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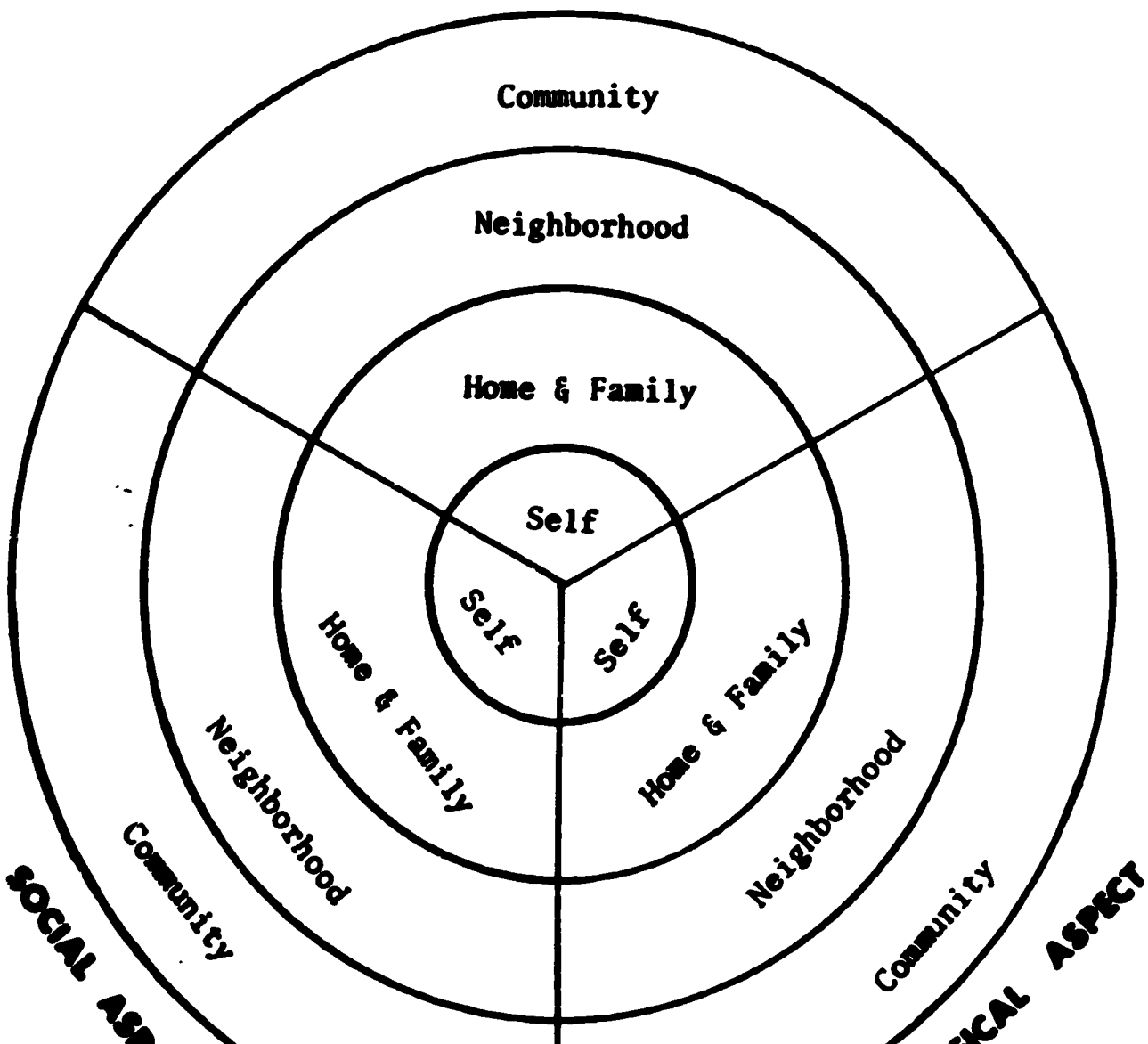
ABSTRACT

The goal of educational programs for educable mentally retarded (EMR) children is to progressively develop socially mature individuals who can think critically and act independently. The major focus is a curriculum that encompasses social and occupational concepts, facts, and behaviors that are consonant with social adaptation during maturation and at maturity. Academic learning is a means to the end. EMR children require daily language arts and arithmetic as communication and social problem-solving tools. All other areas of learning are integral aspects or motivators in social learning and avenues for self-expression. There is a dynamic relationship between the elements of the curriculum and the systematic ways of learning as managed by the teacher. Subject matter determines the characteristics of the teaching-learning transaction or experience and the roles of teacher and student. The categorization of mature retardate behaviors allows categorization of the curriculum into blocks. A three-dimensional model of the developmental curriculum includes: transactions with the interrelated social, psychological, and physical phenomena; and, the vertical progression of maturation or competence through five interrelated environments (self, home and family, neighborhood, community, and extra-community). (SBE)

CONSTRUCTION OF A SOCIAL LEARNING CURRICULUM



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CONSTRUCTION OF A SOCIAL LEARNING CURRICULUM

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Essentially, the two pervasive characteristics necessary for social competence in a society such as ours are the abilities to think critically and to act independently. We present to the maturing individual no clear-cut criteria or lower limits for these characteristics. Irrespective of his physical or mental status, it is expected that the individual "read" his environment, recognize the criteria for social adjustment and then perform in such a way that he does not attract the disapproval awaiting those who in some way threaten the equilibrium. To put it another way, we leave it to him to weigh the facts and their implications for conclusions (think critically) and then to invoke a strategy for acting on these facts (act independently). If the individual perceptions of the facts are consistently accurate; and if his actions and strategies are in harmony with the world around him, he is, more likely than not, well assimilated in society.

Within this context, there are no reliable predictors of who will, or will not, become assimilated into society on society's terms. The best we can do presently is make a probability statement based on measurables and observables of youthful intellectual and behavioral phenomena. As usual, we are more often correct in our predictions at the extremes of these areas of performance. We come closer to predicting the extent of social competence (or incompetence) of the severely retarded child than we do of the mildly retarded, for example.

