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AUTHOR Moore, William, Jr.
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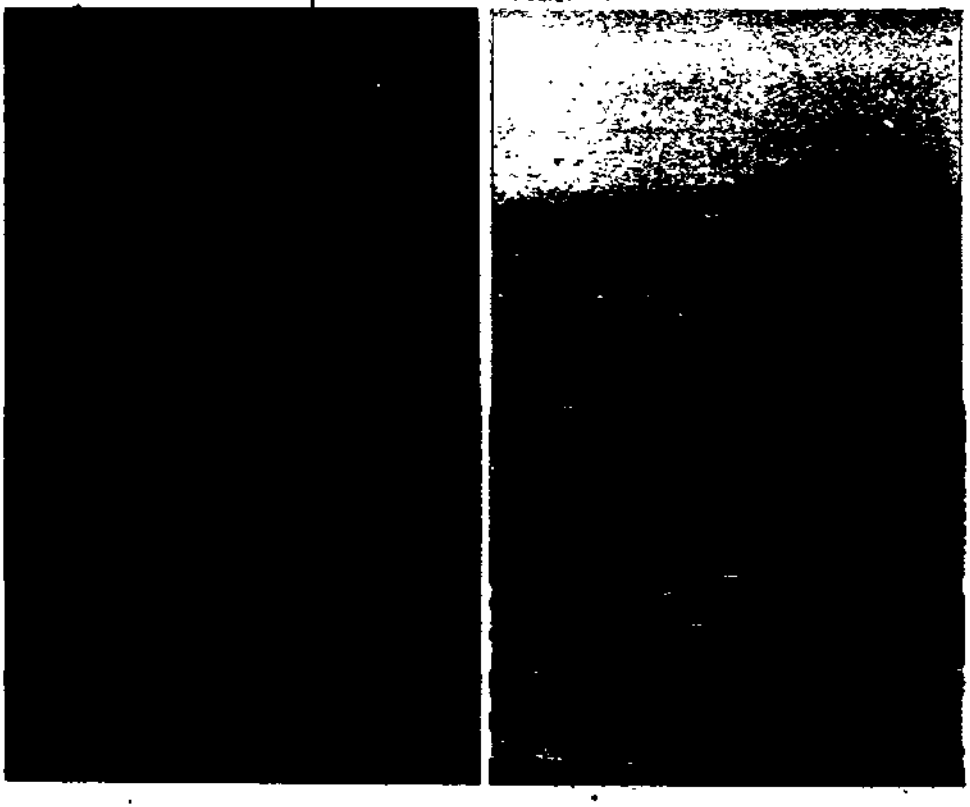
ABSTRACT

It is a widely accepted fact that community and junior colleges have a special commitment to serve students who in other types of higher educational institutions would be considered high risks because they are less likely than other entrants to complete their chosen programs of study. Professor Moore makes clear that the commitment, though well accepted, is ineffectively accomplished. Whether the community college is really able to define or cure academic deficiencies has not been confirmed with hard, unequivocable evidence. The current popular ideas about what causes low achievement in specific groups of students, such as the belief that the students are culturally disadvantaged, have negative self-concepts, and lack motivation; and the current correctives--remedial instruction and therapeutic counseling--are often inappropriate and ineffective. As corrections for the problem, Moore recommends an emphasis on community college teacher preparation, institutional reexamination of selection and admissions procedures, increased faculty advising of high risk students, and increased policy flexibility. A bibliography is appended, and a chapter identifying research needs in this field is included. (Author/NHM)



Community College Response to the High-Risk Student: A Critical Reappraisal

By William Moore, Jr.

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Community College Response to the High-Risk Student: A Critical Reappraisal

By William Moore, Jr.
Professor of Educational Administration
Ohio State University

"Horizons Issues" Monograph Series

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FOREWORD

This first of a series of publications developed for the two-year colleges—the "Horizon Issues" papers sponsored jointly by American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, the Council of Universities and Colleges, and the ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges—strikes to the center of an issue fundamental to those institutions. It is a widely accepted fact that community and junior colleges have a special commitment to serve students who in other types of higher educational institutions would be considered high risks because they are less likely than other entrants to complete their chosen programs of study. Professor Moore makes clear that the commitment, though well accepted, is still ineffectively accomplished.

Although the paper is highly critical, it is offered in the spirit of the Horizon Issues project, which is to have recognized academic authorities present to their colleagues in graduate programs and to the professional staffs of operating community and junior colleges their views on a topic of critical importance and their ideas about research that can improve practices related to the topic. Although some readers may experience defensive reaction to what Professor Moore says, the intent is to stimulate these and others to respond to his request for stronger research on the task accepted. He points out clearly the very shaky research foundation of most current programs for counseling and teaching high-risk students. His call for action merits positive responses.

Since this paper is the first result of the AACJC/CUC Horizon Issues project that took a year to develop and coordinate, comments from the field will be appreciated. Future publications will deal with improving instructional effectiveness, analyzing community needs, and implementing planning decisions. An intensified joint research effort and stronger dialogue on institutional development among all interested parties are the objectives. Reactions and suggestions are welcomed.

S. V. Martorana, Chairman,
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INTRODUCTION

Community college educators tend to think well of their enterprise. They cite its philosophical uniqueness, flexibility, phenomenal growth, response to the needs of students and communities, ability to provide the appropriate educational experience to every person who seeks to avail himself/herself of the institution's resources and expertise, democratizing function, and open-door concept. Finally, they claim they can take students who previously would not have been able to attend college at all because of their poor academic achievement, provide the remediation which will repair their academic deficiencies, and allow them to make normal academic progress thereafter.

