational, and economic poverty is socialized in early childhood; that the basic quality involved is an absence of cognitive meaning in the mother-child communication system; and that the growth of cognitive processes is a wide range of alternatives of action.
MATERNAL INFLUENCES IN THE SOCIALIZATION
OF THE CULTURALLY DEPRIVED CHILD

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

BY
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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Socialization is the process by which children learn the ways of their society and the process by which various agencies or social institutions—the family, the school, the church, the peer group, and others—teach the child and gradually mold him into a group member. The family operates in conjunction with other social institutions in carrying out its socializing functions. Current research illustrates some of the ways in which the socializing agencies influence the child during the course of his development; and how, in turn, the mother interacts with these agencies.

Urie Bronfenbrenner presents a general overview of contemporary child-rearing practices and suggests that recent trends may be producing a "changing American child." The gradual abandonment of authoritarian family structure and the adoption of a middle-class equalitarian family model may be having profound effects upon the personalities of children growing up today.

Bernard C. Rosen's study of family structure and value transmission

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illuminates another aspect of the socialization process. Birth order and age of mother are important aspects of family structure and are related to degrees of similarity in the values of mothers and their children; but early training of the child in independent mastery and the mother's use of "love-oriented" techniques of discipline are of particular significance.

The research of Lucius T. Cervantes indicate how many empirical studies have demonstrated how family socialization processes affect the child's school performance. The findings reveal that school dropouts tend to come from families where there are few close and warm primary relationships between family members.

Although the family may be the most important socializing agency during the early life of the child, as the child grows older the social demands made by his peer group exert an increasing influence upon his behavior. Bernice L. Neugarten's study was one of the first to marshal empirical evidence of the influence of social class upon the friendship patterns and the reputations of children and adolescents. The study showed that these relationships are well established by the time children reach the fifth grade.

James L. Coleman, in his research, attempts to conceptualize the social

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The influence of the peer group in the high school. He implies that adolescents in many ways live in a world of their own—a world which has somewhat different values from those of adult society. While all social scientists do not concur in describing adolescent patterns of social interaction and values as forming a subculture, James L. Coleman's data and his thesis that the adolescent subculture dominates the school environment and mitigates against academic achievement are impressive.

The studies conducted by C. Norman Alexander, Jr. and Ernest Q. Campbell show another aspect of the social influence of the adolescent peer group. The results of their studies suggest that a student is more likely to want to go to college if his best friend also has this desire. Moreover, even if a student is expected to attend college by his parents, the likelihood that he will actually matriculate is greatly increased if his best friend has the same educational plans.

Another important socializing agency in the life of the child is the school itself. As Talcott Parsons points out in his study, "The School Class as a Social System: Some of its Functions in American Society," the school exerts its own socializing influence which is distinct from that of the family or the peer group. Although Parsons focuses his attention primarily upon the classroom as the unit, his observations are relevant to many aspects of the school as a whole.

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David Gottlieb and Warren D. TenHouten demonstrate that each school fulfills its role as a socializing agency in a somewhat different way.\(^1\) In this study the attempt was made to examine some of the social effects of school integration upon Negro students. Gottlieb and TenHouten demonstrate that it is the extent of integration and the particular social climate of the individual school, not the mere fact of integration which determines the kind of relationships formed between Negro and white students.

The purpose of this investigation is to critically evaluate the researches of Robert Hess and Associates. They deal with a more specific aspect of family socialization.\(^2\) In focusing attention upon the culturally-deprived child they present data which indicate that a child’s ability to perform intellectual tasks is directly related to the pattern of communication that exist within his family; that these patterns are different in families of different social class groups; and that a central quality in cultural deprivation is a lack of cognitive meaning in the mother-child communication system that is established in the preschool years.

Hess also conducted a study in reading readiness among urban Negro children. The overwhelming findings of this study show that the relationship between social class and learning, and school performance is that children from background of social marginality enter the first grade already behind their middle-class counterparts in a number of skills related

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\(^1\) David Gottlieb and Warren TenHouten, "Racial Composition and the Social Systems of Three High Schools," Journal of Marriage and the Family, XXX (1965), 204-17.

to scholastic achievement. Reading is one of those skills. When the school goes about the task of inducting the child into his culture, reading is central to this enterprise. Lower-class children must be provided with the skills by which he can cope effectively with the demands of modern civilization.

Environmental influences play a major part upon the development of readiness for reading in young children. The mother is regarded as a teacher. Lower-class mothers' relationships with their children lack depth and consistency. School related learning, such as learning to read, is difficult, frustrating and only distantly related to children's primary needs. Unless children have had relatively good relationships with their parents, it is difficult to engage them in the learning situation.

Maternal attitudes toward the school play a major part in the role of the pupil according to Hess. He attempts to show that the mother's mode of dealing with her child and with the school affect the educability of the child by teaching him ways of dealing with the school as a social system. The status-oriented mother emphasizes the difference in status and power between the child and the teacher and offers compliance and docility as techniques, for dealing with the classroom situation. The instructive or person-oriented mother see less distance between herself and the school and thus is less concerned with obedience.