By placing an educable mentally retarded child in a special class, we are virtually predicting that the probability of his becoming assimilated socially when he reaches maturity is small unless some kind of early intervention is applied. In the case of educational intervention, the assumption is made that the child's experiences in the classroom will lead to a level of critical thinking and independent action that will be consonant with the demands of his environment at maturity. By any means of evaluation, we are still far from perfect in our intervention. Some educable mentally retarded youngsters with long careers in special classes have disappeared into society, while others became notorious failures in one or more aspects of adjustment. At the other extreme, there are youngsters who have never been in a special class who leave school -- some to disappear into society, others to become notorious failures.

There are no conclusive data that tell us why the successful succeed and the failures fail. Those who provide services for mature retardates who are in some way at odds with their environment describe the special class attenders and non-attenders similarly. They do this within the framework of manifest behaviors which conflict with standards for adequate socio-occupational performance. "Irresponsible," "poor judgment," "lack of social sensitivity," and other similar terms are found often in their dossiers in rehabilitation, USES, and social service agencies. The picture is confounded by the fact that there is no uniformity in failure. Some show a complex combination of failure behaviors, while others show one or two. For example, there is the case of the young lady who managed her personal affairs very well, got along with a wide variety of people in social and occupational settings, but ranked showing up for work (on time or at all) as secondary to many other activities.

In the final analysis, it seems that it really doesn't matter whether the mature retardate manifests one area of inadequacy or five. Studies show that if he becomes occupationally immobilized, there is a good chance that his entire adjustment pattern will crumble. In the above case of the young lady who lost her job and thus was deprived of the financial means to manage her personal affairs, her ability to get along with others becomes an academic issue.

Where the pattern of assets and liabilities does make a difference is in the treatment aspects of both rehabilitation and education. Treatment in rehabilitation has an immediacy about it that provides the counselor with information that leads to relatively quick decisions and interventions. This is not the case in education. The long temporal distance between the child in the special classroom and the mature retardate, coupled with the obscure connections between youthful and mature behaviors, makes decisions on the part of educators very vulnerable. Apart from a few obvious connections (e.g., a child who never learns to tell time will probably later have some serious difficulties in situations that demand punctuality), the majority require a great deal of speculation regarding their implications for behavior at maturity.

Fortunately, many educators have the experiences and perceptions needed to estimate logical connections between youthful behaviors and their implications for adjustment at maturity. Furthermore, they have the extensive and in-depth experiences of rehabilitation and social service personnel as resources in decision-making. Beyond this, educators also have the luxury of the many degrees of freedom that go along with so-called normative behavior as it is described by both research and experience.

The research and experiences of rehabilitation personnel indicate some important facts that need to be taken into account in planning educational programs for the educable mentally retarded. First, if we make a distinction between the sensorimotor and the cognitive-affective aspects of working, for example, we find that the problems of the retarded are more often in the cognitive-affective (behavioral) domains. That is, they more often lose their jobs because they violate the personal-social rules associated with work. Conflicts in punctuality, in personal cleanliness, in dependability on the job, with fellow employees and supervisory staff, in management of personal finances, or in activities after working hours account for more firings than do breakage or slowness in production. This seems to hold true for other areas of living as well. Secondly, there is noteworthy evidence in the reports of vocational rehabilitation and social service personnel that behaviors that signify deficiency or abnormalities in cognitive-affective areas are often susceptible to change through treatment by counseling staff. These findings suggest a focus for the special class, along with some optimism with respect to imbuing educable mentally retarded children with the attitudes and behaviors that are consistent with socio-occupational competence at maturity.

Even so, while optimism is warranted, it needs to be tempered by the fact that a sizeable proportion of retardates persist in becoming social casualties despite present educational treatments. Some persist in remaining social casualties despite all that rehabilitation and the social agencies have been able to do. This means that educational planning and implementation needs to be done with broad peripheral vision; thus the incipient deviant will be recognized early and provided for appropriately.

This, then, brings us back to the consideration of the essentials of socio-occupational competence -- the abilities to think critically and to act independently.

The ability to think critically implies that one is able to make judgments, decisions, comparisons, and commitments in a way that will cause the least possible conflict with one's environment, while providing satisfaction for the individual. To accomplish these goals one needs a fund of knowledge, facts and concepts and the ability to see the relationship between these and the immediate issue. Critical thinking is, within the traditional view of education, a concern of curriculum in the sense that children acquire many facts and concepts in the ordinary course of their classroom experiences. These added to facts and concepts learned elsewhere are connected, reinforced and enriched. The curriculum, then, represents educators' selection and ordering of knowledge, facts and concepts which together represent the relationship between what role the school sees itself playing in the maturation of its students and the world into which they are growing and will emerge at maturity.

The ability to act independently can be regarded as a personality factor. That is, it represents the type of self concept that permits the child (and adult) to pit himself against a critical, ever-evaluating world and to accept decisions about his performance with sufficient equanimity to do it again and again.

Obviously, we cannot separate the ability to think critically from the ability to act independently. A child who does not think critically but who nevertheless acts independently displays such inappropriate behavior that he is usually accused of "acting before thinking," of "acting without

thinking," of "being thoughtless," or of "having poor judgment." All of these say the same thing -- namely, that he is not assessing the situation and bringing into play the knowledge that is appropriate to it.

Teachers are also familiar with the child who can and does think critically but who seems to lack the self-starter to act independently. Such children are often described as being "unmotivated," "lacking initiative," or "lazy," even though the situation does not seem to call for much motivation, initiative or diligence. In many cases, these children are so unsure of their competence that they simply cannot take the chance of being wrong again. These essentially immobilized children are, in their own way, as much of a trial to teachers and, in later years, to rehabilitation personnel as are those who "fly off the handle" or act bizarrely. They leave huge gaps in their performance and frustrate the teacher who senses evidence of competence without seeing it come into play.

