DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 056 152   UD 011 884

AUTHOR   Barnes, Edward J.
TITLE   The Utilization of Behavioral and Social Sciences in
              Minority Group Education: Some Critical Implications.
              Symposium on Ethnic Minority Issues on the
              Utilization of Behavioral and Social Sciences in a
              Pluralistic Society.
PUB DATE   Sep 71
NOTE   59p.; Paper presented at the American Psychological
              Association Annual Meeting, Washington, D.C.,
              September 3-7, 1971

EDRS PRICE   MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS   Disadvantaged Groups; *Disadvantaged Youth;
              Educational Practice; *Minority Groups; Psychology;
              *Social Sciences; Sociology

ABSTRACT
        This paper discusses the implications of the
behavioral and social sciences as applied to minority group
education. Various explanations for the failure of poor
minority-group children in school are reviewed. A comparison between
the mental health model of human behavior and the aggregate or
systems model is made. [Because of the quality of print of the
original, reproductions of this document will not be sharply
legible.] (Author/JW)

SYMPOSIUM

Ethnic Minority Issues on the Utilization of Behavioral
and Social Science in a Pluralistic Society

The Utilization of Behavioral and Social Sciences in
Minority Group Education: Some Critical
Implications

by

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For presentation at The American Psychological Association Annual
Meeting, Washington, D.C.   September 3-7, 1971.

The Utilization of Behavioral and Social Sciences
in Minority Group Education: Some Critical
Implications

The Problem

It is almost a cliche today, to state that the American Public Educa-

tional System has largely failed in its efforts to educate the children of

lower-status or oppressed minority groups.   Tested academic achievement, on

the average, is consistently found lagging behind grade expectancy.   The

tendency to fall behind appears as early as the first grade, intensifies as

the child moves through the upper grades, such that by the 6th grade, the

average young inner-city dweller has fallen behind approximately 3 grades in

mathematics and reading (Clark, 1970).[1]   Cursory thought is sufficient to

reveal that it is the existence of these groups, in terms of their values,

that the larger society virtually ignores, while embracing those values re-

flecting the "White Anglo-Saxon Ideal."   Thus, there appears to be a direct

relationship between the degree to which a group's values, norms, life styles,

and life experiences are excluded from representation in the institutions of

the society, and the failure of the society's schools to educate its members.

Apparently, the schools, as sub-systems of the larger societal system,

reflects the dominant trends of the society, vis-a-vis its powerless

minorities.

Over the past several years, particularly with the advent of the "War

on Poverty" concept, increased attention has been given to this grave

national problem, an increased emphasis reflected in the numerous investi-

gations and studies of various groups; national civil rights organizations,

grass roots community groups government officials, Parents, Social and

Behavioral Scientists, Teachers, Educators, etc. Numerous programs:

"educational enrichment," "demonstration," "compensatory," "Pilot," etc.,

have been brought to bear on this problem, but, for the most part these

efforts have not produced sustained improvement in the skills of reading

and mathematics (Clark, 1970; Gordon and Wilkerson, 1966). The increased

attention to the educational needs of these children has been accompanied by

a larger and more active role in this domain on the part of behavioral and

social scientists. This trend is reflected in federal efforts such as

Head Start and Follow-Through, and in private efforts such as the "crash

program" of remedial reading at the Northside Center for Child Development

in New York designed in 1955 by K. B. Clark, and the Clearifying Environ-

ments Project at the University of Pittsburgh, designed by O. K. Moore.   It

is assumed that the behavioral and social sciences have particular contri-

butions to make toward the resolution of this dilemma. Presumably, those

with training in these fields can bring their knowledge and expertise,

theoretical, substantive and methodological, to bear upon theoretical and

applied problems in the education of members of minority groups.

If this is the case, at least three questions need explicit articulation:

(1) What specifically do these fields have to contribute, currently, to ex-

planation and resolution of the problem?   (2) What potentially do they have

to contribute?   (3) What factors might hinder or facilitate maximum future

contributions?

A comprehensive response to the first question would take us far beyond

the space and time allowed in this paper, however, we can sketch a broad

outline. While the persistent and cumulative educational underachievement

of students in large inner-city areas is conceded, there is no consensus

as to cause or as to remedy. However, most currently offered theoretical

explanations tend to locate the causal factors within the child and his

family, while excluding or minimizing the schools and other institutions

as determinants themselves. The total spectrum of theories offered in

explanation of underachievement in these groups can be subsumed under five

category designations: (1) biological or racial, (2) physiological, (3)

demographic, (4) psychological, and (5) sociological. The following section

presents a brief description and analysis of each of the categories of

explanation.[2]

Biological or Racial Explanations

The biological or racial explanations have probably been around the

longest, and are periodically brought forward to explain differences between

members of the majority and those of oppressed minority groups, and to

justify practices which maintain these groups in positions of subjugation.

A notable historical example of this operation pertains to maintenance and

justification of the status of slavery (Stamps, 1956). These explanations

in their crude and sophisticated forms are racist in their assertion that

black and other oppressed minority children, as a group, achieve below

whites because of their genetic inferiority to whites. However, whatever

one thinks of these explanations, they cannot be ignored because they are

part of the fabric of American History, and are consistent with contemporary

pattern of racism. Consequently such explanations have considerable

potential influence on those at decisive policy making levels.

A unique feature of these explanations is that they do not provide

for any form of external or post-natal manipulation to prevent academic

retardation and to increase individual achievement. Explanations within

this framework, as exemplified by Professor Jensen (1969) in his assessment

of the National Head Start effort, assert that compensatory education

programs will not work, that desegration will not work, that quality educa-

tional programs will not work, and imply that nothing short of biological

control can be effective.

Numerous criticisms can be invoked against the validity of these

theories, ranging from those that are obvious, such as criticisms focusing

on the flaws in the definition of race, to the more analytic criticisms,

as exemplified by Valentine (1971) who asserts, that "any theory of class

or racial deficits of biological origin is undemonstrable and scientifically

untestable, in an ethnically plural and structurally discriminatory society.

The necessary separation of biological and socio-cultural factors is metho-

dologically impossible in this setting" (p. 138). Clark (1970) points out

a most obvious flaw nevertheless, one which has not been highlighted before

namely, that these theories do not explain the fact that low-income white

students in urban public schools are also, as a group, consistently retarded

in tested performance in academic subjects.

Physiological Explanations

Physiological theories which focus on neurological and sensory de-

ficiencies, assert that the academic retardation of poverty stricken minority-

group children is a consequence of the by-products of poverty and deprivation.

Knoblock and Pasamanick (1960) have been leaders in the study of brain and

neurological defects resulting from prenatal and post-natal malnutrition.

Obviously this theory will explain academic retardation in some cases;

however, there is evidence that, even in extreme cases of mental retardation

and organic brain damage, when these children are taught in a supportive

educational situation and are accepted by their teachers, they make striking

gains, both educational and personal (Kirk, 1958). There is danger in

attributing academic retardation to physiological causes for oppressed

minority group children, in view of the prevalence of educational under-

achievement in this group, and given the present ambiguity in the diagnosis

of mental deficiencies. In day-to-day operations, it is a simple matter to

substitute physiological deficit for genetic inferiority in which case

policy and programming proceeds as if the latter is the causal factor.