The findings of these studies will be critically evaluated in the following chapters. It is felt that an assessment of these studies will direct attention to the quality of life and other environmental factors when the socialization of the black child is discussed in academic settings.
CHAPTER II

MATERNAL BEHAVIOR AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF READING READINESS IN URBAN NEGRO CHILDREN

During the past few years there has been an increasing recognition of the importance of reading as a variable that affects the processes of learning among disadvantaged children. Reading is a prevailing difficulty for many of these children. The importance of the ability to read is a prerequisite to subsequent education. Programs of compensatory education has focused upon the need to develop reading abilities in children from disadvantaged areas. These programs are attempting to launch attacks dealing with these reading deficiencies.

Entering school from a background which has not adequately prepared him for success in a traditional curriculum, the child participates in communication procedures and patterns alien to him. A child's ability to perform intellectual tasks is directly related to the patterns of communication that exist within his family—usually the mother. These patterns of communication are different in families of different social class groups. The working class individual is responding to a different physical, economic, and cultural reality from that in which the middle-class individual is trained. A central quality in cultural deprivation is a lack of cognitive meaning in the mother-child communication system that is established in the pre-school years. The mother is viewed as a teacher and her behaviors
which affect the child's cognitive development and preparation for school is regarded as maternal teaching styles. A basic theoretic approach here has to be based on the mother and the social class group.\textsuperscript{1}

An individual's relative place in the socio-economic hierarchy of a society has reference to a wide range of characteristics and behaviors. In this chapter, the focal point will be centered around those which seem to be most directly relevant for an analysis of the effects of the social environment upon the educational achievement. The focus of concern is no longer upon the question of whether social and cultural disadvantages depress academic ability, but has shifted to a study of the mechanisms of exchange that mediate between the disadvantaged child and the environment. The thrust of research and theory is toward conceptualizing social class as a discrete array of experiences that can be examined in relation to the effects they have upon the emerging cognitive equipment of the disadvantaged child.

The extent to which a lower working class Black adult can control his own life, accomplish his plans, and protect himself and his resources is not very promising. In this area, which has perhaps come to be the most significant aspect of the social structure, Blacks are the most disadvantaged. They are subject to exploitation; have difficulty defending the privacy of their homes against invasion, for example, by welfare agencies;\textsuperscript{2} and are more likely to be arrested and detained without justification. In


addition, they tend to be diagnosed in mental health clinics as more maladjusted with poorer prognosis than middle-class patients. The routes through which misfortune may strike are numerous. Thus, lower-class Blacks look upon life as a recurrent series of depressions and peaks, with regard to the gratification of their basic desires.

These working class adults are subjected to discrimination in varying degrees. This is evident in occupational experiences that differ essentially from those of middle-class adults. Semi-skilled or unskilled workers are middle-class adults. Semi-skilled or unskilled workers are given little or no part in the policy- or decision-making process; they carry out the decisions of others. This may be an inherent characteristic of a complex, industrialized occupational system and may be difficult, perhaps impossible to modify. The need for money, power, and prestige, education, confines the working class individual's available alternatives for action.

Adults from the working class perceive and structure social relationships in terms of power. Whyte observed this tendency in his work with "street corner society"; it may underlie the greater incidence of physical punishment in lower-class families. An orientation to power would seem to follow from the lower-class person's position in society. He has little voice in decisions affecting his daily life while those who have status and authority also have power. In line with this orientation, the lower-

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class father tends to equate his children's respect with their compliance with his wishes and commands.¹

The lower-class suffers from isolation from the middle-class experiences. His opportunities for social learning are limited by the pressures which he receives from groups above him to keep his social participation within limits. The effects of this isolation hinders him from learning new habits, and in turn, from increasing his social and economic privileges. Social classes operate basically to maintain barriers against intimate social participation.

By defining the people with whom the individual may have social relationships, the social class system narrows his learning and training environment. He has to select from the narrow culture of the class with which alone he can associate freely. Therefore, he tends to have limited skill in getting and judging information and can be easily taken in by exploitations from the outside world.

Another consequence of the lower class life circumstances is to promote and encourage a simplification of the experience world and a restriction of the range of linguistic modes of verbal exchange.² This follows in part from the interlacing of language and behavior and from the limited behavioral alternatives in the lives of lower-class people. This does not imply that they speak less often or less effectively but that the patterning of their speech differs according to the nature of the interaction among them.³

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Social as well as physical environment shape behavior and compel adaptations in mothers then transmit these values to their children. These values may be transmitted in several ways. They can be transmitted through instruction and the selective reinforcement of appropriate responses, or through their own behavior in certain situations. Maternal influences are considered to be essential for the learning of values. Children are exposed to values in several situations with many different agents of socialization, however, when he is young he tends to take his values from the mother.