Traditional special education programs take into account the role of curriculum in developing the ability to think critically. They do not, however, identify the specific role of developing the ability to act independently. This is probably because teachers have characteristically viewed themselves as "interpreters and perpetuators of the culture," as "dispensors of learning," and as professional persons who "make learning possible." In the case of children with strong capabilities in auto-education, these views of the role of the teacher are reasonable. Confronted with children with learning disabilities that militate against auto-education, however, the teacher does not have the luxury of a loosely defined role. Instead, the teacher should take a purposeful and predetermined role that leads to a calculated management of learning. One important aspect is the ability to systematize teaching so that the nature

of the substantive elements of the curriculum and the nature of the teacher-pupil transaction are in harmony. To put it another way, a teacher needs to teach for the learning of a concept so that the insights fundamental to acquisition and then generalization are attainable. Facts, on the other hand, need to be taught so that they stand out clearly as entities and as relatables to other facts, i.e., my birthday is in March; I will be eight years old.

The dynamic relationship between the substantive elements of the curriculum and systematic ways to manage learning requires that teachers of the retarded abandon the traditional separation of curriculum and methods and turn instead to the implication of one for the other. To do this, the teacher needs to recognize that subject matter constitutes the essence of classroom transactions and that the nature of the subject matter determines the characteristics of the transaction and, consequently, the roles of teacher and student in the course of the transaction.

The Goal of Education for the Educable Mentally Retarded

Taking into account the essentials for socio-occupational competence, the histories of mature retardates and the implications of these on educational programs for the retarded, one could say that the goal of educational programs for children is to evolve mature individuals who can think critically and act independently to such an extent that they are socially and occupationally competent.

This is a broad goal. Social competence includes relevant decisions and behaviors in areas ranging from self-management of personal affairs (such as finances, leisure time, communication, travel, health) to

establishing and maintaining a family and household. Occupational competence ranges from getting and holding a remunerative job to responsible performance on the job as a productive and cooperative member of a work force.

The major focus for this goal is a curriculum that encompasses those social-occupational concepts, facts and behaviors that are consonant with social adaptation during maturation and at maturity. This is not to say that existing curriculums disregard factors in social-occupational growth. On the contrary, many do incorporate these concepts someplace in the curriculum. To achieve the goals of education for the educable mentally retarded, however, factors in socio-occupational competence need to constitute the central thrust of the curriculum, with all other areas being reinforcers of these learnings. We call this style of organization the Social Learning Curriculum.

In a goal so broadly stated, the end necessarily invokes many related means. Some of these have been looked upon traditionally as ends in themselves. If there is any merit to the goal as stated above, the means toward this end include:

1. Literacy -- the child needs to master the language arts as problem-solving tools in socio-occupational events. In this sense, the extrinsic values inherent in being able to read, write, spell and converse supercede the intrinsic. How to use reading abilities to help arrive at a decision in leisure-time activities, for example, is of greater value than reading as a leisure-time activity.

2. Quantitative ability -- the child needs to learn the processes of computation along with the cues in problems that indicate which process is relevant. That is, children need to know both how to add and when to add. They also need to know the quantitative concepts that are fundamental to the actualities and comparatives in measurement, position, order and conservation.

Thus, while educable mentally retarded children require a daily session in language arts and in arithmetic, these sessions need to be conceptualized as ones that will build skills which have their important application as problem-solving tools in socio-occupational events. All other areas of learning (e.g., health, safety, science) are integral aspects of social learning, while activities such as art, music and physical activities are motivators, reinforcers or transitional factors in the social learning pursuits. These are not narrowly conceived. It is contended here that these can be complementary to social learning in some way, as well as being avenues for self-expression (depending, of course, on how the teacher manages the activity).

Succinctly, then, while socio-occupational competence based on the ability to think critically and act independently is the end purpose of special education, academic learning is a means toward that end.

The Social Learning Curriculum

As stated earlier, the Social Learning Curriculum represents a departure from traditional concepts of curriculum for the retarded only in the sense that it gives primacy to the concepts and facts that lead to (and are integral with) those knowledges and behaviors that appear to be

consonant with broad assimilation into society at maturity. This curriculum makes no claim of innovations in the substantive elements of curriculum. Instead, it represents a selection and organization of substance that purports to be in harmony with the goals of education for the retarded.

Focusing on the factors in the social development of children as the substance of a curriculum and the matrix for teaching systems presupposes certain assumptions. These are stated as follows:

1. a noteworthy proportion of knowledges and behaviors manifest at maturity have their roots in the learning and experiences constituting the total social-psychological growth of the individual;
2. maladaptive or deficient behaviors are signs of: (a) lack of exposure to modal kinds of learning and experiences, (b) exposure to learnings and experiences that are inappropriate or antagonistic to expected behaviors, or (c) learnings and experiences, while appropriate by ordinary standards, are either distorted or misperceived by the learner; and
3. that such learnings can be managed to the degree that the probability of the occurrence of lack of exposure to necessary learning, exposure to inappropriate or antagonistic learning, and the distortion or misperception of learning will be reduced. In turn, this will contribute to reducing the probability of maladaptivity in socio-occupational endeavors at maturity.

The above assumptions being accepted, the crucial issue becomes the designation of the substantive elements of the curriculum that will be

most consonant with the assumptions. If the assumptions are based on observables in mature behavior, it is only logical to study the knowledge and behaviors of mature retardates and to classify these educationally. This we have done by first studying the negative aspects of behavior as reported by rehabilitation and social service agencies. These debilitating behaviors of maturity have been translated into counterpart positive learnings and experiences which occur during childhood and youth. In this way, the curriculum is conceived as a preventative instrument in the long run and an ameliorative instrument in the short run. It is possible to misconstrue the foregoing statement and attribute to the curriculum the intent of preventing mental retardation. Frankly, we will be satisfied if the curriculum and teaching systems some day are correlated with a diminution in the number and kinds of problems that force themselves to the attention of those agencies attending to mature retardates.