Demographic Explanations

Demographic theories give emphasis to where children live and go to

school in explaining their educational achievement. Coleman (1966) found

that the academic performance of black youngsters increased after attending

a previously all white school. Kleinberg (1935) found that black youngsters

born in the Northern part of the U. S. scored higher on I.Q. tests than did

their newly arrived counterparts from the southern part of the country.

However, the differential tended to washout over time, as the southern born

youngsters remained in the North, apparently reflecting the positive benevolent

influence of the northern setting.   Thus, it is asserted that large numbers

of lower-status children, whose families migrated from southern to northern

states, brought with them the consequences of segregated and inferior

educational experiences (Pettigrew, 1964).   If this were the controlling

factor, one would expect a direct positive relation between length of time

in the "better schools" and increase in academic achievement.   Such a trend

was noted in the 1930's, but it did not continue beyond the 1950's (Clark,

1970).   In recent years, the evidence suggests that there is no difference

in educational achievement between those children who spend all their lives

in Northern inner-city urban schools, and those who migrated from the south.

Psychological Explanations

Psychological theories which emphasize variables such as individual

motivation, self-image, delay of gratification, anxiety, achievement expect-

ancy, etc., as an explanation of the educational achievement of oppressed

and poor children contend that lower-status children are low in achievement

motivation (Rosen, 1959; Mussen, 1953; Deutsch, 1960), unrealistically

high in aspirations levels (Katz, 1968; Ausubel and Ausubel, 1958;

Deutsch, 1960; Johnson, 1941); that black youngsters have incomplete self-

images (Rainwater, 1967; Gordeon, 1965; Coles, 1965; Ausubel and Ausubel,

1965), negative self-images and a preference for things white (Proshansky

and Newton, 1968; Rainwater, 1967; Stevenson and Stewart, 1958; Morland,

1962; Goodman, 1952) and that lower-status youngsters have an inability to

delay gratification (Mischel, 1961 and 1966), and are frustrated when

required to learn or are held to high educational standards (Proshansky and

Newton, 1967). It is also contended that academic aspirations are depressed

by the effects of discrimination on previous and present generations, and

that these children and their families receive no economic or social awards

which they can realistically hope to attain through academic achievement

(Proshansky and Newton, 1967). Students having these social-psychological

handicaps, combined with low motivation, are expected to be inattentive,

hyperactive, hostile, and aggressive.

While such explanations assert that the academic retardation is a

consequence of these motivational and behavioral handicaps, it is just as

conceivble that these handicaps are a consequence of the educational

deprivation these children experience. Regardless of the explanation,

when one finds a disproportionate number of psychologically impaired

children in a school system, one cannot realistically deal with this pro-

blem in terms of individual clinical methods and therapy, but must address

rather the problem of bringing about the necessary changes within the

educational system itself which produces'such casualties.

Sociological (cultural) Explanations

The last explanatory category, sociological explanations, exphasizes

cultural, class, and environmental differences as determining factors in

the low academic achievement of minority group students and as placing

limitations on the students' ability to profit from formal educational

experiences. Some specific environmental features cited as inhibiting

learning are neighborhood crime and delinquency (Miller, 1958); broken

homes (Kahl, 1953; Mischel, 1961); poverty which sends children to school

without breakfast, without adequate rest, and which prevents parents from

providing quiet places of study (Deutsch, 1963; Sexton, 1961). Other

factors cited include overcrowded living quarters, deteriorated and un-

sanitary housing, no books in the home, and the strong influence of peers

among lower status children, a condition interpreted as adversely affecting

the desire to pursue academic learning.[3] The linguistic patterns of lower-

status, particularly black, children, also are said to act as inhibitors to

academic learning (Whiteman and Deutsch, 1967; Ausubel, 1964). Considerable

evidence has been adduced to demonstrate that blacks have developed

structurally differentiated dialectal variants of English and other European

languages, indicating ethnic distinctiveness in areas of expressive culture

(Kochman, 1972; Stewart, 1965). These findings are the base of the cultural

difference hypothesis. The difficulty turns on the point that the school

curriculum is based on "standard English," a factor with presumably presents

the black child with a Promethean barrier to academic mastery. This

position appears to posit a separation of black subculture and mainstream

culture as a central assumption. However an alternative position could

be developed based on a biculturation assumption. The decisive factor is

that the schools do not reflect a bicultural or ethnic pluralism in its

structure and functioning. It should be noted that the data cited shows a

consistent relationship between social and cultural status and academic

achievement, and on this basis a causal relationship is assumed to exist.

But it is critical to note that no causal relationship has been demonstrated.

If sociological explanations are accepted, then the most direct way

to increase academic achievement of students who are victims of their

conditions is to change those conditions, an approach which would neces-

sitate a vast program of social change. However, there is evidence that

the academic achievement of socially devalued children can be improved

without changes in the pattern of sociological deprivation, given improved

quality of education (Kirk, 1958; Clark, 1965; Cloward, 1967). The socio-

logical explanation should be applied cautiously. It provides an all too

easy route to abnegation of responsibility since improved education would

have to await massive changes in other societal features and, as such,

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is a formula for maintaining the status quo in the schools. Witness the

Nixon administration's approach to the interrelated problems of defacto

segregation of schools and segregated housing patterns in the north.

Furthermore, as Clark (1970) indicates, those in control of the public

schools do not have significant decision making power within the larger

society. The only processes over which they have effective control is

education. Thus, it is in that domain that they must exercise their power

to improve the quality of education. Besides, only when educational quality

is held constant will the influence of other factors on learning be

ascertainable.

In assessing current endeavors to educate minority children, Gordon

and Wilkerson (1966) make the following observations:

> "Most of what is being done in the area of curriculum
> change is being done in a tradition of unscientific
> innovation . . . . Many of the innovations consume
> considerable time and money. Few of them are based
> on identifiable premises or viable hypotheses. Very
> often these innovations appear to have resulted from
> isolated, poorly controlled trial and error discoveries
> . . . . For example, there is little evidence or theo-
> retical basis for judging either homogeneous or hetero-
> geneous groupings as providing the more effective learning
> situation. Homogeneous grouping may, indeed, provide an
> easier teaching situation, but in practice it often serves

> simply to segregate the minority group children
> from their more privileged peers. Given the evi-
> dence suggesting that segregation is, per se, a
> handicap to the achievement of educational quality,
> and given, in addition, the school problem of the
> time, it might be well for school systems to examine
> the premise on which they have overwhelmingly
> adopted homogeneous grouping. It is quite possible
> that the more difficult teaching situation provided
> by heterogeneous grouping is also the more productive
> in the total development of the child." (p. 169)

Gordon and Wilkerson make a similar criticism for certain struc-

tural changes in the programs, such as team teaching, utilization of

technology, modifications in teacher-pupil ratio, etc. Assuming the

foregoing to be a valid analysis, the greatest contribution behavioral

science can make to the educational process, as it applies to these

children, would seem to be twofold: (1) providing the necessary theo-

retical and empirical basis for program development, and (2) bringing

the theoretical and methodological frameworks of behavioral science to

bear on the theoretical and applied problems of education. To speak more

specifically, it is the writer's conviction that the fundamental contri-

bution the behavioral and social sciences can make to the process of

educating lower-status children would be the identification of patterns

of <u>interrelatedness</u> of individual learner characteristics, characteristics

of the individual's social context, and outcomes in the teaching-learning

process. This position rests on the assumption that explanations based

on dimensions or variables in a single domain cannot account for the cur-

rent level of academic performance of oppressed children, as a group, nor

can they provide a basis for remedy.