Part of the cognitive environment provided for the child follows from the mother's conception of herself and her relations to the institutions and opportunities of the community where she resides. These attitudes are expressed in her participation in the organizations of the community and her feelings of achievement. Whether the attitudes are negative or positive will decide if she will surrender or face the environment defiantly. Such feelings indicate a sense of faith and trust in the integrity of action—that there are consequences which follow in some orderly way and that there is some point in setting goals and working toward them.

Mothers exert control by combinations of requesting, suggesting, arguing, commanding, pleading, scolding, and punishing. Communication failure may be a primary factor in the mother-child interaction patterns of disadvantaged children. They may have far-reaching and cumulative effects on their cognitive development. A mother's teaching style tends to reflect her response to her own circumstances and instills in the child maladaptive learning styles and orientation to school and other school institutions. Teaching styles of the mother induce and shape learning styles and information-process strategies in the children. A cognitive environment in which behavior is controlled by status rules rather than by attention to the
individual characteristics of a specific situation and one in which behavior is not mediated by verbal cues or by teaching that relates events to one another and the present to the future. This environment produces a child to relate to authority rather than to rationale who is not reflective in his behavior, and for whom the consequences of an act are largely considered in terms of immediate punishment and reward.

In the past, studies of maternal behavior in relation to the emergence of various types of behavior in children has focused very heavily on affective dimensions. Schaefer (1961) argues on the basis of factor analysis of maternal attitudes and interaction scales that there are two dominant factors in maternal behavior—love rejection and control autonomy. The successful use of withdrawal of love as a discipline technique implies the prior existence of a gratifying relationship; the more love present in the first instance, the greater the threat implied in its withdrawal.

Children from middle-class families excel those from lower-class in many characteristics. They are self-control, achievement, leadership, responsibility, popularity, adjustment in general. These differences in behavior are attributed to class-linked variations in maternal treatment.

A study conducted of social class differences in reading readiness of children show differences in levels of performance between children from dissimilar socio-economic levels. This is typical in the research literature on school achievement. The study shows that middle-class Negro children

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performed at a higher level than did Negro children from working class backgrounds. There was also a significant difference between the level of reading readiness of children from skilled occupational levels in comparison to children whose parents work in unskilled occupations.  

The home environment has been studied as a means of understanding the factors which influence the development of children. The home is a very important influence on the intellectual and emotional development of the children. This is particularly so during the pre-school years of the child. The ways in which parents spend time with their children at meals, in play, and at other times during the day, have been found to be basic factors in developing skills which prepare children for school. The amount of parental interest in learning, and the objects in the home, and the amount of practice and encouragement the child is given in conversation and general learning have been found to be significant influences on language and cognitive development, attention span, and motivation of the child. Variables such as reading to the child, use of toys and other equipment to stimulate play, and of space both within the house and in the neighborhood to maximize the child's growth are related to the child's performance on reading achievement tests. The amount of time the mother reads to the child and the number of persons in the home also are factors.

The mother's participation in non-family organizations, excluding social visiting, and her attitudes toward the non-family world and her ability to deal with it are indicated in three measures: number of memberships in community organizations, feelings of effectiveness in dealing with the

school and other institutions in the community, and feelings that life has opportunities to improve. All of these variables are correlated with reading readiness. The correlation between the mother's feelings of optimism and effectiveness and reading readiness parallels the association of these measures with child performance measures at age four. The correlation between the mother's activities in the community and the child's reading attainment in the first grade suggests that the mother's integration into the social institutions of her community, provide the child with incentive or information and learning opportunities. The initiative of the mother and her tendency to meet the environment and to enter into interaction with it appear to be important variables in the development of educability in the young child.

Maternal behavior and cultural background thus appear to be influential through various avenues of behavior upon the child's early cognitive and academic development. To the extent, that these affect the child's cognitive development, they appear to include the motivational and other abilities involved in learning to read.
CHAPTER III

MATERNAL ATTITUDE TOWARD THE SCHOOL AND THE ROLE OF PUPIL: SOME SOCIAL CLASS COMPARISONS

This chapter deals with the origins and antecedents of educability in young children whose families live in economically and socially depressed urban areas. Educability refers to a mingling of orientations, skills and motivations that prepare the child to learn in a formal school setting. Educability includes three components: (1) a cluster of cognitive skills (language, conceptual ability, adaptness with logical operations, visual and auditory discrimination); (2) a degree of motivation to learn and to achieve in a school and classroom setting (curiosity, interest in inquiry, need for achievement); (3) acceptance of the role of the pupil (orientation toward authority of teacher and school, acceptance of rules of the classroom and school, an understanding of the central purpose of the school). 1 This chapter is focused upon the role of the mother in the emergence of this complex set of orientations and response patterns.

Poverty stricken youth are becoming the subject of growing interest among the nation's educators. The development of an ability to learn in school situations has traditionally been of widespread professional concern.

only in special cases of children with mental defects of some kind. The concentration upon the educational problems of the disadvantaged has raised several questions about the inconsistency between the behavior and values of lower class children and the expectations for social and academic performance under which the schools operate. Children that form the lower working-class sectors of society are not prepared to perform effectively in the school system. This absence of preparation is not a matter of level of intelligence but represents orientations to authority, the school, and the learning process in the child's pre-school experience and are constantly reinforced by his home and community environment.