It was to those agencies serving mature retardates that we turned to document the types of behavior that defeat desirable socio-occupational adjustment. Surveys were conducted by questionnaire and by personal interview with a representative cross-section of vocational rehabilitation, U. S. Employment Service and social welfare staffs. These professional people were asked to describe the conditions that required their services, as well as their speculations about the source of the conditions. They were then asked to describe how they used their professional skills and facilities to deal with the situation, and the extent and conditions of their success or failure.

A sizeable array of "undesirable" behaviors was described in the form of incidents. Considerable repetition of certain behaviors appeared, both across the service agencies and across situational

boundaries. For example, over-dependence as a defeating behavior was in the catalog of each agency and, at the same time, seemed to be a crucial factor in occupational settings, in leisure-time activities, in family matters and in a wide array of inter-personal transactions. The hundreds of statements by agency staf were distilled into lists of concepts, facts and behavioral skills.

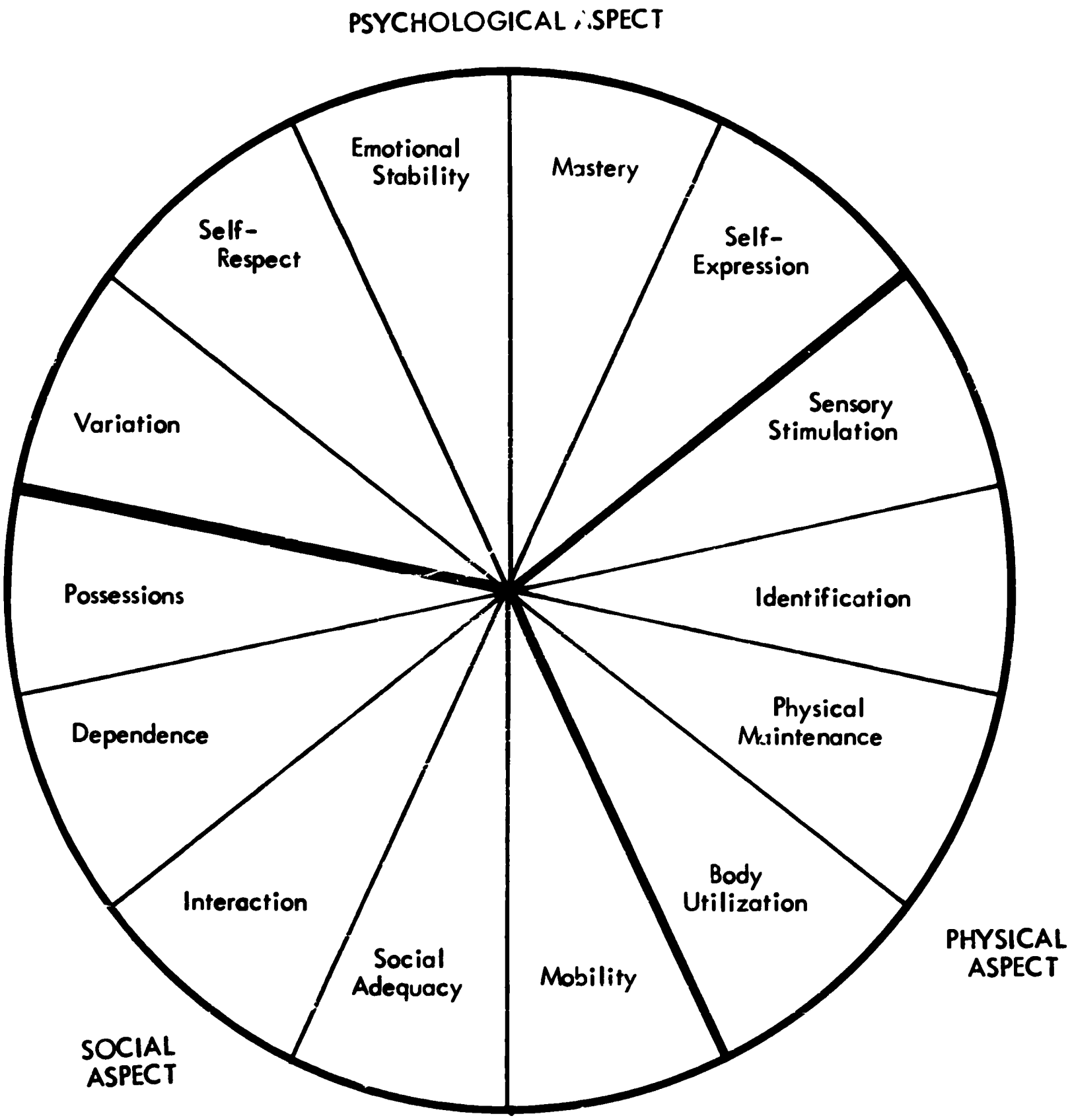
After much exploration into psychological and sociological literature, it became obvious that no one theoretical position could account for the many facets of behavior listed without considerable forcing and superficiality. Accordingly, our target was a middle ground that would accommodate a straight-forward categorization of behaviors as manifestations of the need to acquire and sustain a combined social, psychological and physical equilibrium. The categories, shown as need areas, can be seen in Figure 1.

It is clear that the need areas are both interdependent and interactive. For example, "mobility" as a social phenomenon is, to a degree, interdependent and interactive with all of the psychological and physical needs. The extent to which these relationships exist is more clear in some situations than it is in others. Hopefully, these will become better understood with further study and experience.

The key advantage of Figure 1 is found in the fact that it allows for the categorization of the substance of the Curriculum into teaching-learning blocks. Within each "need" area, it becomes possible to identify and specify the concepts, facts and skills that seem relevant to the social behaviors required at maturation.

Figure 1

Need Areas



It is at this point that curriculum builders are faced with decisions basic to the organization of teaching-learning transactions. Of the many possible systems, it seems that only a developmental progression of substance would be consistent with the concept of educational goals for the educable mentally retarded expressed earlier. The model for the organization of teaching-learning substance is shown in Figure 2.