It is understandable that two-year-college people would allow themselves to be proud. To be sure, the emergence of their institution has, in fact, caused some change and has brought about some significant contributions to higher education. Any critical examination of how the community college operates, however, leaves the investigator uncomfortable. The researcher finds it almost impossible to determine to what degree the two-year college has really accomplished the goals about which its advocates show so much pride and satisfaction. In fact, a close look at the community college reveals that most of its dimensions and most of the claims about it remain unanalyzed. Every facet of it needs research and reappraisal.

Whether or not the community college is really able to define or cure academic deficiencies has not been confirmed with hard, unequivocable evidence. The current popular ideas about what causes low achievement in specific groups of students, such as the belief that the students are culturally disadvantaged, have negative self-concepts, and lack motivation, and the current correctives—remedial instruction and therapeutic counseling—are, as I shall demonstrate, often inappropriate and ineffective. A reexamination of the achievement problem and the institution's general response to high-risk students is in order.

First, however, a word about terminology. Initially, I planned to write about "the new student" or "the nontraditional student." A few years ago, both these phrases referred to culturally disadvantaged students and students in remedial programs. But now these terms are used to describe older students, people changing careers, married women whose children are no longer underfoot, people updating their present skills, and so on.

So what term can be used to refer to students who need academic remediation? Granted that any label is likely to be paternalistic and euphemistic. The educator who uses such labels may do so to avoid designating students by social class or by race in order to conceal his appraisal or disapproval of them. Perhaps when "we mean that the person or group we are describing is poor or powerless or black or red or brown [or academically deficient],* we should say it" (Tolson, 1972). But that would not solve the problem here. In the interest of time, space, and brevity, a single designation is preferable. I have selected *high-risk* because, though it is no more definitive or less offensive than other terms such as *culturally disadvantaged*, it has not been as widely used and abused.**

*Words in brackets are mine.

**Nevertheless other terms, such as "culturally disadvantaged," "nontraditional," "remedial," "new," "developmental," "marginal," "culturally different," "nonmotivated," do appear in the text occasionally as alternates.

THE "CULTURALLY DISADVANTAGED" HYPOTHESIS

At least a dozen nationally known two-year-college* authorities have defined high-risk students.** They agree that the student's age, erratic academic performance in high school, economic plight, unimpressive standardized test scores, and racial/cultural/class background place them at a disadvantage in contention with the vast majority of students applying for entry into college. Research further suggests that most high-risk students are first generation college enrollees, have few if any intellectual contacts, are likely to need remedial work, are the sons and daughters of lower-class workers, and are represented by a disproportionately high percentage of minority-group students (Cross, 1971; Gordon and Wilkerson, 1966; Roueche, 1972). Moreover, the conditions of their upbringing are said to depress their intelligence, motivation, and self-concept.

Unfortunately, this description of cultural and educational disadvantages has been widely accepted, not as a tentative hypothesis but as a *confirmed* explanation of the poor achievement among high-risk students. The 1960s and 1970s produced a voluminous professional literature which documented and popularized these ideas and used them to justify the remedial and other compensatory programs which have now become institutionalized (Baehr, 1969; Berg and Axtell, 1968; Biggs and Others, 1971; Bloesser and Others, 1968; Ferrin, 1971; Garcia-Passalacqua, 1968; Krupka, 1969; Lackey and Ross, 1968; Shea, 1966; Moore, 1970). In fact from the preschool to the university one will find the "culturally disadvantaged" hypothesis supporting a pervasive and coherent ideology (Gordon and Wilkerson, 1966).

Acceptance of a hypothesis, however, is not a test of it. And a systematic analysis of the literature reveals little more than a collective restatement of the problem. Thus there is considerable question in my mind about the extent to which poor achievement can be traced to the social, economic, family, motivational, and environmental backgrounds of the student. Moreover, I believe I

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*The terms community college, two-year college, junior college, and open-door college are used interchangeably throughout this paper.

**See Roueche (1967, 1968, 1972), Clarke and Ammons (1970), Cohen and Associates (1971), Berg and Axtell (1968), Moore (1970, 1971), Monroe (1972), Knoell (1970), as examples.

am not alone in questioning these and other popular ideas about low achieving students.

Any serious student of the community college will find himself compelled, painfully and gradually, to discard one accepted educational "fact", after another about low-achieving students, facts which constituted the core of some of his professional training. Although both the content of the curricula and the commentary of his professors reinforced the "culturally disadvantaged" hypothesis, he usually discovered that many of the things he learned turned out to be sets of officially certified nonfacts and respected assumptions. Even the few highly technical, though tangentially related, research studies which made it easy to acquiesce to the seemingly logical constructs and quite believable scholarly explanations about low-achieving students become suspect upon re-examination.

REASONS FOR CHALLENGE

How is it possible that so many experts and practitioners have reached consensus on such a theoretical construct when a number of the individual components have not been validated, especially in relation to high-risk students in the community college? One answer is that some of the dimensions of the "culturally disadvantaged" hypothesis are extremely difficult, if not impossible, to measure. Race, for example, is one of those individual components which cannot be validated as a causative factor in low achievement. In like manner, the effects of environment on student achievement is one of those dimensions which is impossible to accurately measure.

Another answer is that, except for Cross (1971), Knoell (1970), and a very few others, community college writers and theorists have done virtually no original research. Also they have often failed to use whatever empirical evidence does exist to support their own writings; instead they have simply repeated the unsubstantiated assumptions and observations made by their published predecessors. Rarely has the cycle been broken by the introduction of some new knowledge or empirical data.

There are other reasons why the "culturally disadvantaged" hypothesis should be challenged. For instance it does not:

- consider the possibly negative effect of the school environment on student performance.
- take into account how the teacher's behavior and attitude toward the student may effect student performance.

• attribute any of the problems of achievement to poor instruction.

• discriminate among high-risk students.

• question the validity of test scores in spite of the controversy with regard to their validity as predictors.

• identify any strengths or talents which the students may have.

• account for the effect of peer pressure on performance.