The ideas and results presented in this chapter are part of an extensive study, which was contrived to assess the cognitive environments of urban pre-school Negro children and the impact of these environments upon the cognitive behavior and motivation of young children. In attempting to identify and study these variables in the environment of the pre-school child which appear to facilitate or interfere with subsequent cognitive growth, the concentration will be upon the role of the mother as a socializing agent in areas of behavior usually associated with success in school.

The conceptual approach is a view of the educationally disadvantaged child as presenting a problem in acculturation. Social and economic circumstances of the family deny children an opportunity to learn the behavior of the dominant society and the school. This view holds that a large segment of our population has not been socialized into the behavior needed for success in school and other middle-class institutions. When he arrives at school, he brings with him a deficiency in verbal skills, an inability to discriminate auditory and visual input and a pattern of behavior which
is not readily adaptable to the school. He is from a part of the society
which has not permitted him to learn. The child comes to school ill pre-
pared in basic concepts and skills necessary for school achievement. Before
a child can learn effectively he must be ready to learn. He must be free
to accept new ideas, to be receptive to differences in people's behavior,
and to realize the potential within him. Not only must he be ready matur-
ationally to acquire new skills and knowledge but he must have the desire
or motivation to learn. He does not get this from home, therefore, the
school must serve as a re-socializing agent. The alienation he feels from
the mainstream of society has begun before he reaches school and his modes
of adapting to this fact have created behavior that must be changed if he
is to succeed in school.

The early years are especially significant in the development of
educability. This is true because the implications these early patterns
of learning have for later experiences in the school. They are important
because they occur before formal schooling begins and impede or facilitate
the transition to academic success. Early experience is the time when the
child begins to learn ways of sorting and ordering the mass of information
that his input modalities bring to him, developing techniques for selecting
or ignoring the stimuli that reach him from internal and external sources.
The child needs to be given categories of thought and ways of dealing with
information which is part of the role of a socializing adult. These modes
of dealing with stimuli may be regarded as information processing strate-
gies which enable the child to make some sense out of the incredibly large
number of pieces of information with which he must cope. These strategies
are learned in interaction with the environment, particularly with other
persons, and in this early learning process the mother plays a dominant part.

A prevailing view is that many of the differences in mental ability and cognitive styles that appear among different cultural and socio-economic groups can best be understood in terms of the transmission of information processing strategies from parents to children. It is also held that there are relationships between the position of the family in the social structure of the community and the techniques children use to deal with information made available to them. Probably the most significant is the range and number of alternatives for action and for thought that are available in the environment and which may engage the consideration and attention of the family and its members. The extent to which alternatives are available is related to the family's position in the community. A family that resides in an urban ghetto has few choices to make with respect to the basic things as residence, condition of housing, and occupation. This type of family with few opportunities to make choices among events that affect it is not likely to encourage the children to think of life as consisting of a wide range of behavioral options among which they must learn to discriminate. There is almost unanimous agreement that the prior satisfaction of the basic needs operate to influence learning in a number of ways among the young children. Much of the energy and attention of the child is directed to his immediate needs and he is less able to attend to learning which must seem to him as less urgent and not very relevant to his present state.

The argument is that social class and cultural effects upon cognitive development of children can best be understood in terms of the specifics
of interactional transactions between the mother and her young child, that the nature of these exchanges is influenced by the family's position in the social structure of the community and the availability of alternatives open for consideration that material behavior induces complementary learning or information processing strategies in the child and that the child's early orientation to authority and cognitive activity facilitates his ability to adapt the role of pupil when he encounters formal learning situations in the schools.

There are five essential aspects of maternal behavior. The first is the mother's way of regulating and controlling the behavior of the child. This method may be imperative-normative, relying mainly on appeals to formal rules or authority of conduct. This method is especially important because of the low demand they make on the cognitive resources of the child. The method is an appeal to subjective-personal states. The mother appeals to inner states, to feelings, moods, personal preferences, and approval of others. The child sees himself from another's viewpoint and is sensitive to the evaluations of surrounding peers as well as adults. The third method is cognitive-rational. The appeal in this method is to long-term consequences inherent in the situation and related to the task to be accomplished rather than to feelings and established rules. These teaching techniques include the mother's tendency to be specific, to orient the child to certain tasks, to present material and ideas in sequences which give the child some experience in following a chain of ideas in working toward clear goals set for him.¹

Maternal language has been one of the points of special concern. Scales for analyzing maternal language were developed by Ellis Olim and the relation of maternal language to the cognitive behavior of the child was investigated.¹

Several questions are relevant concerning the mother's role in socializing her child into the behavior expected of children in public educational systems. These questions are:

1. What are the elements of the images the mothers hold toward the school as an institution and toward the teacher as a figure that represents the school?