This model has three important dimensions. The inverted cone represents the expansion of the growing individual's world. This dimension takes into account the growing number of transactions he has with social, psychological and physical phenomena as his mobility increases. Thus, it brings into focus the second dimension, the delineation of certain molar environments through which he passes on the road to maturity. These environments are shown by the concentric circles. The third dimension, the vertical progression of each environment, is consistent with the developmental orientation of this curriculum. In this sense, it is important that we keep in mind the additive aspects of the progression to maturity. Note that the first environment to be studied is the Self.[1] The next important environment is the Home and Family which, according to the model, incorporates the Self. This is based on the assumption that one never really abandons experiences as one matures but instead adds to and builds upon these; he thus becomes eligible for the "next" even more complex environment. The third dimension, the persistence of knowledge, facts and skills, is represented by the vertical broken lines.

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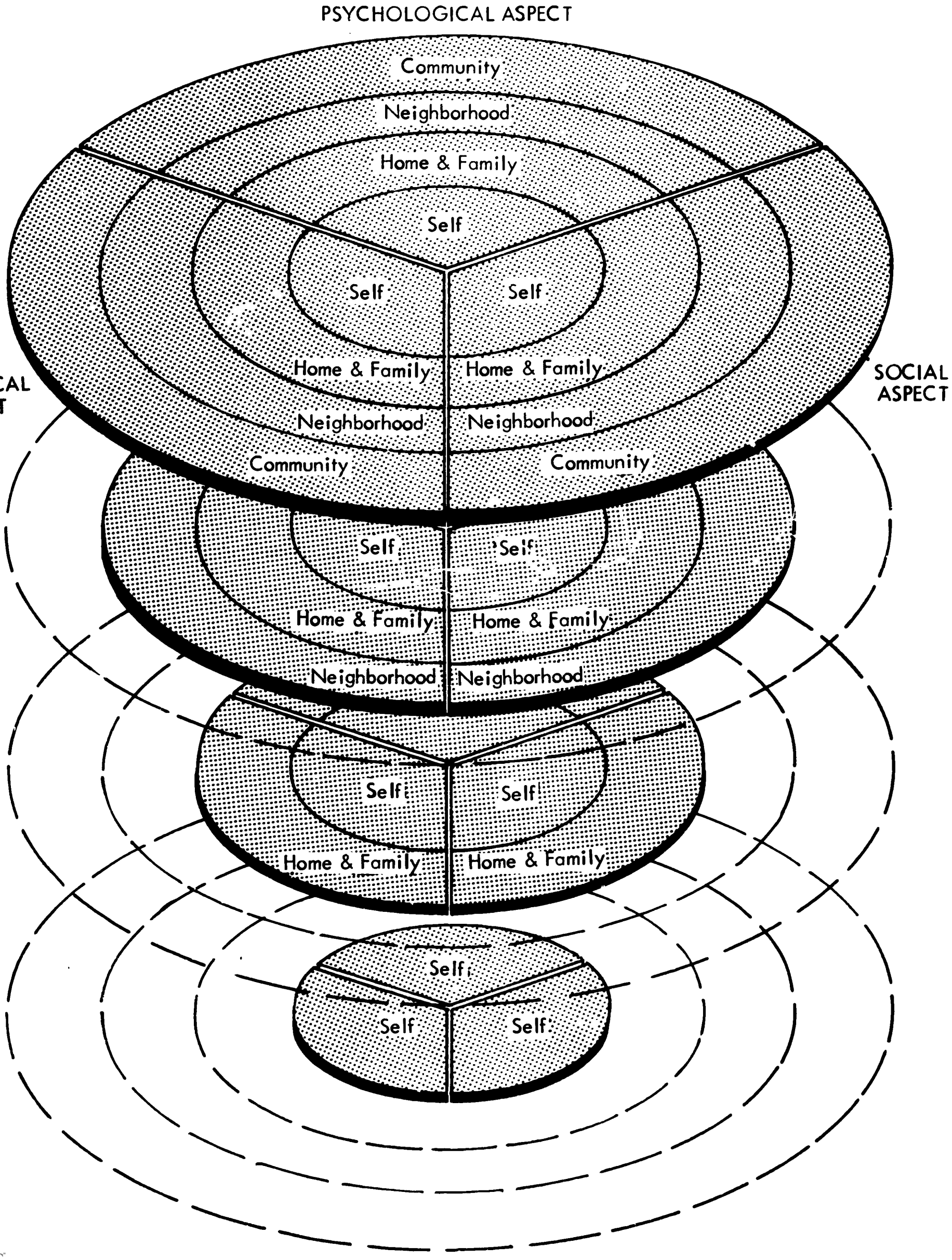
[1] This will be discussed in greater detail later.

MODEL OF CHILD'S EXPANDING ENVIRONMENT & ENVIRONMENT COMPONENTS

Figure 2

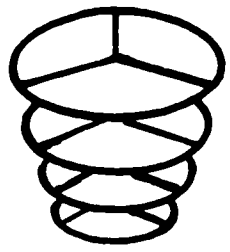
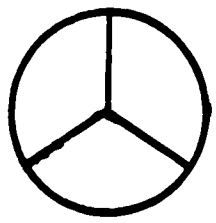


The model for the Social Learning Curriculum incorporates an assumption about the constituency of all of the environments portrayed. It assumes that each environment has three normative aspects: physical, social and psychological. By physical aspects we mean such elements as size, shape, temperature, things (chairs, trees, stores) and objects symbolic of laws, codes and mores but without other purpose (such as traffic lights). By social aspects we mean such elements as roles, status, group purposes and identities. By psychological elements we mean attitudes, feelings and motivations. Obviously, all three aspects of each environment are as much interdependent and inter-related as are the environments themselves. In this way, they are consistent with the categories within which the normative factors in the need areas shown in Figure 1 are subsumed.