If the foregoing is valid, then the question becomes what does be-

havioral science have in the way of theoretical frameworks, methods, and

empirical findings which reflects or stem from this interactive point

of view? An examination of relevant literature is instructive. In re-

viewing the literature one is struck by the extent to which lower-status

minority children, particularly black children, are separated from families,

even conceptually, and the further separation of black children and black

families from the black community. But the most glaring factor concerns

the separation of the black community from the surrounding white community.

It seems obvious that we who are concerned about black children must think

about them in relation to black families and the black community, never

forgetting that this entire configuration is embedded in a society which

devalues everything black.

A second realization occurring with great impact on the writer,

concerned the essentially negative nature of research findings and inter-

pretations as they pertain to lower-status and particularly black children.

Findings from a variety of sources converge to indicate the black child's

incomplete self image (Rainwater, 1967; Gordon, 1965; Coles, 1965; Ausubel

and Ausubel, 1963); his negative self image and preference for things "white"

(Proshansky and Newton, 1968; Rainwater, 1967; Goodman, 1952; Clark and

Clark, 1947; Stevenson and Stewart, 1958; Radke and Trager, 1950; Morland,

1962; Landreth and Johnson, 1953); his rejection of and expressed hostility

toward his own group (Goodman, 1952; Stevenson and Stewart, 1958; Clark and

Clark, 1947).

If it is the case that the black child feels disdain or hatred for

his group, therefore, for himself, and experiences himself as incomplete,

as indicated above, then one would expect such factors to have negative

effects on his behavior and experiences. Reported research findings

which can be subsumed under two categories, "cognitive and affective

status", and "achievement orientation" converge to support hypothesized

effects. The literature shows the black child to be characterized by high

anxiety level (Feld and Lewis, 1967; Hill and Sarason, 1966; Sarason, et. al.,

1960; Palermo, 1959; Caldwell, 1959); a high level of maladjustment

(Rainwater, 1967; Baykin, 1957) and neuroticism (Hammer, 1953), given to a

rejection of other blacks (Yarrow, 1958) he is shown as having an inability

to delay gratification (Mischel, 1966, 1961 b) presumably a critical factor

in immature, criminal and neurotic behavior (Mowrer and Ullman, 1945), as

having low level orientation toward achievement (Mischel, 1961 b), a prone-

ness toward delinquency (Mischel, 1961 a); confusion of sexual identity

or cross sex-role adoption (Burton, 1961, Hofanson and Calden, 1960,

Lott and Lott, 1963, Sclare, 1953); and a sense of little personal control

over his environment presumably a weakness (Crandall, et al., 1965).

Intellectual functioning is typically at the low average to borderline

range, and accompanie. by poor ability for critical thinking - analytical

and synthetical (Barnes, 1969).[4]

Findings from the "achievement domain" showe black youngsters as

low in achievement motivation (Rosen, 1959; Mussen, 1953; Deutsch, 1960;

McClelland, 1961); or as unrealistically high in aspiration levels (Katz,

1968; Ausubel and Ausubel, 1958; Deutsch, 1960; Johnson, 1941);[5] and as

low in expectancy of success (Katz, 1968; Lefcourt and Ladwig, 1965).

Placing the black youngster within the context of the black family gene-

rates the following image. The "Negro" family is portrayed as having

a distinct life style, different from all other segments of the society.

More often than not the father has deserted the family; the mother,

frustrated because of her own unfulfilled needs and wishes, reacts harshly

and rejects the children. Her frustration generally is a "causal" factor

in her having more "illegitimate" children. The children in turn, react

to this hostile atmosphere by becoming aggressive, nontrusting, and uneducable.

They experience unusual difficulty in differentiating between male and
female roles, and cross-role adoptions are the rule. By age 3 or 4 years
the black child is aware of racial differences including a knowledge of the
usual associated stereotypes, but is slow to make racial distinctions; and
parents (mother) are not able to help him with questions and anxiety around
black-white issues and concerns. He frequently chooses white dolls and
white friends and often identifies himself as white, or shows a pained
reluctance to "admitting" he is "Negro." While much of the direct mani-
festation of "self-hate" disappears by seven or eight years of age, definite
indications of it still exist later; for example, "shooting" dope to escape
the image, or "pimping" and having illegitimate children to deny it.[6]

Thus, the attention given so far to characteristics of lower-status
children has given rise to sweeping generalizations, many of highly
questionable validity. The tendency is to identify certain conditions
and characteristics found frequently in some lower-status children and then
to assume these factors to be typical of the group. As indicated earlier,

concurrence between certain conditions and certain characteristics and

low academic achievement is given a causal interpretation. Furthermore,

do the foregoing configurations of findings and projections tell the

whole story? The writer thinks not. Theoretical explanations can be

questioned on the grounds of their failure to account for the full

spectrum of findings in the various empirical studies; for example, what

about that 33% to 77% in the Clark (1949) studies, or the 87% in The

Greenwald and Appenheim study (1968), or the 46% to 68% in Morland's

(1962, 1966) studies who did not select white dolls as being "like them-

selves?" How does one account for Boyd's (1952) findings of higher aspira-

tion level of blacks compared to whites when groups were matched for age,

IQ, and socioeconomic status? Lott and Lott's study (1963) suggest that

blacks can have <u>high</u> and <u>realistic</u> levels of occupational aspirations.

It is of interest to note that when empirical results are not consistent

with theoretical expectancy, usually they are intepreted so as to be con-

sistent with expectations. The concepts of "unrealistic (high) aspiration

level", or "overachiever" seem to serve that purpose. Since the validity

of a theory is contingent upon its ability to explain and predict, in

these instances one has to wonder about theory-conserving operations.

The history of this country is replete with instances of the creation

of theories to demonstrate the inferiority of blacks; theories which can

provide justification for the oppression of blacks; self-serving theories

directed to maintaining the oppressor's illusions of his own innate

superiority (Stamps, 1956).