• explain how some teachers can consistently instruct high-risk students effectively and other teachers consistently fail to do so.

• explain the effectiveness of older persons (disadvantaged) who return to college many years after earlier failure and achieve great academic success.

• take into consideration that high school grades are not as good predictors of college success for minority students as they are for white students.

• recognize any positive qualities of the student's environment.

Finally, this hypothesis does not explain the success of students who suffer all the deprivation of the culturally disadvantaged but who nonetheless succeed academically. The reason given most often in this latter case is that such students are highly motivated. Yet there is not a single community college writer of authority who is billed as an expert on motivation. Only Roueche (1972) has written more than two pages on the subject. I am convinced that community college educators (experts and practitioners) do not know what motivates high-risk students. What they claim to know has come primarily from studies of another population: elementary and secondary school children. And the same sources have given them the "culturally disadvantaged" hypothesis.

The authors of these sources* were among the first to characterize specific groups of children as culturally deprived or culturally disadvantaged and, therefore, as atypical. To their credit, these early investigators did more research than their community college contemporaries. Still, they made some assumptions and

*See Coleman and Others (1966); Gordon and Wilkerson (1966), Passow (1962), Deutsch (1962), Riessman (1962), Bereiter and Engelmann (1966), Moore (1969), Conant (1961), Clark (1965).

speculations about the characteristics of "disadvantaged students" which were never proved or disproved, but which, nonetheless, were passed on and have since come to be viewed as truth. Two-year-college educators adopted from the public schools not only the concept of cultural deprivation as a reason for poor achievement, but also the language which defined certain students as "marginal," "high-risk," "nontraditional," "remedial," and so on; and by accepting these labels and definitions they shaped their strategies for dealing with such students.

This transfer of ideas upward is quite understandable, since almost 50 percent of the teachers and 80 percent of the administrators in community colleges come from the public school system (Cross, 1970; Shane, 1973). But can we accept the proposition that the age of two-year-college students, their mobility, employment, experience, learning, and other factors have no positive effect on them even if they were culturally disadvantaged as children? Although we do not have empirical evidence to answer this question at present, I suggest that the personality is not static, that "the adult is a constantly adapting organism" (Birren, 1964). Thus, one may reasonably challenge the application of the cultural deprivation hypothesis to community college students.

These arguments are not suggesting that original research is always necessary or that it is the only mode of knowing about high-risk students. Turning to authorities is a well-accepted practice: it saves time and effort and is a point of departure. Because a single individual cannot know everything, he must turn to others whose knowledge, skill, and experience are trusted and respected. But when the authorities simply rely on each other's past statements when they never replicate or really criticize the work of their colleagues, and when they do not determine at least some of their facts independently, care must be taken in both choosing authorities and evaluating what they say.

One may also learn about high-risk students through personal experience, deduction, induction, and experimentation, although an uncritical and unrestricted use of any one of these avenues should be avoided. One person's appraisal of the conditions of a particular situation is not empirical proof that these conditions exist in similar situations. Personal experience also does not evoke the analysis and interpretation that would help in understanding other situations (Scudder, 1970), and it cannot be replicated. Nevertheless, this means of knowing can be useful as long as one recognizes that the mode which is substantive, which can be tested and measured, and which allows the consumer of the information to predict, explain, and control is generally preferable.

The foregoing discussion should not be misleading. High-risk students are an identifiable group, and I am not denying that certain students may appear to have some of the characteristics of being culturally disadvantaged, as described earlier. The point here is that the teachers and administrators who make these determinations should have some data or research basis to support their evaluations, since these descriptions have come to be badges of affliction for the students so designated.

High-risk students *are* different, may view themselves differently, and may lead a kind of life unlike that of the traditional college student of the past—so do low-risk students. But differences between students do not cause poor achievement. High-risk students may have a social and cultural value system significantly different in some ways from that of nondisadvantaged students and from that of their teachers. However, using cultural deprivation as the primary explanation for the apparently poor academic performance of high-risk students is being questioned (Roueche, 1973; Cross, 1971; Cohen and Associates, 1971; Cohen and Brawer, 1972; Moore, 1970).

Many community college authorities do acknowledge that negative faculty and administrative attitudes and behavior, poor teaching, and lack of administrative support are also responsible for poor achievement and the ineffective education provided to high-risk students. Citing the previous economic and social conditions of the students as reasons for their academic failure only blames the students for having been the victims of those conditions—a phenomenon explored by Ryan (1971)—and these factors may have little to do with the instructor's ability to teach or the student's ability to learn. Citing low IQ blames the student's poor achievement on genetic inheritance—a position espoused by Jensen (1969). Yet, this measure has been repeatedly challenged and its results have been found to vary significantly. Knoell (1970) argues that "the validity of the scores is to be doubted as a predictor of their success in college" (p. 178). And Schenz (1964) maintains that "ability" tests are by all accounts of dubious value in predicting the "success" of "low-ability students." Focusing on grades and other academic measures as though they were infallible and conclusive evidence of learning ability is no more productive when dealing with high-risk students than comparing two-year-college students with four-year-college students, black students with white students, the IQ scores of one group with the IQ scores of another group, and low achievers with high achievers. Information may be gained thereby, but for the most part it is not being used constructively.