The conceptual model of the Social Learning Curriculum has its parallel in a pedagogical model in Figure 3. The Social Learning Construct represents the total developmental progression (maturation) through predominantly social environments. Its parallel is found in the Social Learning Curriculum. The maturation level (the expanding solid lines) has as its curricular parallel the notion of chronological age progressions. The environment is accommodated in the Curriculum by the area of study. Functions (psychological, social and physical) within the environment are classified within the area of study as aspects of that area. These are similarly grouped as being predominantly (but not exclusively) psychological, social or physical. The need, as it represents a specific response to environmental conditions (e.g., the need to communicate), constitutes the teaching-learning substance of the learning scheme. The components (behaviors representative of

PARALLEL MODELS OF SOCIAL LEARNING

Figure 3

(Conceptual)		(Pedagogical)
Social Learning Construct		Social Learning Curriculum
Maturational Level	•	Chronological Age Level
Environment	•	Area of Study
Function		Aspect
Need	•	Learning Scheme
Sub-Need	•	Phase

responses to needs) and concomitant behavioral criteria are dealt with or implemented in the teaching phases, sequences and activities. Thus the Phase, including the implementation stage, is the smallest organized element of the curriculum. It is the direct substantive link between teacher and pupils and the vehicle for their transactions.

The Teaching Phase is designed to be inclusive of all subject matter areas and activities except the two skill periods devoted to language arts and arithmetic. The Teaching Phase exploits the child's competence in these subjects in problem-solving tasks within the Social Learning character of the Curriculum. Each Phase deals with a social-occupational concept or rational cluster of concepts and associated behaviors.

Language arts, arithmetic, science, safety, health, music and physical education are typical elements of each Phase. Each element is designed to reinforce the central social learning concept in the Phase and to provide the child with opportunities to generalize and make transfer from the central concept. Thus, instead of the usual discreteness of subject matter areas, each Teaching Phase represents a correlation of all subject matter areas with the concept central to the Phase. To put it another way, except for the two skill periods in language arts and arithmetic, the Social Learning Curriculum can occupy the balance of the teaching day.

Thus, the model represents both the maturational progressions of social growth and the constituency of the world within which this growth takes place. It thereby accommodates the teaching-learning substance consistent with growth and permits an organization of the substance into

elements identifiable with growth. Within this context, one can account for built-in factors contributing to conflicts or anomalies in the social development of the child.

First, there is the factor of physical immobility. The child who, because of chronic illness or physical disability, is confined to a limited space (e.g., his room or his home) will probably be limited in his experiences to the things, people and emotions peculiar to that environment. These will, in turn, be modified only to the degree that other than the usual people and things enter his environment. Secondly, there is the child who for reasons of psycho-social inadequacies or abnormalities needs to be constantly supervised and guarded. The forceful circumscription of this child's environment likewise arrests his mobility into more broad and complex environments. We may assume that any change for the better in both cases would provide for further development.

For the purposes of this curriculum, the environments through and within which ordinary growth progresses are designated chronologically as follows:

1. Self
2. Home and Family
3. Neighborhood
4. Community
5. Extra-community

Each of these environments offers a wide array of topics worthy of study. A Social Learning Curriculum, however, represents a distillation of these topics to those having most implication for

socio-occupational competence at maturity. The following limited discussion of each environment will highlight the abstractions which represent the clustering of concepts and facts that rank high in importance. The Curriculum is designed to equip the student with the knowledge, skills and behaviors that will assure better success in each environment. The discussion relative to each environment represents an amalgam of our experiences, the recommendations of psychologic and sociologic consultants, along with a synthesis of a wide array of sociologic literature.

The Self:

The child is viewed as constituting an important and basic environment. It is here that the values, attitudes and knowledges about oneself are formed and drawn upon as points of reference. The extent to which the child knows the facts about himself, his attributes, and how these measure up against normative expectations may very well color his self-concept in terms of a reality-unreality continuum.

The Self seems to be a logical starting point in Social Learning with young children because of their tendency to be self-centered or hedonistic in their approach to conditions surrounding them. Self-centeredness, then, is a worthy departure in the Social Learning Curriculum if only because the learning focuses on the children's primary interest, namely, themselves. Motivation is thus a built-in attribute.

The facts about the child logically constitute the substance of his learning in this Area of Study in the Curriculum. While there is a tendency to assume that retarded children know what and who they are,

SOCIAL LE

Aspect: **Psychological Aspect**

Learning Scheme	Becoming Emotionally Secure	Gaining Proficiency	Developing Positive Self-Image	Striving for Diversity	Communicating Feelings
	EMOTIONAL STABILITY	MASTERY	SELF-RESPECT	VARIATION	SELF-EXPRESSION
Phase A	Recognizing and Reacting to Emotions KNOWLEDGE OF EMOTIONS	Understanding KNOWLEDGE ACQUISITION	Feeling Competent ADEQUACY	Experiencing EXPERIENCES	Displaying Feelings EMOTIONAL OUTLETS
Phase B	Perceiving the Causes of Emotions SOURCES OF EMOTIONAL REACTION	Doing Well ACHIEVEMENT	Feeling Worthwhile USEFULNESS	Appreciating APPRECIATION	Showing Concern ALTRUISM
Phase C	Adapting Emotions to the Environment HARMONY	Initiating Activities INDEPENDENCE	Feeling Skillful CONFIDENCE		Exhibiting Originality CREATIVITY
Phase D		Integrating Learnings SELF-FULFILLMENT			