Historically, biological or genetic factors have been invoked as

explanatory modes to account for the status of blacks; today the vogue is to

call forth environmental factors as explanatory modes. However, as the

writer has noted elsewhere (Barnes, 1969) it is of small benefit to blacks

whether an environmental hypothesis is chosen over a genetic hypothesis,

"if explanation remains at the level of the black individual or family

and does not begin to deal with forces in the larger society, in which case,

contemporary social deprivation theories may be viewed as substituting

environmental unchangeability for biologically determined immutability." (P. 39)

Also, as stated earlier, most of the theoretical explanations for low

academic achievement cited, tend to locate its causes within the child

and his family. Now, manifestly, it is logical to have the remedy,

designed for intervention into a condition, rest upon one's concept of

its causes. Thus, if the causes of academic failure among lower-status

children are deemed to be within the child or his family, then this will

be the point of focus for change. If it is thought to also reside within

the social context of the child and family; that domain will be emphasized

as well. The basic orientation implicitly or explicitly adopted by the

social scientist, will move him in one direction or another in theory and

research.

It is the writer's position that if the behavioral and social sciences

are to realize their full potential in terms of the contributions they can

make to the education of black and other oppressed minority children, they

must modify theory and the research flowing therefrom such that the child and

his family are not viewed in isolation from their social contexts. This

means a modification of perspective on part of the behavioral and social

scientists in their study of the academic performance of blacks and other

oppressed children. Another critical feature of the theoretical positions

and empirical studies cited concerns their failure to view the black

community as the highly complex and structured system that it is. The

black writer Ralph Ellison (1967) placed this issue in perspective when

asked by a group of young black writers to comment on how they might more

accurately portray the complexity of the human condition, using the black

experience as a theme. Ellison, among other things, stated that the black

writer would never see his subjects so long as he accepted the black

family as a broken one and a matriarchy or of Harlem as "piss on the wall

and blood on the stairs. Such stereotypes, as all stereotypes, have some

grain of truth in them, but they do not come close to reflecting the

complexity of the black condition. . . ." (P. 87). In face of this, it is

interesting to note that the concentration of the literature is on the lowest

income, most oppressed black families and individuals. The findings from

this group are used as an index to "understanding," "explaining," and

"describing" blacks. Obviously, to utilize information from this narrow

spectrum of the black population as a basis for describing, explaining and

predicting for blacks creates conditions for gross error. This practice

probably explains some of the contradictions and paradoxes in the litera-

ture regarding blacks.

The writer, then, is arguing that social and behavioral scientists

must be aware of the proto-assumptions of the theoretical positions and

research methodologies with which they approach the study of blacks

generally, if these fields are to yield their full potential with respect

to this segment of the population. The perspective advanced here emphasizes

the interdependence of the black child and family with other levels of

society, and emphasizes the recognition of the black community as a complex

social system. Further, this perspective shifts the focus from the behaviors

of individuals to recurrent interchanges between people, i.e., to the

context in which social behavior takes place.

If the analysis advanced here has any validity, it raises implications

for social and behavioral science in terms of the need to subject its

theories, concepts, and methodologies, as applied to oppressed minority

groups, to careful scrutiny, with a view toward assessing how they operate

when black people are the object of their focus. The significance of this

assertion seems obvious when one reflects on the nature and function of

theories, concepts, etc. Theories have their origin in the need to under-

stand, explain, or predict phenomena, an activity each of us engages in

daily, implicitly or explicitly. Theories or their concepts may be ordered

along the following continuums: implicitness-explicitness, specificity-

generality, concreteness-abstractness. The theories of physics are

characterized by explicitness, generality, and abstractness. The level of

development of those of behavioral and social science are somewhere between

the polar points of the continua. They were and are developed by those

having a Western-Anglo-European heritage, in order to describe, explain,

and understand the behavior of those from that same heritage. It is

legitimate to inquire as to whether these constructions, as they stand,

give rise to valid explanations when applied to those who do not fully

share that heritage. We know that ostensibly, the same behavior, arising

in different contexts may have different significances. The obvious case

regards similar behaviors arising in different cultures.

Kelman (1968) has produced a cogent analysis of the role of social

values in the development of science. It is his contention that not only

do values (and I would add, perspective) determine the directions scientific

activity takes at any given time, but they also influence methodological

considerations. Values direct the choice of theories or models, directs

focus, whether on strengths or weaknesses, and influences the nature of

definitions of behavioral events. Definitions of events by members of the

privileged majority often are negative in connotation as applied to blacks,

and other oppressed minority groups. White, (1970) analyzes several concepts

in cognitive and dynamic schools of psychology such as "disadvantagement,"

"broken family," etc., noting underlying assumptions of deficiency or

abnormality as pathology. He concludes that the cultural values of the

dominant society are built into the definitions, and carry adverse implications

for blacks. It seems obvious that definitions of what is "normal," "healthy,"

"deviant," "pathologic," etc., must relate to the conditions of a groups'

existence, to its interests, and to what it conceives as socially desirable

and socially undesirable. Total acceptance and application of white

definitions of "health," "pathology," "growth," "delay of gratification,"

etc. to blacks leads to the ironical situation Barbara Sizemore (1968) so

ably articulates in the "A/B" conceptualization. The paradigm is as

follows: A creates a set of conditions for B. If B is to survive he must

respond in those ways having survival value. A defines this behavior as

"sick" or "abnormal," but, in fact, B's response is natural and appropriate

to the conditions. A response which A would call normal would not have

survival value for B. The plain facts are that blacks and whites do not

live in the same social reality. That which is deviant behavior for a white

might be healthy for a Black and vice versa. Rosa Parks' refusal to sit

in the "proper place" on that bus in Montgomery in 1955 was problem or

deviant behavior from the vantage point of whites in the antebellum south.

How would you define the behavior of a bright 13 year old living in one of

the more dehumanizing housing projects in Chicago, who almost daily, during

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the school week, had the choice of fighting or running, but who chose to

fight? This child was referred to me with the complaint of being overly

aggressive and hypersensitive to provocation. Clearly the healthy

response in this situation is not running; i.e., if we are concerned

about the youngster's self-esteem, and psychological survival. The

critical issue here concerns the perspective from which behavioral events

are defined. For example, certain behaviors of black youth have been

defined from the perspective of the dominant culture as "apathy or lack

of communication with the school." From the black perspective, this same

behavior might well be defined as "failure of school officials (decision

makers) to provide the black community with needed educational concepts,

strategies, and tactics for successful coping with a hostile white environ-

ment"; or majority designated "low achievement pressure, or failure to help

the parents or mother to help the child develop the behavior necessary to

translate high level motivation into concrete performance behaviors as

the exclusion of black parents from a social system which uses race as a

basis of including or excluding groups from full participation in it," or

"pessimism about future life chances as "the existence of racism in

America and its legitimation by social and behavioral scientists who

study the consequences and victims rather than the cause of rampant white

racism."