2. What kinds of behavior do mothers believe to be appropriate for pupils in a classroom setting? Their definition of the expectations of the school and the complementary role of pupil for their young children?

3. What relationships appear between the attitudes and practices of the mothers and the cognitive and school-relevant performance of their children?

4. What are the mothers' aspirations for their child?

The use of the term, role of the pupil, means here, a set of behaviors, non-academic in nature, which structure interaction between the child and the basic components of his school experience: the teacher, the tasks and materials of learning, institutional rules, and the peer group. The process of socialization into this role is not direct training: the child's definition of his role as a pupil, his expectations of the behaviors to be demanded

¹Ibid.
of him by the school system, are attained through indirect learning.¹

The home environment has the job of conveying to the child, during his pre-school years, attitudes toward learning, toward institutions (schools), toward persons of authority (teacher), and toward his own abilities and limitations as a member of the school complex. Through the mother’s everyday behavior and through interaction with her child, the mother acts as the primary socializing agent of the child into the role of pupil.

Successful socialization should result in a set of behaviors conducive to learning, the child is capable of establishing a good working relationship with his teacher, he is prepared to deal with her as a source of information as well as an authority. The child who is not prepared is not uneducable because he is lacking in learning from his pre-school years, but because he has not learned the right things. Unsuccessful socialization is expected to lead to a very poor teacher-child relationship which will result in the blocking of information transmitted, and to a set of behaviors disruptive to the learning situation. The child who has learned to be submissive and compliant, to consider himself ineffective in dealing with authority and insufficient in solving problems, comes to school unready to meet the demands which are made upon him. He has a limited perception of the school and the world about him. He is learning from his parents to cope with a negative environment. Parental indifference to the value of education is transmitted to the children. This set of hypothetical events

is seen as a potential explanatory model for the lower-class child's inability to meet successfully the role-demands of the public school system.

Mothers' attitudes toward the school play a very essential role in the socialization of the child. Mothers from the lower-class believe that it is useless to attempt to change the system or the unruliness of children. On the other hand, middle-class mothers tend to disagree with this statement. Mothers from the lower-class agree that conservatism, an attitude which discourages fun in life, and complaints about the waste of time in extracurricular activities that are provided by the school. They express feelings of optimism and of reliance on education for bettering one's lot.

In their attitudes toward education, the mothers from middle-class backgrounds reject themes of powerlessness vis-à-vis the authority of the school, deny a conservation which dictates more work and less play, deny an optimism which states that formal schooling is the only means to a better life, and agree with the notion that there are other goals in life as important as education.

A mother's attitude about herself and her relationship to the school system may set the pattern for her child's belief about the typical relationships of the individual to the institution. Middle-class mothers tend to see their role in interaction with the school and its representatives as one of equality: The mothers' see their meeting with the teacher as a friendly visit between equals who are interested in gaining insight into the child's behavior. Lower-class mothers do not emphasize positive affect and equality to the extent that middle-class mothers do, however, they tend to describe the mother-teacher relationships as a working together of the
two to teach some common goal.

How a mother defines the school indicates which aspects of the new situation concerning the child are important to her. Until he has entered and actually experienced this new realm, the pre-school child's notions about school are likely to be hazy and inaccurate. He can anticipate it if his mother prepares him, drawing his attention to those aspects she deems most important. If she does not tell her child what she thinks of school nor describe the daily round of a classroom, she will often express her attitudes and behavior she believes will be necessary for his success in school.

Working-class mothers feel a powerlessness and a lack of personal effectiveness against the authority of the school system, although they have great respect for education as an important tool for achieving a better status in life. They believe in the importance of good behavior on the part of their children. The frustration which appears to accompany these attitudes and beliefs was strikingly illustrated when mothers were asked about their aspirations and expectations for this children's educational achievement in a study conducted by Hess and Shipman.¹ (Figure 1). The majority of mothers in all social class groups said that they would like their children to finish college. The majority of mothers in the working-class groups, however, when asked how far in school they thought their child would actually go, were less hopeful. Group B mothers' aspirations and expectations were more diverse, but the majority of those who aspired to a college education for their children also expected that their children would finish college. Discrepancy between expressed aspirations

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FIGURE 1

MOTHERS' ASPIRATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS FOR THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT
(Percentage responding at level of college attendance or above)

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and expectations among middle-class mothers barely exists; they want their children to finish college, and they believed that they would. The images that the mothers hold of the school and that are probably transmitted to the young child in some form are particularly relevant for early education and the child's success in the school. The mothers' attitudes indicate that the problem is not due to a lack of respect for the school or to the belief that it is ineffective; it is due to the fact that the mothers regard it as a distant and formidable institution with which they have little interaction and over which they exercise very little influence.
little control. The initial relationship between the child and the teacher is posed in terms of authority rather than interaction and in terms of rule of obedience rather than inquiry and exploration. This early attitude supports and reinforces the passivity of many working-class children who come into contact with middle-class institutions. It represents an orientation toward authority and also toward learning which has been taught by the mother and by the community environment and which needs to be modified through experience with teachers who interact on a basis other than authority and obedience.