AL LEARNING CURRICULUM FOR THE EDUCABLE MENTALLY RETARDED

Area of Study: Self

Physical Aspect

...ng Feelings	Identifying Ourselves	Realizing Physical Capacities	Developing the Senses	Maintaining Our Bodies	Depending on Others	R...
...ESSION	IDENTIFICATION	BODY UTILIZATION	SENSORY STIMULATION	PHYSICAL MAINTENANCE	DEPENDENCE	
...Feelings ...ONAL ...ETS	Perceiving Individuality — PERSONAL INFORMATION	Recognizing the Body — BODY AWARENESS	Recognizing What Senses Do — SENSE AWARENESS	Getting Proper Food — NOURISHMENT	Recognizing Dependence — ADMISSION	C...
...Concern ...UISM	Understanding the Environment — ENVIRONMENT INFORMATION	Developing Motor Skills — MOVEMENT	Combining the Senses — INTEGRATION	Protecting Ourselves — PROTECTION	Identifying Helpers — ASSISTANCE	
...iting ...nality ...TIVITY		Developing Coordination — BODY CONTROL		Maintaining Body Functions — BODY MAINTENANCE	Accepting Restrictions — AUTHORITY	
		Recognizing Gender — SEXUAL AWARENESS		Keeping Comfortable — PHYSICAL COMFORT	Becoming Independent & Dependable — COOPERATION	

Figure 4

LLY RETARDED

Social Aspect

Aspect

Depending on Others	Relating to Others	Coping With Others	Expanding Goals	Gaining Possessions	Learning Scheme
DEPENDENCE	INTERACTION	SOCIAL ADEQUACY	MOBILITY	POSSESSIONS	
Recognizing Dependence ADMISSION	Conversing COMMUNICATION	Attaining Social Skills BASIC SKILLS	Moving About TRAVEL	Fulfilling Requirements NECESSITIES	Phase A
Identifying Helpers ASSISTANCE	Being with Others COMPANIONSHIP	Recognizing the Environment UNDERSTANDING MILIEU	Moving Up SOCIAL	Attaining Desires LUXURIES	Phase B
Accepting Restrictions AUTHORITY	Making Friends FRIENDSHIP	Adapting to the Environment ATTITUDES			Phase C
Becoming Independent & Dependable COOPERATION	Joining Groups BELONGING				Phase D

the complexity of the facts and feelings fundamental to these facts leave much room for error and omission. We are all too quick to connect manifest behavior with rationality and to assume that omissions signify lack of readiness "which will be taken care of by time." We need to stay alert to the fact that what looks like appropriate behavior may be nothing more than mindless imitation or the results of conditioning. If transfer and generalization are to be the child's facile enterprises, we need to insure that the facts and concepts underlying knowledge and behavior are built into him.

In this Curriculum, then, the Self is an area of study where the child can learn how he is put together, how his characteristics compare with others, who he is and how he feels about all of these. The organization of this area of study can be seen in Figure 4. Here the teaching schemes are displayed within the three aspects of the environment Self. The Phases (teaching procedures) are listed under the appropriate scheme.

The Home and Family:

The child's family, as a dynamic entity, is probably the first phenomenon that catches his eye once he begins to see beyond himself as the most needful and important organism in the universe. All of the theories of child growth and development contend that the child sooner or later begins to realize that the world is not a one-way street and that, unless he gets busy manipulating people and things and feelings, he is going to be deprived of some pleasurable experiences. It is probably at this stage in his development that he enters purposefully into transactions with some of the conditions around him.

The quality of these transactions will be determined in great part by the child's ability to perceive and relate to the specific status of people and things in his environment that together constitute the Family. The associated role expectations thus become the matrix within which transactions take place. The scope and accuracy of role perception often determine the quality of inter-personal transactions and therefore precursors to harmonies and disharmonies in the child's environment.

Learning how to perceive people, things and feelings around him and to judge his own impact on each are important aspects of the child's development. The strategies he employs in these transactions and the way he assesses results probably lay the foundation for interactions both within the family and throughout his world at large.

The scope of this environment, including the wide array of people and things and the feelings they engender, is infinitely greater than the preceding environment, the Self. The identification of roles and their multiplicity within the family, learning and acting on such abstract concepts as obligation and cooperation, and the understanding and appreciation of customs and mores of other families are generally recognized as important to healthy development within the family as an environment. In turn, these constitute the readiness to cope with the next environment.

The Neighborhood:

The Neighborhood, like the Family, is viewed as an inclusive environment in the sense that within its borders are contained the Family and the Self as simultaneously separate but interactive elements. Neither loses its identity or its individuality within this larger environment.

Instead, these constitute the neighborhood and contribute to its character in concert with other families and with the public aspects of the environment. Thus, the Neighborhood as an environment for study represents a horizontal and vertical extension of the Family (a kind of family of Families). It is horizontal in the sense that the facts, concepts and behaviors requisite to social competence in the neighborhood are more numerous. It is vertical because of the increase in number and complexity of facts, concepts and behaviors and the sometimes obscurity of their relationships. The need for the ability to transfer and generalize is more pronounced. Systems for reward or punishment have proliferated and sanctions can come from all directions. Just as important, the protections offered by the Family are not as clear, tolerance for error is usually not as great, forgiveness is not as quick, and the probability for "misunderstanding" or "misinterpretation" of act and deed is increased.

Many of the strategies leading to healthy interactions with people and things in the Neighborhood have their foundations in the Family. There is need to incorporate the strategies that go along with sporadic but nevertheless consistent experiences, such as shopping, going to the movies, using the library, etc. One also needs to develop ways of understanding and appreciating the transactions with people occupying statuses remote in time and place from the Family, i.e., the protective and maintenance services provided for the neighborhood by the larger community.

We could say that the customs and mores of the Neighborhood represent a composite of codified and uncodified rules for its constituent families. These need to be presented in the Curriculum because they

are designed to promote the well-being of the Neighborhood as a whole. The retarded child should study these so that the kinds of differences that set families and public facilities in the Neighborhood apart from one another can be taken into account in the ordinary course of events. At the same time, he probably needs to study those features common to families and public facilities so that he will have a more real perspective of the total nature of the Neighborhood.

Like the Family, the Neighborhood confronts the child with statuses and roles. From a dynamic point of view, some of these replicate statuses and roles within his family. No infrequently, however, interactions with people and things occupying what appear to be analogous roles require modifications in both the transaction and in the expected outcomes of the transactions. Thus, straightforward generalizations based on in-family transactions often need to be approached with a readiness to modify, alter or shift. We need to recognize that this also holds true for dealing with people, things and rules.