In addition to the operation of values and perspective the formal

definition of terms and selection of variables are their role in the

operational definition of variables, an example being "deferred gratifi-

cation" and its attendant, "time orientation," where the lesser of two

values chosen "now" over the greater one promised "tomorrow," is designated

"inability to delay" and is indicative of a "present-time" orientation,

presumably a negative attribute. This is contrasted to behavior of

the middle class individual who chooses the object of greater value to be

delivered tomorrow, and is, thus, said to have "delay capacity" and a

"future-time" orientation, a positive attribute. The writer could argue

that the former behavior on part of a black or other oppressed minority

person demonstrates their insight into social reality and is consistent

with healthy coping techniques. The difference between the two individuals

lies not so much in their different orientations to time as in their

different orientations to future time, or more specifically, to their

actual futures. The future orientation of the middle class person pre-

sumes, among other things, an adequate supply of resources to be invested

in the future, and a belief that the future will be sufficiently stable to

justify his investment, and to permit utilization or consumption of his

investment at a time, place, and manner of his own choosing and to his

greater satisfaction. In other words, the system provides the latter with

real alternatives. It is precisely the socially devalued childs' awareness

of the future that moves him in the direction of "a bird in the hand." It

is instructive in this regard to observe the behavior of investors on Wall

Street when events occur to produce uncertainties in the future. At such

times their selling and buying behaviors have all the earmarks of those

labelled "inability to delay" and present-time orientation.[7] In other words,

social and behavioral scientists must examine carefully their operational

definitions, and must ask themselves if the same set of operations defining

concepts such as "female-dependence," "unresolved oedipal conflict,"

"deferred gratification," etc., can be applied with equal effectiveness

and validity to all segments of the society; particularly those whose life

conditions differ markedly from those of mainstream Americ...

The writer submits that the objections raised throughout the dis-

cussion point to factors which militate against behavioral and social

sciences making the maximum contribution to the education of black and

other oppressed minority children. The question, then, becomes: are

there alternatives to the present order? The writer's response is a

confident "yes."

The perspective advanced in this discussion, with its emphasis on the

interdependence of child and family with other levels of society, the

heterogeneity of blacks, (and other oppressed groups), the recognition of

the black community as a complex social system, the shift of focus from

behaviors of individuals to recurrent interchanges between people, is an

alternative, and may properly be called a social systems approach. It

addresses many of the objections raised to the current modal approach,

reflecting White-Anglo Perspective.

The system conception as put forth here has been called by some an

"aggregate" or "growth and development" model while those perspectives which

focus on the individual or his family have been called "mental health,"

"treatment," or "pathology" model (Adelson, 1970; Sizemore, 1969).

Fundamental conceptual distinctions characterize these two modes of

approach. The spelling out of some of their distinctions will facilitate

our grasp of some of the assumptions underlying the various theoretical and

methodological approaches currently in use.

Comparison and Contrast of Two Conceptual Approaches to Human Behavior

The Mental Health Model focuses on the individual in an attempt to

understand or resolve a problem. There is an implicit assumption that

the individual is responsible for his condition. The aggregate or systems

model is social-psychological, economic-political; and biological-cultural.

This model is concerned with systems and subsystems, social and psychological, in interrelationship. In research, the point of focus is interchange between systems. As an approach, it does not focus on unidimensional explanations. For example, in attempting to understand the determinants of the present pattern of educational performance of lower-status children, it would look for complex patterns of interrelatedness of class, cultural, social, and racial inequities, and their various effects upon the student and outcome of the teacher-learner interaction. It would recognize that a change in context may be attended by a change in relationship on the part of those who are part of the system. This approach with altered interpretations which take into consideration the environmental or social context of those studies possibly can begin to put some of the various findings regarding blacks into a coherent scheme.

For the Mental Health Model, community tends to be defined as a political unit, a place from where the subjects come, or as a geographic unit. The Aggregate Model views the individual in relation to the

community, defined as "system of systems" and views the community as in

dynamic interrelationship in a larger system. The theories and concepts of

such sociologists as Parson (1951), Parson and Bales, (1955), Billingsley

(1968), Tonnies (1957), Durkheim (1951), and Cooley (1962); and psycholo-

gists such as Lewin (1948), Mead (1934), and Sarbin (1954), among others,

provide the basis for a new approach to thinking about man and his context.[8]

From the point of view of the "Mental Health" Model, when the individual

alone is considered, the focus is on intrapsychic factors such as id, ego,

superego, etc. From the Systems point of view the concepts utilized consider

such aspects as system boundaries, open and closed systems, roles, statuses,

structure, communication, communication barrier (von Bertalanffy, 1966),

intra and intersystem relationships (Cartwright and Zander, 1960), etc.

All of these variables can add to our understanding of the relations of

individuals to their social contexts.

The Mental Health Model focuses on pathology, deficiencies, etc.,

while the systems model has the goal of exploring the conditions which

impede or stimulate positive functioning or growth. To this end, the

base, in research, is on "normal" growth processes and the social systems

which influence them. The Mental Health Model focus insists that the line of

causation runs from the individual to society. For example, Moynihan's

analysis of the black family in which he concludes that the black family

is a"tangle of pathology" assumes the family to be responsible for the plight

of the black American. This is tantamount to asserting that society is the

creation of the family. But actually, the family is the product of society.

In system terms, the line of causation runs from society to community, to

family, to individual and not the reverse. The weakness, etc. of the indi-

vidual family do not cause poverty and racism, the true pathology which

afflicts all blacks.

From the perspective of the "Mental Health" Model evaluation or assess-

ment is program focused, and in terms of the explicit criteria to which the

program is addressed. It does not recognize that any program has both

intended and unintended outcomes. In the systems model, the individual-in-

relations-to-his-social-systems is studies for insights and understandings

which may lead to social action as well as to information regarding the

status of the program, with reference to the criteria it seeks to achieve.

The concept of systems has been treated comprehensively by Bertalanffy

(1966). In his treatment of General Systems Theory (GST) Bertalanffy states

that "general systems theory contends that there are principles of systems

in general or in defined subclasses of systems irrespective of the nature

of systems or their components, or of the relations of forces between them."

(p. 708) Thus, GST is general in that it attempts to examine all types of

systems. A system is an organization of elements united in a form of regular

interaction and interdependence. GST as an approach to organizing and looking

at phenomenon is, thus, applicable to the cell (biological system), to the

individual (psychological system), to groups or society (social systems).

The focus of the perspective offered here is on psychological and social

systems.

The concept of a social system has been treated comprehensively by

Talcott Parson (1951) and associates (1955). A social system is an

aggregation of social roles or persons bound together by a pattern of

mutual interaction and interdependence. It has boundaries which enable

us to distinguish the internal from the external environment and typically

is a system for social units smaller than itself and in turn, a subsystem

for social units larger than itself.

While grossly oversimplified, the black family as a social system

has been diagrammed by Billingsley (1968) as indicated in Figure 1. As

depicted, the family is embedded in a network of mutually interdependent

relationships with the black community and wider society. Just as the

family is a subsystem of the black community, so are various patterns of

interactions (dyads: father-son; mother-daughter; brother-system; triads:

grandmother-mother-daughter, etc.) subsystems of the family, which for

them is a social system. The individuals in these various patterns, in

turn are subsystems to the larger interactive patterns, dyad, triad, etc.,

within the family.

A key consideration in all of this concerns the mutually interdependent

relations existing between the family and its members, on the one hand, and

the family and the black community, and the black community and wider

society on the other hand.