Engaging parents in the activities of the school in some meaningful way may assist the child in developing more adequate and useful images of the school, of the teacher and of the role of pupil. More interaction between the home and the school, particularly in situations where the child is coming into the first grade or kindergarten might make the initial orientation smoother and easier and supply an initial setting for the child in his first contact with the school that would make the task of resocialization somewhat simpler. The schools must find ways of involving parents. Most important is the recognition by teachers and parents of the role of the parents in raising the aspirations of children and in the valuing of education and learning as a major means of gaining security and mobility.

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CHAPTER IV
EARLY EXPERIENCE AND THE SOCIALIZATION OF COGNITIVE MODES IN CHILDREN

For many years the central theoretical issues in this field focused far too much on the contribution of genetic factors rather than with environmental factors. There has been too much emphasis on the genetic approach in attempting to understand why the child doesn't learn. The most recent theoretical addition to an understanding of the inadequate academic attainment of disadvantaged youth has come from explorations of the relationship of early environmental stimulation. We need to understand how cultural experience is translated into cognitive behavior and academic achievement.¹

The arguments presented in this chapter are these: First, that the behavior which lead to social, educational, and economic poverty is socialized in early childhood (it is learned); second, that the basic quality involved is an absence of cognitive meaning in the mother-child communication system; and third, that the growth of cognitive process is a wide range of alternatives of action.

The structure of the social system and the structure of the family shape communication and language, and in turn, language shapes thought and

cognitive styles of problem solving. The nature of the control system
which related the parents to the child restricts the number and kind of
alternatives for action and thought that are opened to the child; this
constriction prevents a tendency for the child to reflect, to consider
and choose among alternatives for speech and action. It develops modes
for dealing with stimuli and with problems which are impulsive rather than
reflective, which deal with the immediate rather than the future.

In the view of Basil Bernstein, language structures and conditions
what the child learns and how he learns, setting limits within which future
learning may take place. He identifies two forms of communication codes
or styles of verbal behavior: restricted and elaborated. Restricted
codes are stereotyped, limited, and condensed, lacking in specificity and
the exactness needed for precise conceptualization and differentiation.
Sentences are short, simple, and often unfinished; there is little use of
subordinate clauses for elaborating the content of the sentence; it is a
language of implicit meaning, easily understood and commonly shared. It
is the language form often used in impersonal situations when the intent
is to promote solidarity or reduce tension. Restricted codes are non-
specific cliches, statements, or observations about events made in general
terms that will be readily understood. The basic quality of this mode is
to limit the range and detail of concept and information involved. Elabora-
ted codes, however, are those in which communication is individualized and
the message is specific to a particular situation, topic, and person. It
is more particular, more differentiated, and more precise. It permits
expression of a wider and more complex range of thought, tending toward
discrimination among cognitive and affective content.¹

Lower-class language follows a restricted linguistic code pattern while middle-class environments develop both elaborate as well as restricted codes. The restrictive code of the middle-class is different from that of the lower class. The middle-class restrictive code is usually of a special or formal language whereas the restrictive code of the lower-class might be "slang" language of some lower-class adolescents.

The interlacing of social interaction and language is illustrated by the distinction between two types of family control. One is oriented toward control by status appeal or ascribed role norms. The second is oriented toward persons. Families differ in the degree to which they utilize each of these types of regulatory appeal. In status-oriented families, behavior tends to be regulated in terms of role expectations. There is little opportunity for the unique characteristics of the child to influence the decision-making process or the interaction between parent and child. In these families, the internal or personal states of the children are not influential as a basis for decision. Norms of behavior are stressed with such imperatives as, "You must do this because I say so," or "Girls don't act like that," or other statements which rely on the status of the participants or a behavior norm for justification.²

In the family, control is employed through status appeals. The feature that distinguishes among families is the extent to which the status-based control maneuvers are modified by orientation toward persons. In a

² Ibid.
person-oriented appeal system, the characteristics of the child modify status demands and are taken into account in interaction. Individualized decisions derive from this type of family. The conclusions reached of this type of family are less frequently related to status. This philosophy demands an elaborated linguistic code and a wide range of linguistic and behavioral alternatives in interpersonal interaction. Status oriented families may be regulated by less individuated commands, messages, and responses. The status-oriented family will rely more heavily on a restricted code. The verbal exchange is inherent in the structure.

A person-oriented family allows the child to achieve the behavior rules by presenting them in a specific context for the child. Status oriented families present the rules in an assigned manner, where compliance is the only rule following possibility. The role of power in the interaction is more obvious. Coercion and defiance are interactional possibilities. Status-oriented families use a more rigid learning and teaching model in which compliance is stressed.

There are two axes of the child's behavior. One of these is assertive, initiatory approach to learning; the other deals with the tendency to reach solutions impulsively or hastily as distinguished from a tendency to reflect, to compare alternatives, and to cease among available options.