SOME REASONS FOR THE BEHAVIOR OF HIGH-RISK STUDENTS

Just as most community college authorities subscribe to the cultural deprivation theory, most also agree, as Roueche and Kirk have reported, "that nontraditional students are characterized by feelings of powerlessness, worthlessness, alienation, and inappropriate adaptive behaviors—unrealistic levels of aspiration, lack of problem-solving skills and experiences, hostility, aggressiveness, and often delinquency" (1973, p. 69).*

No doubt they do manifest such feeling and actions, and for good reason: they *are* without power. They do not have control over their school's policies and procedures, what and how they are taught, who attempts to teach them in the college, what evaluative instruments are used, and so on. Likewise, they feel alienated because they *are* alienated. Several authors have reported that community college teachers have negative feelings about teaching high-risk students (Monroe, 1972; Cohen and Brawer, 1972). The students, especially those in minority groups, *are* often excluded from some parts of the educational enterprise. Apprenticeship programs in health sciences are examples. These fields and the individuals and groups who represent them have the worst images in the community college. Those persons have a reputation not only for attempting to prevent the participation of high-risk students in the allied health programs, but also for trying to remove their training programs from among the educational options of the students. Furthermore, one cannot deny that racism exists in two-year colleges (Moore and Wagstaff, 1974).

So ingrained are the suspicions of minority group students, so real the past and present inequities, and so complete the in-school and out-of-school isolation that these students would have to be completely out of touch with reality not to be aware of what happens to them and not to feel alienated. The benign neglect that Moynihan (1965) has advocated for this group is a case in point. The alienation the student feels and expresses is real—not a paranoid response, as some may infer.

And reference to a "lack of problem-solving skills and experiences, and inappropriate adaptive behavior," must be confined to academic problems in an educational environment, because some of the most effective "real world" problem solving

*Professors Roueche and Kirk are not necessarily subscribing to these characteristics of high-risk students themselves.

and most sophisticated coping skills we can identify in college students can be found in high-risk students.

The question is: How should the student feel, given the reality which confronts him? Others are describing how the student feels, or the way they think he ought to feel. And when the student's behavior demonstrates that he does not like what is happening to him, this action is challenged by the academics as inappropriate and nonadaptive behavior. To be characterized as "aggressive," "hostile," "unrealistic," and a "delinquent" suggests unhealthy personality problems. So, on the basis of "general agreement," the high-risk is type-cast.

Such students are also said to have difficulty achieving because their attitudes, opinions, and general feelings about themselves and their abilities are negative (Cohen and Associates, 1971; Monroe, 1972; Clarke and Ammons, 1970). The consequence of such personal perception is associated with deficiency in school performance (Dinkmeyer, 1972). Conversely, positive self-concept is predictive of academic success (Green, 1969; Williams, 1969). Both of these positions, however, should be approached with some caution. Although there is some agreement that differences in self-concept do exist between achievers and nonachievers, such consensus does not confirm that the differences in self-concept are the causes of, or the result of, underachievement (Shaw and Others, 1960).

The belief that a low self-concept is one of the factors in poor achievement is widespread, as shown by the hundreds of articles, research reports, and project summaries which refer to it. And the deleterious effects of negative self-concept are so firmly accepted by some teachers that they feel little can be done to assist students so afflicted. In fact, citing the negative self-concept of high-risk students has become an acceptable way to avoid teaching or to excuse the inability to provide quality instruction. While many things, including IQ scores, are said to help form the negative self-concept (Knoell, 1970), virtually none of the available data explains how low self-esteem is established in high-risk community college students. The overwhelming majority of studies on self-concept have been done with small children and adolescents (Wylie, 1961, 1974). And any attempt to generalize from such research to an adult population in the community college should be examined.

REASONS FOR CHALLENGE

If it is true, as many teachers believe, that high-risk students have negative self-concepts, how does an instructor determine whether a student sees himself in this way? "Little research is available on the self-concept of the community college student" (Roueche and Kirk, 1973, p. 69)—too little to legitimately cite it as the primary cause or result of poor achievement, or as a basis for prescribing teaching strategies. Although a number of instruments purport to measure this characteristic they are not widely known, and few teachers use or have access to them. Notwithstanding, when I surveyed 250 directors of counseling and an equal number of instructors from

identical two-year colleges (Moore, 1975). I found that more than 90 percent of both groups believed that women, minority group members, low achievers of both sexes and all races, and students identified as disadvantaged had negative self-concepts. This feeling was a little startling, since not a single teacher reported administering a self-concept test. If this survey was at all representative, a lot of instructors are basing their judgment on some subjective prescription which leads me to ask, what effect does the teacher's attitude have on student achievement? Is the negative self-concept notion as applied to marginal students simply a widely accepted, stereotyped, unexamined, and unsubstantiated assumption? My survey certainly suggests this possibility.

With what student group is the high-risk student group compared? Collins (1967) suggests that the self-concept of community college students is low in relation to that of students in four-year colleges. But what is the purpose of this comparison? The tendency to contrast community college students with their senior college brethren does not appear to be either enlightening or instructive (Cross, 1971). And even when the results are useful, there is little evidence that they are made available to the teachers who need them.

Against what standard (that is, of a positive self-concept norm) is the community college student compared? O'Banion and Thurston (1972) maintain that junior college students begin with doubt and get worse when they experience little, if any, success. If this is true of these students as a group, what distinguishes the high-risk from the low-risk student? What *is* a positive self-concept? How can an instructor tell when a student has one?

PROBLEM OF DEFINITION

Various investigators define self-concept differently and look for different characteristics when they study it. Some view it in terms of specifics (Brookover and Others, 1967); others, more globally (Banks and Grambs, 1972). Coller (1971) writes that "self-concept is a highly general construct composed of diverse and sometimes unrelated subconstructs" (p. 75); Woodard (1971) suggests that a positive self-concept is the need and willingness of an individual to march to a different drummer. All of these investigators may be right—or wrong. Such is the lack of a precise definition.

Is a negative self-concept cyclical when applied to high-risk students; that is, both a cause and an effect of poor achievement? If it is, what should the instructor do in order to break the cycle—attempt to modify instruction or try to change the student's

self-perception? Theoretically, the instructor should be more competent to accomplish the first alternative than the second. After all, he does control instruction, but he has virtually no influence over any of the conditions which are purported to cause poor self-images, with the possible exception of his attitude and behavior toward the student, his expectations and other prejudices and biases.