The educational subsystem is among those having an impact on the

community and, through it, the family. It may be, among other things,

that the nature of the relationship of the family to the community, and

in turn, the nature of the interchanges between school and community are

key factors in the academic achievement of the child. It may be that when

the interchanges between the school and the child's community and family

are mutually supportive, the school taking an initiating role in making

itself a part of the child's community, academic achievement is positively

affected. This perspective also conceives of blacks as the highly complex,

heterogeneous, diverse people that they are. Even though, in this country,

black people are viewed as a group apart from other people, and as showing

common intragroup attributes, behaviors, and conditions, great variations

are also obvious. Billingsley (1968) offers the concept "ethnic subsociety"

as a means of capturing this duality. This concept was taken from

Milton Gordon's theoretical work <u>Assimilation in American Life</u> (1964).

An ethnic group is defined as a relatively large configuration of people

with "shared feeling of peoplehood." In this society, such groups are

organized around race, religion, national origin, or some combination

of these. Gordon states that, common to the ethnic group

> is the social-psychological element of a special sense
> of both ancestral and future-oriented identification
> with the group. These are the 'people' of my
> ancestors; therefore, they are my people, and will be
> the people of my children and their children. With
> members of other groups I may share political parti-
> cipation, occupational relationships, common civic
> enterprise, perhaps even an occasional warm friend-
> ship, but in a very special way, which history has
> decreed, I share a sense of indisoluble and intimate
> identity with this <u>group</u> and not <u>that</u> within the larger
> society and the world. (p. 29)

This conception seems to reflect the reality of the existence of black

people. It also reflects the growing black consciousness or awareness of

black peoplehood, which is evolving at a rapid rate in black communities

throughout the country. While blacks are one, as members of a color caste

system, and by virtue of their common peoplehood, they are not a homogeneous

mass. Billingsley (1968) has depicted the black community as an ethnic

subsociety as indicated in Figure 2.

Billingsley's conceptual model makes use of three dimensions in describing the black community as an ethnic subsociety. They are social dimensions on which members within an ethnic group vary, namely, social class, rural or urban residence, and region of the country lived in. For our purposes then, black groups are not only blacks to be compared or contrasted with whites, they may also be upper class, middle class, or lower class, with northern, southern or western residence, with urban or rural backgrounds, and significantly they may be meaningfully compared and contrasted with each other. Consider the additional complexity added by further distinctions within an overall class level, e.g., the lower class is divided into the non-working poor, the working poor and the working non-poor.

As indicated by Billingsley (1968) the significance of social class is not to be able to make statements such as middle class whites and blacks have more in common than do middle and lower class blacks, etc. Such a formulation obscures more than it reveals, and fails to make a distinction

between the different types of identities people share. Gordon (1964)

conceptualizes two types of identities people share: historical and parti-

cipational identification.

> With a person of the same social class but of different
> ethnic group, one shares behavioral similarities but not
> a sense of peoplehood. With those of the same ethnic
> group but different social class one shares the sense of
> peoplehood but not behavioral similarities. The only
> group which meet both these criteria are people of the
> same ethnic group and social class. (p. 53)

As Billingsley (1968) suggests, even though social class lines among

blacks are less rigid than among other groups, social class distinctions

within the black community do provide a distinct basis of differentiation

which helps to condition the lives of blacks. Hence, one would expect

differential responses to external impingements, or interchanges with the

various subsystems by people located at different positions in the structure,

differential responses or interchanges that have implications for minority

children's developmental status generally, and educational achievement

in particular.

Summary and Conclusions

The perspective brought forth in this paper argues for new directions in the educations of oppressed minority groups, and addresses needed assessment of the theories, concepts, and methods of the social and behavioral sciences as applied to members of these groups, requisite to a fully meaningful contribution to innovative efforts in this area. A critical strategy necessary to break the familiar cycle involves an explicit recognition of the minority child's community, group, and culture. The learning environment must become a part and supportive of the child's community. This perspective considers the whole child, recognized that he has both cognitive and affective needs, that he come from a family, which exists as a part of an ethnic subsociety, which, itself is part of a larger society, which devalues the child, his family, and his community, and recognizes that the process of education must address itself to these dimensions explicitly. The behavioral and social sciences can play a critical role in this process by facilitating this endeavor. Even where

cognitive achievement does occur, it is not enough if such achievement is

attained at the exclusion of the child's own culture. Fanon's Black Faces

and White Masks speaks eloquently to the pernicious effects of education

attained in the latter terms. In effect, it leads to "gaining the brain

but losing the soul." Thus, the social and behavioral sciences must

address these issues if they are to be positive forces in the educational

process as it acts upon these children.

A central implication of this perspective is the necessity for a

redefinition of educational programs, especially childhood education, to

include a total developmental approach. This change in definition would

require a shift in focus in the evaluation process from the child

(conceived of primarily as a cognitive subsystem) to the whole person-

in-a-social-context, not as a fragmented being separated from his

surrounding. Given this perspective, research on a particular problem

area would not be concerned only with narrowly defined approach such as

the evaluation of pupil cognitive change, as a function of being exposed

to a program of compensatory education, but would take into account those

wider experiences which influence growth, positively or negatively. There

is also a critical necessity for behavioral science research, concerned

with understanding and resolving social problems, to be more explicit about

its underlying assumptions, values, and goals. Laboratory-based research

may be able to remain at the level of "pure knowledge," -knowledge for

its own sake - but research into problems concerned with understanding

and resolving social problems cannot. Thus, a developmental model appears

to be the appropriate one for the behavioral sciences, as applied in this

area. This model incorporates growth as its value base. Academic mastery

may be offered as a significant aspect of growth. It must be realized

that neither the behavioral scientist or researcher, as a person, nor

the processes or products of research are entirely value-free. The

observations of the social scientist cannot be carried out from a wholly

external vantage-point, nor can the findings of social research stand

by themselves as scientifically valid facts about the world. Further, the

role of the social scientist cannot be totally separated from that of

human being, of citizen, and of participant in social action. Further,

definition of the problem cannot be totally separated from those defining

the problem. The selection of dimensions and measurement operations reflect

the cultural and value perspective of those developing the concepts,

defining dimensions specifying operations, etc. Probably few would argue

that the majority of the research on black children today is received, executed

and reported out of the white middle class perspective, with no meaningful

participation by blacks. Ditto for other oppressed minorities. There must

be a measure of black, brown and red perspective incorporated into behavioral

and social science scholarship.

These modifications in research on black and other oppressed minority

groups could lead to: (1) improvement in social science scholarship

through their impact on problem selection and formulation, on methodological

considerations, such as sampling, operationalizing concepts, defining

concepts, specification of two-tailed statistical tests, interpretation of

findings, etc., (2) a reduction in the "white knows best" diction, (3) a

study of black people per se and thereby contribute clarification to the

condition of blacks, as contrasted to viewing blacks as objects worthy of

study only when they can be compared to whites - an ethnocentric syndrome

of white behavioral and social scientists, (4) a cessation on the part

of behavioral and social scientists in the legitimation of societal myths

concerning blacks, which gives scientific respectability and justification

to white racism, individual and institutional, and (5) recognition of the

need for theories and methodologies that recognize the plural nature of

the society, and an accompanying move away from the White-Anglo Conformity

perspective with its tendency to judge blacks and other minority groups

outside the context of their unique history, their experience in this

country, and their contemporary-social conditions, which tends to see

deviations from it as negative in consequence.