These styles of cognitive behavior are related to the dimensions of material linguistic codes and types of family control system. A status-oriented statement offers a set of regulations and rules for conduct and interaction that is based on arbitrary decisions rather than upon logical consequences which result from selection of one or another alternatives. Elaborated and person-oriented statements deals more with the styles of the cognitive approach that involve reflection and reflective companion. The
child comes to see the world as a set of possibilities from which he can make a personal selection. He learns to role play with an element of personal flexibility and not by role-conforming rigidity.

One of the most striking differences in the environments provided by lower-class and middle-class others is in their patterns of language usage. The lower-class home is limited in that the actual intellectual and social interchange between mother and child is of a kind that does not provide a practical and easy transfer to the school setting.

Even if lower-class parents desire to play an action role in the education of their children, they are limited by their own language deficiency and knowledge. Lower-class parents are far less effective than middle-class. The lower-class parents are not only far less effective as a directive agent for learning, but are unable to provide the child with an environment adequate for learning.

The child from a lower socio-economic background may experience a deficient amount of verbal interaction. He learns most of his language by hearing rather than by the correction of his own speech. Words acquired with no connection in a stable learning environment will be of minimum use as mediators, at a later stage of development. In contrast, the child whose language acquisition is characterized by active participation with a more verbally mature individual not only develops greater verbal proficiency—as a result of being listened to and corrected—but also is more likely to rely on, and use effectively, words as mediators.

The pupils need direct instruction in language forms and their uses, intensive correction of their own speech patterns and a continuous emphasis or vocabulary building and the appropriate use of words.
The meaning of deprivation is a deprivation of meaning—a cognitive environment in which behavior is controlled by status rules rather than by attention to the individual characteristics of a specific situation and one in which behavior is not mediated by verbal cues or by teaching that related events to one another and the present to the future. This environment produces a child who relates to authority rather than to rationale, who, although often compliant, is not reflective in his behavior, and for whom the consequences of an act are largely considered in terms of immediate punishment or reward rather than future effects and long-range goals.

The Research of Robert D. Hess

A research group of 163 Negro mothers and their 4-year old children was selected from four different social status levels: Group A came from college-educated professional, executive, and managerial occupational levels; Group B came from skilled blue-collar occupational levels, with predominantly elementary school education; Group C came from unskilled or semi-skilled occupational levels with predominantly elementary school education; Group D from skilled or semi-skilled occupational levels, with fathers absent and families supported by public assistance.

The mothers participated in an interaction session with their children in which the mother was taught three simple tasks and then asked to teach these tasks to the child.

One of these tasks was to sort or group a number of plastic toys by color and by function; the second task was to sort eight blocks by two

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characteristics simultaneously; a third task required the mother and child to work together to copy five designs on a toy called Etch-A-Sketch.

The data in this research show social-status differences among the four groups in the dimensions of behavior to indicate something of the maternal teaching styles that are emerging and to offer examples of relations between maternal and child behavior.

One of the most outstanding differences between the environments provided by the mothers of the research group was in their patterns of language use. The most obvious social-class variations were in the total amount of verbal output in response to different questions and tasks asking for verbal response. Middle-class mothers were longer in language productivity than mothers from the other groups.

These differences in language indicate the extent to which the maternal environments of children in different social-class groups tend to be mediated by verbal cues. They offer or fail to offer opportunities for labeling, for identifying objects and feelings and adult models who can demonstrate the usefulness of language as a tool for dealing with interpersonal interaction and for ordering stimuli in the environment.

There were also differences in the quality of language used by the mothers which were brought out in an examination of their responses to the following task: The mothers were shown a Lion Card of the Children's Apperception Test and asked to tell their children a story pertaining to the card. On the card there is a picture of a lion seated in a chair holding a pipe. Next to him is a cane. In the corner is a mouse peeping out of a hole. These protocols were the source of language samples which were summarized in scales (Table 1). Two scales are described here.
Table 1. Social Status Differences In Language Usage  
(Scores Are The Means For Each Group)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Social Status</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Social Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>U. Lower</td>
<td>L. Lower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean sentence length(^a)</td>
<td>11.39</td>
<td>8.74</td>
<td>9.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjective range(^b)</td>
<td>31.99</td>
<td>28.32</td>
<td>28.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverb range(^c)</td>
<td>11.14</td>
<td>9.40</td>
<td>8.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb elaboration(^d)</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complex verb preference(^e)</td>
<td>63.25</td>
<td>59.12</td>
<td>50.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syntactic structure elaboration(^f)</td>
<td>8.89</td>
<td>6.90</td>
<td>8.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stimulus utilization</td>
<td>5.82</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td>4.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduced content</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>2.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstraction(^g)</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>3.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)Average number of words per sentence.
\(^b\)Proportion of uncommon adjective types to total nouns, expressed as a percentage.
\(^c\)Proportion of uncommon adverb types to total verbs, adjectives, and adverbs, expressed as percentage.
\(^d\)Average number of complex verb types per sentence.
\(^e\)Proportion of complex verb types to all verb types, simple and complex.
\(^f\)Average number of weighted complex syntactic structures per 100 words.
\(^g\)Proportion of abstract nouns and verbs (excluding repetitions) to total nouns and verbs (excluding repetitions), expressed as a percentage.