QUESTIONS ABOUT RACE, SEX AND ACHIEVEMENT PREDICTIONS

Is the incidence of negative self-concept higher among minority group students than among white students, since a disporportionately greater number of minorities than whites are considered high-risk? Although older research answered yes, more recent investigations challenge these findings (Zirkel and Moses, 1971; Zirkel, 1971; Zirkel and Greene, 1971). It is true that a disproportionate number of low achievers and remedial students are minority group members. Can we, therefore, conclude that negative self-concept is related to racial or ethnic background? The findings are vague and inconclusive (for example, see Dreger and Miller, 1968; Katz, 1969). Zirkel (1971) reports that ethnic group membership and mixture may either enhance or depress the self-concept of a high-risk student.*

Some propose the existence of a black self-concept (Banks and Grambs, 1972). The problem is, blacks define it differently from whites (Williams, 1974). Which definition is the right one? Or are both versions acceptable? There is agreement neither within nor across racial groups with regard to a black self-concept. And Arnez (1972) rejects the negative black self-concept hypothesis altogether. If a black self-image exists, are there also corresponding Jewish, Puerto Rican, Chicano, Native American, Oriental, and "other" self-concepts? And if each group has its own self-concept norm, then from which group do we evolve the standard? Should we have specific self-concept tests to measure each racial and ethnic group's self-concept and a general instrument to measure them all?

As more male than female students are enrolled in remedial courses and remedial students are often characterized as having

*It must be noted here that the research relating to self-concept in older minority group students is so scant that I have quoted from some references relating to research done with children. This is a procedure I criticized earlier, but these were the only sources I was able to locate.

negative self-concepts (Monroe, 1972), does it follow that more male students have poor self-perceptions than females? A voluminous literature denies such a proposition. What, then, is the explanation?

When it is said that negative self-concept is predictive of low achievement, does this mean that the student will be a poor achiever in all subjects or only specific ones? We are never told. How do the advocates of this hypothesis explain the self-concept of a student who appears unable to successfully perform academic work, but who excels as an athlete? In other words—does self-concept only apply in the cognitive domain? Is it possible that a student may have a negative self-concept because he cannot read well and a positive one because he is successful in mathematics? Though it may be difficult to answer these questions, it is not difficult to find an honors student in the community college who excels in one discipline but is a low achiever in another.

This leads me to ask, are there multiple self-concepts in each individual, or does each person have some type of psychological barometer which measures the strength of his self-concept according to his knowledge of and skill at the task to be performed? Brookover and his associates (1967) suggest the possibility of a different self-concept for each of the roles a person performs.

Does a marginal student say he cannot perform a specific task because he does not feel good about himself or because he is fully aware that he does not possess the necessary skills? To not *know* how is not the same as being unable to *learn* how. If negative self-concept is predictive of low achievement, how does one account for students who perform well but who also have low opinions of themselves?

Although these questions may be simplistic, they do indicate that the wide acceptance of negative self-concept as a major factor in under-achievement may be questioned. Such an explanation seems irresponsible until some conclusive data can be found to support the position.

SOME DAMAGING PRESUMPTIONS

A number of remedial and developmental programs have built-in components for developing a positive self-concept in the student (Roueche and Kirk, 1973). Although these components are designed to help the student, they do suggest that he must be taught to feel good about himself before he can profit from instruction. A further implication is that in order to teach a high-risk student, a teacher, or someone else, must first improve the student's view of himself. These presumptions are troublesome for several reasons. First, the

classroom teacher is seldom equipped to diagnose a negative self-concept in a student. Second, even if he can make or has made such a diagnosis, it is presumptuous to believe that he can either prescribe the remedy or bring about the change. Third, it is damaging to assume that a high-risk student needs his self-concept changed in the first place. Even the experts cannot agree on what it is. A teaching strategy based on low expectations, the self-fulfilling prophecy, and the assumed need of students for psychological remediation as a prerequisite for academic remediation is starting off on the wrong foot. It is quite possible that a student may have good feelings about himself *until* he encounters his teachers and the educational institution. Davidson and Lang (1960) found that the teacher's negative image of the student erodes self-perception or self-image, as well as his academic achievement.

ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO CATEGORIZE AND TRACK?

Watching attempts to substitute a hypothesis of psychological deprivation for one of cultural deprivation gives a sense of *déjà vu* to those who have observed the responses of educators to high-risk students. The second hypothesis (poor self-concept), like the first, provides a rationale for locating the learner's failure in the learner and his environment and omits holding the institution and its academic experts accountable. And it permits educators to make a better case for failure than for success.

The cultural deprivation hypothesis is easy to challenge but the theory of negative self-concept is more difficult to counter because the facts are more elusive. The cultural deprivation idea, for example, which emphasizes that high-risk students lack such things as educational tools in the home, involvement with cultural events, and fathers or father figures in the home, is often in conflict with the facts. Too many high-risk students at the two-year-college level do not lack these things to be citing deprivation as a common pattern. Many of the students work full time or part time, own some of the common material items, come from intact families, and attend some of the same cultural activities as privileged students. And it is seldom reasonable to imply that a male student, for example, cannot read because he doesn't have a father in the home or that he has a role and identity problem because there is no male model in the home. In like manner, the mere presence of educational tools in the home—books, for example—does not mean that the books are read. In fact, the evidence shows that students without books in their homes learn to read as quickly as students from homes which are

well-equipped with reading materials (Clark, 1965). In what way does the absence of books in the home, the economic status of the student, or his race actually interfere with his ability to learn to read?