Finally, the social scientist is confronted with the question as to

the nature of the social forces his research represents or his theories

reflect. What is the nature of the social processes they help to foster?

What is the quality of the social values they help to promote? Rather

than hiding behind "scientific objectivity," social and behavioral

scientists, are called upon to assume their responsibilities for the human

beings in our society and become monitors for social justice. The foregoing

represents some of the characteristics the writer would see in humanistic

behavioral and social sciences. He believes that these are the directions

future developments in social and behavioral sciences must take if they

are to serve all peoples of the society and not merely represent and

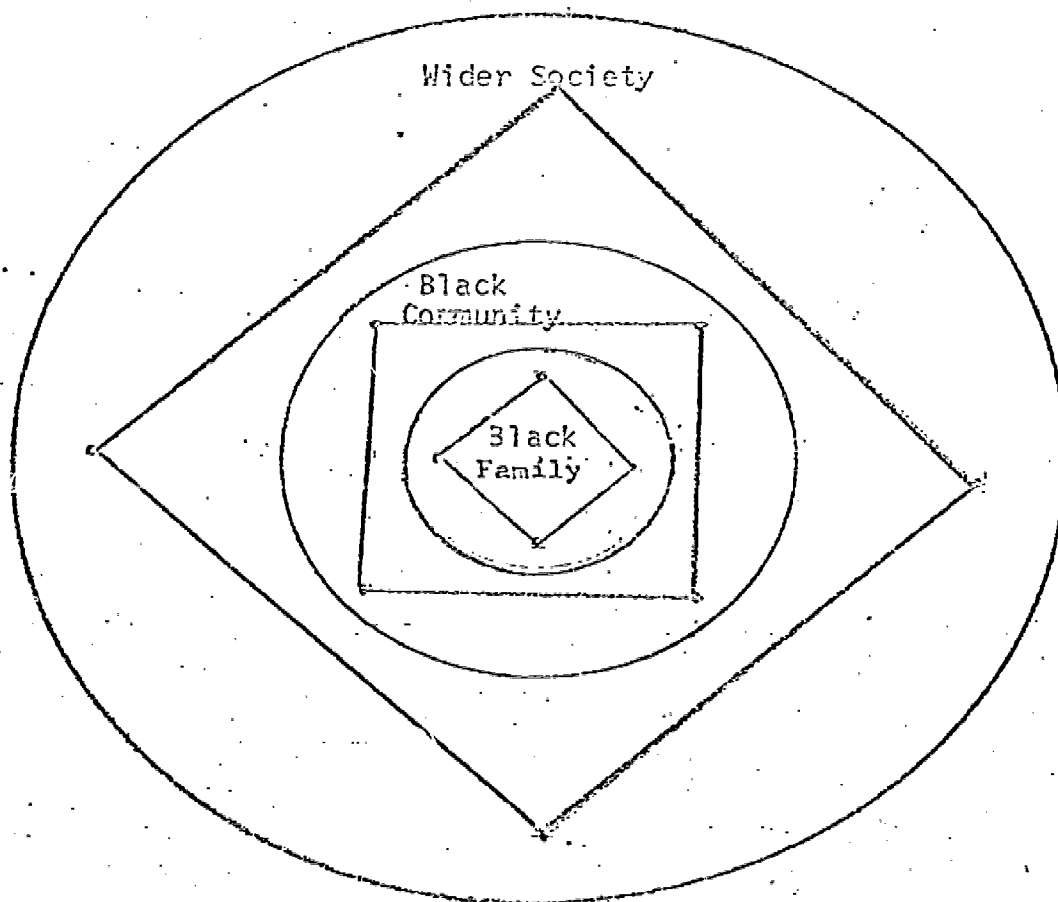protect and maintain the "White Anglo-Saxon Ideal."

. FIGURE 1

The Black Family as a Social System (Adapted from: A. Billingsley, Black
Families in White America, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968).
    The family is embedded in a matrix of mutually interdependent relation-
ships with the Black Community and the Wider Society.
    There are subsystems within the family: Husband-wife; Mother-son; Father-
daughter, Grandmother-mother-daughter, etc.
    The Black Community includes: Schools, Churches, Lodges, Social Clubs,
Funeral Societies, Organized Systems of hustling and other institutions.
    The Wider Society consists of major institutions: values, political
ec   c, health, welfare and communication subsystems.