Studying the Self in terms of self-identification in the physical, psychological and social realms, combined with an elaboration of these within the Family, are preparation for an analogous study of the Neighborhood. Acquiring and understanding the facts and conditions that comprise the Neighborhood not only provide for ways of functioning in that environment, but also lay the groundwork for entering the more elaborate, more sizeable and therefore more complex environment represented by the Community.

The Community:

The Community as an environment is less circumscribed than previously discussed environments. While there is a quality of unity to a Neighborhood and, of course, much more so in the Family and Self, the key factors in the Community are more dispersed and their relationships more obscure. Places for doing things, e.g., shopping, working, etc., are often some distance apart. Similarly, the ways of doing things may be quite different, even though the setting and the purpose for entering the setting are alike. The way one transacts business with the nearby supermarket may be quite different from the procedures used in the corner grocery store.

Unlike the Family and Neighborhood, roles in the Community are often lacking personal ties. Many fulfill a specific role with regularity, becoming something of a fixture without acquiring the closeness that comes with living in the Neighborhood. In some cases, the role identity transcends personal identity, and behaviors of others are geared more to the role than to the person occupying the role. Thus, children learn the formulae for interacting with clerks, police and many others. In some cases, the formulae are learned through imitation, in others by trial and error. In either case, society lifts a critical eyebrow if the game is not played properly.

The physical properties of the Community are also markedly depersonalized. Whereas the child in the Neighborhood had two points of reference, e.g., the mores peculiar to Mr. Jones's grocery store along with what one knows about Mr. Jones, in the Community he often needs to set his expectations apart from the people involved. A limited set of

references plus a wide array of settings can make the Community a bewildering environment.

The increased frequency of abstract "rules" only adds to the confusion. The constraints on pedestrians and drivers, the sanctions involved in purchasing for cash or credit, and the many rules associated with leisure-time activities may easily lead to conflict. Why wait to cross at the cross-walk when there is no traffic imminent? Such "rules" are inconvenient and annoying. Self-management therefore becomes a critical factor if one is to move unspectacularly from one transaction to the other. The extent to which the individual can function adequately is determined largely by his knowledge of the details of the Community combined with his ability to generalize from earlier experiences in the Family and Neighborhood.

These aptitudes receive their most rigorous test in the work setting. The physical, social and psychological aspects of this part of the individual's life do not permit for the freedoms characteristic of earlier settings. The sanctions, rewards and penalties are monumental and far-reaching by comparison. The individual probably finds himself standing alone in the face of problems. Family and solicitous neighbors are not near enough to intervene, ameliorate or intercede. The need to think critically and act independently becomes paramount at this stage of his development.

All of the knowledges, skills and behaviors requisite to competence in transactions within the community come to focus in the occupational endeavors of the maturing retardate. The earlier experiences and learnings summate at this point in the form of psychological, social

and physical foundations for the decision-making and interactions encountered on the job. The degree of understanding about responsibility and dependence, about immediate wants and postponement of gratification, of self-perception and the perceptions of others, reaches the pay-off stage during work. Management of personal affairs -- physical, financial and social -- has direct bearing on success or failure. In an important sense, all of the learnings in earlier environments are basic training for this critical stage of maturation. In studying about himself, his family and his neighborhood in additive style, he has been given the opportunity to learn the principles, concepts and facts that provide for adjustment in each. These learnings culminate in a real sense when he faces those conditions wherein the onus is on him to take an active and often leading role in making decisions about himself and the conditions surrounding him.

Extra-Community:

To reach this stage dynamically, one must have a pre-requisite competence in the Community. This environment is probably the most abstract of all. It is characterized by such conceptually distant acts as exercising one's franchise to vote, taking part in the activities of civic, fraternal and service groups, traveling with all of the attributes of planning and understanding, and coping with regional differences in customs and mores.

Motivation and self-awareness as a member of a larger geographic and political unit are important foundations for participation in this larger environment. Even membership in a labor union, if it is to be more than a mechanical act, requires some notion of purpose along with a sense of the historical.

There are many who consider the retardate's involvement in matters beyond the environment of the Community more or less superfluous. There is little doubt that this attitude is a product of the educational treatment wherein many of the social, psychological and physical aspects of all of the environments are centered in the secondary school program. The pressure applied to teachers and ancillary staff to prepare the student for employment and other activities rarely leaves time or energy to engage in much more than a work-study enterprise. It is our contention that the so-called work-study, family-planning and leisure-time programs must start very early. The Social Learning Curriculum sees the classroom, the home and family and the neighborhood as being in microcosm what the community and extra-community are in macrocosm. By including in the Curriculum the social, psychological and physical aspects of each in developmental order, the child will have time to learn in depth and to experience the realities of growing up in a complex society.

Summary

A noteworthy proportion of educable mentally retarded children continue to become social casualties at maturity. The experiences and research of rehabilitation and other social service agencies indicate that socio-occupational incompetence is mainly a function of a poor command of social knowledge and a lack of work skills. In a broad sense, they lack the information basic to sound decision-making (thinking critically) and the personality characteristics basic to acting on these decisions (acting independently).

Vocational rehabilitation and other social service agencies can catalog the specific behavioral insufficiencies that lead to social incompetence. These, stated positively, can be the point of departure in developing a curriculum for the educable mentally retarded. The assumption here is that an early and persistent exposure to the learnings associated with social competence can lead to an attenuation of the number of social casualties at maturity.

A curriculum based on social learning concepts and facts needs to take into account the social, psychological and physical factors in the growth and development of children, along with similar factors in their environments. In this sense, environments are analagous to the molar stages through which children pass as a function of their increasing mobility. Their mobility, in turn, is characteristic of children who are psycho-socially and physically intact. Models for maturation through environments and parallels in curriculum have been presented.