Not every student who resides in a depressed area or belongs to a minority group is from a low-income family, a broken family, a home devoid of educational materials and stimulation, or a hostile environment. Every community, including an inner city or ghetto community, has its "respectables," its conformists to the social norm (Moore, 1969). Although it is true that some students do not have some of their basic material, and perhaps emotional needs met, it is an exaggeration to assert that most of them experience severe deprivation. The purported cultural disadvantages are easy enough to check. But when educators suggest that high-risk students suffer from low self-esteem, see themselves as not being preferred, and so on, contradicting such statements requires more attention and puts the burden of proof on the student and his advocates.

According to some of the more recent literature, a depressed self-concept is not as prevalent in high-risk students as it was thought to be, and, even where it does exist, it may have little influence on negative achievement (Gordon and Wilkerson, 1966). Researchers have also found that a positive or negative self-concept may operate to reduce or to stimulate achievement, respectively, and that ethnic group membership may either enhance or depress self-concept (Zirkel, 1971). In fact, recent studies (Carter, 1968; Soares and Soares, 1969; DeBlassie and Healy, 1970; Rosenberg and Simmons, 1971; Gaston, 1972; Hara, 1972) have rejected the earlier stereotypes about blacks, concluding that this minority group has self-concepts just as high or higher than whites.

Even if one is able to help the high-risk student improve his self-concept, this change will not guarantee that his academic skills will improve; nor does it alter the ability of the person who provides instruction, the financial and other support services which are necessary to help the student succeed, or the attitudes of those who would prefer working with students without achievement problems. The need for instructors to have a wide range of teaching strategies, to be familiar with the necessary tools and materials, to be aware of the means for diagnosing academic problems, to accept the proposition that every teacher in the community college is, in reality, a remedial teacher, and to know what resources are available and where they can be found will not change because the student's self-concept improves.

In other words, it is extremely doubtful that a change in student outlook and participation will produce a corresponding

change in the behavior of those who teach and in the institution's response to the high-risk student. And I believe it is irresponsible to base the academic lives and perhaps the only higher education opportunity that many students may have on an idea as vaguely calibrated as self-concept. Although I have not provided many answers, I think I have generated sufficient questions to challenge any serious scholar or practitioner who is willing to investigate many of the assumptions made about the relationship between negative self-concept and achievement.

MOTIVATION

Another reason commonly given for the poor academic performance of many high-risk students is that they lack motivation. Jencks and Riesman (1968), for example, assert that only the upper-middle-class student is really motivated to go to college and to do difficult, unpleasant academic tasks when he gets there. Although college attendance has traditionally been related to social class, does it follow that a strong desire to enter college is restricted to the well-to-do? If so, how do they account for the thousands of lower-class blacks and whites who attended night classes, took advantage of the G. I. bill, shined shoes, and worked as bellhops, janitors and waiters in order to complete their higher education? Many of these lower-class students served and cleaned up after those upper-middle-class students who were "really motivated to go to college." I am convinced that these authors of *The Academic Revolution* are elitists who understand neither the community college nor what motivates many of its students.

Unfortunately, they are not alone in their ignorance. The fact is that little is known about what moves a student to come to college, to remain once enrolled, and to pursue academic work with tenacity. One problem in studying motivation, like self-concept and a great many other subjects of social science research, is that it is inaccessible to direct examination. No matter how sophisticated their research technique, psychologists and educators must infer motivation from subjects' reports or from behavior. Therefore, this complex inner drive or intention is difficult to define and measure.

A related problem is the inapplicability of much research to our target population. Studies of children and adolescents, which have used such things as doll-play, noxious stimuli, and candy rewards, are not usually generalizable to adults. And most experiments have concentrated on rather isolated fragments of behavior rather than confronting the total behavior of specific students and its longitudinal sequences. Granted, adults are difficult to study. Unsophisticated methods cannot be used because adults are suspicious, demand explanations, understand innuendos, are not a captive audience, and so on (Bischof, 1969). Nevertheless, educators must not use this difficulty to justify accepting the conclusions of inappropriate research on motivation instead of investigating on their own.

To my knowledge, not a single community college administers a test of any kind to determine motivation for academic

achievement. The results of the survey cited earlier (Moore, 1975) showed that not one instructor or counseling director had given such a test to high-risk students. Yet despite the lack of concrete and relevant data, two-year-college experts and practitioners continue to have firm ideas about who is motivated and who is not. The teachers and counselors I surveyed believed that poor, black, high-risk, and female students were less motivated than affluent, white, low-risk, and male ones. The problem with such labeling is that it victimizes its recipients. They are treated as though they are not motivated: little is expected of them and little is done to help them. And even if such comparisons were true, in what way would they help to prepare, present, and evaluate quality instruction for high-risk students?

This is the crux of the issue. Educators are right to associate motivation with learning. But their negative, defensive attitude—"I can't do anything if they don't want to learn"—must be replaced by a positive approach based on the principles of andragogy: the art and science of helping adults learn (Knowles, 1970). Some instructors believe that a student ought to be ready for learning when he comes to the class. His plans should be clear; he should know what he is doing and what the risks are. According to the cognitive theory of motivation, knowing his goal should be sufficient motivation. And as the instructors see it, if this knowledge is lacking, the student shouldn't be there. This is a neat formula, but it simply doesn't work in practice. Goal identification and a positive attitude toward learning do not guarantee motivation to achieve. Perhaps the goal is not the student's, or perhaps his positive attitude does not extend to those areas prescribed by his teachers. In any case, the teacher must accept some responsibility for helping the student determine his objectives and then help him reach them.

What, then, can the teacher do? Obviously motivation strategies are necessary. Ways must be learned to make students receptive to learning activity. Every student, motivated or not, is likely to respond to the good human relations practices promoted by the so-called helping professions: liking and respecting the student, listening to him, building his confidence. Personal honesty and high expectations are helpful as well. It is more productive to determine what stimulates a student than to argue that the student cannot be stimulated. The teacher will probably discover that some persons work for tangible rewards, others for abstract gifts; some respond to praise and some to criticism. By applying this information the teacher can increase each student's interest in learning.