49

Upper Class

Traditional Upper Class

Newly Arrived Upper Class

Upper Middle Class·

Solid Middle Class

Middle Class

Precarious Middle Class

Working non Poor

Working Poor
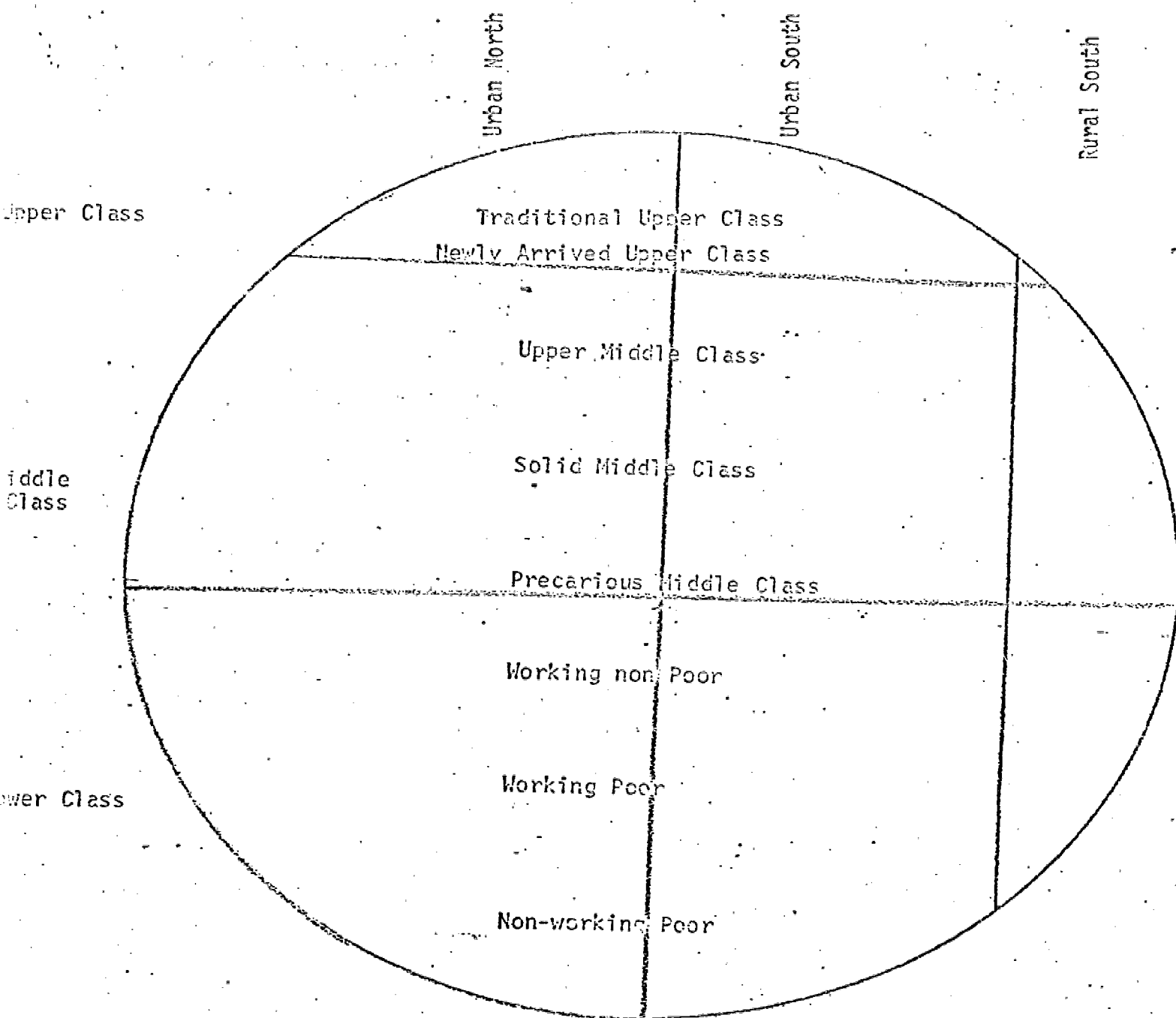
Lower Class

Non-working Poor

FIGURE 2

The Black Community as an Ethnic Subsociety (Adapted from: A..Billingsley, Black Families in White American, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1968).

This figure is conceptual and does not reflect exact social and geographic distribution of black population. In 1966 about 50% of all black families lived in Urban North, 25% in Urban South and 25% in Rural South.

Using income as an index of social class, about 50% of all black families fall into Lower class, about 40% in Middle class, and about 10% in Upper class.

FOOTNOTES

1. The findings reported by K. B. Clark, <u>Dark Ghetto: Dilemma of Social Power</u>. New York & Evanston: Harper Torch Books (Harper & Row) 1965, concerns the academic performance in reading and arithmetic of oppressed minority group children in Harlem. It is important to note that the data reported were generated by standard tests administered throughout the New York City school system. The same pattern of retarded performance was reflected whether the standard used was "grade expectancy", performance norms of New York City school children as a whole, or the National Norming group for the standardize instruments used.

Even though the findings cited by K. B. Clark refer specifically to New York City children, they are considered similar to the situation prevailing in other urban inner city school systems for these groups. The concept of "accumulative deficit" was coined by M. Deutsch to describe the tendency on part of poor black children to fall progressively behind in academic performance as they advance through the grades. In the survey by J. S. Coleman, et al. <u>Equality of Educational Opportunity</u>. U.S. Department of H.E.W, Washington, D..C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1966, for information on a national sample.

2. The references cited in each explanation-category are presented as illustrations of the work done in these areas and not representative as exhaustive studies.

3. K. B. Clark, <u>A Possible Reality</u>: A Design for the Attainment of High Academic Achievement for the Students of the Public Elementary & Junior High Schools for Washington, D. C., New York, MARC, Inc., 1970, 3-11 summarized the theories of educational underachievement in this fashion.

4. E. Barnes in Cultural Retardation or Shortcomings of Assessment Techniques, <u>Selected Convention Papers</u>, <u>CEC: Washington, D.C.</u>, 1969, criticizes recent relevant literature in this domain from the standpoint among others of the status of the black community, family, and individual within society. The criticisms brought to bear in this article are relevant to other dimensions of functioning covered in the current paper. M. Deutsch, The Disadvantaged Child & The Learning Process; In H.A. Passow (ed) <u>Education in Depressed Areas.</u> New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1963 treats this issue in detail within the context of several background & performance variables. The concrete & abstract modes are related to the nature & context of verbal interchanges between the child & his parents. D. P. Ausubel, How reversible are the cognitive & motivational effects of cultural deprivation? Implications for teaching the culturally deprived child. Urban Education, 1964, 1, 16-38, focuses on the difficulty black youngsters experience in switching from a concrete to an abstract mode.

5. Conceptualizations by B. C. Rosen, Race, Ethnicity, and the Achievement Syndrome, American Sociological Review, 1959, 24, 47-60, and E. Epps. correlates of Academic Achievement Among Northern & Southern Urban

Negro Students, J. Soc. Issues, 1969, 25, 55-70, point out the weaknesses conceptualization in the areas of achievement motivation and aspiration levels. Epp's concepts of "hope or success' and perceived probability of success" make for greater precision in studies of achievement motivation and provides a basis for clearer distinction between this concept and that ofaspiration level. Rosen's conceptualization advances the concept of achievement motivation by specifying these factors upon which achievement motivation depends in this society. These three factors he labels collectively as "achievement syndrome." The factors are" McClelland's "achievement motive," a personality characteristic; achievement-value orientations, involves a concern with social mobility and behavior patterns instrumental in pursuing long-term goals, and educational and vocational aspirations, concerns the levels of academic and occupational achievements desired by parents for their children and by the children themselves.

6. For a representative article providing a general picture, based on research finding of development and functioning of blacks, individual and family, see Lee Rainwater, "Crucible of Identity: The Negro Lower-Class Family," In T. Parsons & K. B. Clark (Eds.), The Negro American, Boston, Beacon Press, 1967, 160-204.

7. E. Liebow, Tally's Corner. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1967, 63-71 provides an analysis of this concept from the point of view & life conditions of his street corner subjects. This analysis is forceful in its demonstration of the criticalness of the relationship of definer to the definition. It raises the important question of having input from the community, from which the subjects come, into the process of defining behavioral events to be focused upon. It certainly raises serious question about the practice of having a person from one cultural net give significance to behavioral events (define) arising from another cultural net.

8. A number of persons have begun to make use of these frameworks in therapeutic situations, such as M. Jones, Therapeutic community, New York: Basic Books, 1953; V. Satir, Conjoint Family Therapy. Palo Alto, California: Science & Behavior Books, 1964; R. MacGregar, et al. Multiple Impact Therapy With Families. New York: MacGraw-Hill, 1966. A beginning is in evidence in the research of Social Psychologist such as I. Katz,University of Michigan, Edgar Epps, University of Chicago & C. Clark, Stanford University. However, it is the case nevertheless that generally the community of the child is left out of investigations. However, in focusing on an increasingly large segment of the child's social context, investigators seem to be getting away from the tendency to speak of the environment in terms of the historical-continuity theory and are beginning to focus on the role of subsystems in the behavior of lower-status individuals & groups.

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