The first scale dealt with the mother's use of abstract words. The index derived was a proportion of abstract noun or verb types to total number of noun and verb types. Words were considered abstract when the name of the object is thought of apart from the cases in which it is actually realized.

Middle-class mothers attained an abstraction score of 5.6; the score of the skilled workers was 4.9; the score for the unskilled group was 3.7; for recipients of Aid to Dependent Children the score was 1.8.
The second scale centered around the mothers' tendency to use complex syntactic structures such as coordinate and subordinate clauses, unusual infinitive phrases. (For example, "To drive well, you must be alert"); infinitive clauses ("What to do next was the lion's problem"); and participial phrases (e.g., "Continuing the story, the lion..."). The index of structural elaboration derived was a proportion of these complex syntactic structures, weighted in accordance with their complexity and with the degree to which they are strung together to form still more complicated structures (e.g., clauses within clauses), to the total number of sentences.

Mothers from the middle-class had a structure elaboration index of 8.89; the score for Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) mothers was 6.46. The use of complex grammatical forms and elaboration of these forms into complex clauses and sentences provides a highly elaborated code with which to manipulate the environment symbolically. This type of code encourages the child to recognize the possibilities and subtleties inherent in language not only for communication but also for carrying on high-level cognitive procedures.

Data on the mothers' use of status as contrasted with person-oriented statements comes from maternal responses to questions inquiring what the mother would do in order to deal with several different hypothetical situations at school in which the child had broken the rules of the school, had failed to achieve, or had been wronged by a teacher or classmate. The results are found in Table 2.

The orientation of the mothers' types of control are seen in their instruction to their children in getting them prepared for new experiences. The data at this point derives from answers to the question: "Suppose your
Table 2. Person-Oriented and Status-Oriented Units On School Situation Protocols (Mothers)

A. Mean Number

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Class</th>
<th>Person-Oriented</th>
<th>Status-Oriented</th>
<th>P/S Ratio</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upper middle</td>
<td>9.52 (1-19)</td>
<td>7.50 (0-19)</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper lower</td>
<td>6.20 (0-20)</td>
<td>7.32 (2-17)</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower lower</td>
<td>4.66 (0-15)</td>
<td>7.34 (2-17)</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADC</td>
<td>3.59 (0-16)</td>
<td>8.15 (3-29)</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Mean Per Cent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Class</th>
<th>Person-Oriented</th>
<th>Status-Oriented</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upper middle</td>
<td>36.92</td>
<td>27.78</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper lower</td>
<td>31.65</td>
<td>36.92</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower lower</td>
<td>26.43</td>
<td>40.69</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADC</td>
<td>20.85</td>
<td>51.09</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

child were starting to school tomorrow for the first time. What would you tell him? How would you prepare him for school?

A person-oriented mother who used elaborated verbal codes stated:

"First of all, I would remind her that she was going to school to learn, that her teacher would take my place, and that she would be expected to follow instructions. Also that her time was to be spent mostly in the classroom with other children, and that any question or any problems that she might have she could consult with her teacher for assistance."

What did the mother do in her response in reference to the education of the child? She was informative; she offered reassurance and support to
help the child deal with anxiety; third, she described the school situation as one that involves a personal relationship between the child and the teacher; and last, she presented the classroom situation as one in which the child was to learn.

The response of a second mother is as follows: "Well, John, it's time to go to school now. You must know how to behave. The first day at school you should be a good boy and should do just what the teacher tells you to do." In this mother's response she defined the role of the child as passive and compliant. The central issues presented were those of dealing with authority and the institution, rather than with learning; third, the relationship and roles she portrayed were sketched in terms of status and role expectations rather than in personal terms; her message was general, restricted, and vague, lacking information about how to deal with the problems of school except by passive compliance.

One of the features of the behavior of the working-class mothers and children is a tendency to act without taking sufficient time for reflection and planning. This might be called impulsive behavior in a type of activity in which a particular act seems not to be related to the act that preceded it. It lacks meaning; it is not sufficiently related to the context in which it occurs, to the motivations of the participants, or to the goals of the task. The behavior may be verbal or motor; it shows itself in several ways. For example, on the Etch-a-Sketch task, the mother may silently watch a child make an error and then punish him. Another mother may anticipate the error, will warn the child that he is about to reach a decision point; she will prepare him by verbal and nonverbal cues. A problem-solving approach requires reflection and the ability to weight decisions, to choose
among alternatives. The effect of restricted speech and of status orientation is to foreclose the need for reflective weighting of alternatives and consequences, tends to produce cognitive styles more easily adapted to problem-solving and reflection.
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