It is equally important to provide successful learning experiences. In the public schools, teachers attempt to structure the learning environment in such a way as to bring about readiness in the student, and frequently they do not attempt to provide instruction until that state is observable. Community college instructors can do more than they have to present material in stages that are appropriate to the student's capacity so that he can master one step before going on to the next.

The effects of teacher behavior on motivation cannot be minimized. Instructors are models. They are authority figures; they do exhibit values and attitudes; they do encourage and discourage, reward and punish, praise and condemn, measure and evaluate, demonstrate prejudices and biases, and so on. The statements they make, their availability, the interest they take in their students, the advice they give, the enthusiasm they display—all are facets of their ability to stimulate. When teachers and students spend less energy on fearing and blaming each other and more on cooperating for mutual achievement, then real progress in learning can be made. One wonders, however: If high-risk students have as much wrong with them as the authorities insist; if they are so trapped-in that "tangle of pathology" which Moynihan (1965) has described; if they are the genetic cripples that Jensen (1969) and Shockley (1972) have proclaimed; and if they are really the educational, cultural, and psychological deviants that educators and social scientists say they are, what can we expect from them? And is it realistic, or even possible, to expect educators in the community college to be able to bring about sufficient change in them so that they are able to counteract all of these conditions? I would suspect that some among us would suggest that high-risk students are so far behind, and so imbued with past academic deficiencies and failures that little can be done to provide redirection for them. This idea finds expression in the old quotation I recently heard again: "You can't teach old dogs new tricks." This may be true. But it is true only as long as it applies to dogs. People are different. And there are remedies, although sometimes they may be misused.

REMEDIES

In spite of the complex reasons that community college educators give for poor achievement by high-risk students, their prescriptions for improvement have been surprisingly simple: personal and academic counseling and remedial instruction.

COUNSELING

This remedy is considered almost a panacea in that it is supposed to give high-risk students the extra attention they need in comparison with students in other higher education institutions. What penicillin was to the medical profession three decades ago, counseling is to the community college today. Unlike medical practitioners, however, who have since discovered that penicillin has destructive side effects when inappropriately administered to some patients, the advocates of counseling have neither checked for side effects nor discontinued the prescription. They appear to assume that all high-risk students need counseling and that the teachers know best those things which affect achievement.

Although community college educators generally boast of both the importance and the positive effects of counseling with high-risk students, claiming that this function as it is carried on in the community college is distinctive, perhaps they do not listen to how students evaluate this human resource. While the educators speak in generalities (about cultural disadvantages, self-concept, lack of motivation, for example) the students speak in specifics.

A typical complaint is that counselors spend (or want to spend) too much of their time in one-to-one therapy activity and too little in supplying information, identifying resources, and finding support (guidance activity). One student remarked, "I went to that counselor and he immediately started probing me about everything, including my sex life—and all I wanted to know was where to find the next class."

Herrick (1971) found that counselors consider "counseling" the individual student their most important function in the two-year college. In fact, counselors measure their success by the results of interaction with individual students (Cohen and Associates, 1971). The counselor may use other methods, but it is unlikely that an educator would continue to use a technique that in some way frustrates him and violates some premise or belief about the nature of what he does (Purdy, 1973). One-to-one counseling appears to operate on the principle that a high-risk or disadvantaged student

who comes into a counseling center has personal problems with which he cannot successfully cope. The real point here is that high-risk students are concerned about assistance and information and the counselors seem more concerned about setting and process.

A conflict in values here is unmistakable. There can be, and often is, considerable disagreement between the counselor's favored approach and what the student thinks will help him. The counselor may value personal relationships, the dynamics of encounter, psychic facilitation, the application of varied theories of counseling, psychological process, the counselor-client mystique, seeing the student develop from a position of dependence or arrogance to a position of independence or accommodation, and so on. In sum, the counselor may prefer those activities, techniques, and settings that allow him to establish his own role and function.

By contrast, high-risk students are often seeking help with choosing academic programs, identification of resources, awareness of procedural hazards within the institution, information about individuals who may cause them difficulty (that is, administrators and teachers who make excessive demands on students, who have eccentricities about which the students should be aware, who have demonstrated negative attitudes toward certain types of students, and so on), and information about official actions (by the board of trustees, legislature, administration, faculty senate, and other bodies) which may change their status. They value: tangible services, specific referrals, definite directions and answers to their questions; obtaining information without self-examination; identifying effective teachers without resorting to the trial and error method; and maintaining their privacy and secrets, including some weaknesses and problems they may not wish to share. In short, students need the information, warnings, support, and follow-through that will allow them not only to negotiate the academic bureaucracy but to survive in it (Hecht, 1970)—and this means, in many cases, guidance rather than therapeutic counseling.

The quality of this guidance depends a great deal on the attitudes and personal awareness of the counselor, for the student can only decide what he thinks is best for himself, while the counselor may be able to decide not only what is best for the counselor but also what is best for the student. Counselors protest that they do not tell students how to make up their minds. This may be true, but as Patterson (1966) has warned, the counselor's values inevitably influence the client, whether intentionally or unintentionally. The counselor *can* choose what information to make available to the student and how much, what options to present and how

attractive to make them: he can emphasize the student's limitations, choose the method of counseling, counsel and guide the student according to the desires of the faculty and administration, and so on.

It is well documented that many students are counseled out of programs to which they aspire. "There is an axiom, for example, that every successful college-trained black adult who was poor had trouble with his guidance counselor and he made it in spite of determined efforts of guidance personnel to steer him into semi-skilled or unskilled work" (Brazziel, 1970, p. 748). Because of this practice, many minority group students have a rule of thumb: whenever a white counselor advises you about anything—get another opinion. Thus, high-risk students have had experiences with both personal counseling and guidance that make them distrustful (Russell, 1970). Their image of this campus resource was created by counselors, and if it is to be changed, the counselors must do the changing.

This discussion does not mean to suggest that personal counseling has no value. It may provide a setting which helps a student to understand himself better, develop self-confidence, learn to be honest with himself, and evaluate his goals and aspirations more realistically; it may even help the student develop a positive self-concept, assuming that his present one is demonstrably negative. Roueche and Kirk (1973) believe that "counselors have a crucial role to play in developing positive self-concepts, and that activity is critical in developmental programs" (p. 90). And May insists that "counselors are in a unique position to help people improve their self-concepts and develop more of their potentials" (1971, p. 381). Still, if the student does not have the appropriate information, effective instruction, a positive relationship with persons other than counselors in the educational enterprise, or applicable skills when he graduates, voluntarily withdraws, or is officially withdrawn, then all we may really have is an academic failure who likes himself.

REMEDIAL INSTRUCTION

This is the other method most used to try to reverse poor achievement by high-risk students. Essentially, it provides remedial courses in the language arts (reading, writing, spelling) and mathematics. Unfortunately this approach, at least the way it is currently carried out, is seldom effective. And like the purported causes of poor achievement I discussed earlier, it has been poorly researched. Remedial methods are more often described than

validated. Although Roueche (1972) and Roueche and Kirk (1973) have provided a theoretical framework for teaching high-risk students the basic academic skills, and have suggested some techniques for instruction, their how-to-do-it models do not appear to be in use by many instructors. Innovative acts have tended to be minimal. While the *most* innovative thing that community college people could do would be to simply teach low-achieving students how to read, write, and figure more effectively, students often spend considerable time with educational gadgets and self-taught learning materials and packages instead of more intense, meticulously planned, tightly organized, and well-presented instruction. The gadgets and other materials, in many ways, seem more important than the function they are supposed to serve; and, even more disturbing, they may be misused. In this light, let us look at some of the more popular modes of instruction: cassettes, programmed textbooks, learning centers, and tutoring.

Cassettes. There is much that is positive about this widely used tool of instruction. The information recorded may be well organized and does not require a teacher or some other learning facilitator to be present; the student can involve himself in the learning activity at a time of his choice. The sequence, pacing, and amount of content may have been carefully planned and the student can return to the same tape as often as he chooses and get the same information. Tapes are not necessarily biased because the listener is a high-risk student or a minority group member, or a female, or because the student has a different political persuasion. The literature tends to be buoyantly optimistic about the effect of these and other types of audio-visual devices on learning (Dale, 1969; Erickson, 1965; Postlethwait and Others, 1972; Jamison and Others, 1974).

Yet in spite of what the literature says, listening to a tape is listening to a lecture, and as a teaching method it has been shown to be relatively ineffective with high-risk students (Moore, 1971). Still, if the student must hear lectures, he is better off with a human being with whom he can interact. While the lecturer may have speech peculiarities, physical exaggerations, and eccentricities of dress which may distract the student, he can nonetheless provide feedback, embellish his speech, change his mind, point out additional resources, give on-the-spot demonstration, act as a model and identification figure, and provide encouragement. These latter attributes and behaviors are important to all students, especially those considered to be high-risk. In sum, giving a marginal student a cassette tape as the primary mode of instruction—a practice rather

widespread in many learning centers—is a misuse of a teaching tool. This is not to say that some students cannot profitably use cassette tapes without previous or additional guidance from the teacher. The fact is, we have done no research to really find out.

Programmed Textbooks. Programmed textbooks follow much the same format as cassette tapes and, though these texts can supplement live instruction, they should not be used as the fundamental means for improving basic skills. I propose that they be used primarily with students who can read well and who enjoy working independently. This frees the instructor to interact with students who need his personal attention.

Reading is a sophisticated skill requiring cognitive operation. Although at first learning to read may be procedural and mechanistic, the integration necessary to comprehend the printed word can be quite complex—calling upon a number of mental, physical, social, and emotional behaviors. The student must be able to follow instructions, add inflection to the printed word, recognize emotional tone, detect sarcasm, take direction from punctuation, extract facts, comprehend principles, see cause and effect, make inferences, understand plot, and utilize all the other cognitive perceptual skills needed to interpret printed material.

A second problem is that you cannot effectively teach adults to read the way children are taught to read. Adults scorn many of the learning-to-read activities (such as sounding out the consonant and vowel sounds) which children enjoy. And the widely accepted practice of determining a student's reading level and then prescribing reading material at that level is problematical. Although the printed level of the material presented must not be beyond his comprehension, the sophistication of the materials should be commensurate with his chronological growth and experience. It is important to understand that a student's ability to conceptualize or comprehend subject matter may exceed his reading skill. Very often the teaching of reading is restricted to such basic activities as word attack, developing speed and vocabulary building. Yet, a student who doesn't *know* how must be *taught* how to make inferences, identify emotional tone, understand what is meant by the development of characters, and so on. He probably cannot learn most of the foregoing from a programmed textbook which is provided to him—along with an invitation to use the study carrel of his choice.

Even the regular textbooks are a problem and are written above the reading level of not only many high-risk students but many "average" students. One has but to examine *English 1800, English*

2200, and *English 3200* to be convinced of this. While the exercises these publications contain are applicable and graded, the material used to demonstrate specific skills can cause many problems. Adult students, for example, resent the subject matter of most graded reading and English programmed books. Similarly they resent the primary school method of presentation of the materials in the books. Such students prefer to use subject matter commensurate with their age and affective level of functioning, but written at their cognitive level of operation.

One publisher found that materials it had developed to teach the "basic skills" in writing, communications, and mathematics were too sophisticated for the students they were designed to help (Scully, 1974). This finding confirmed an observation I reported earlier (Moore, 1970). Publishers are now recommending that authors of textbooks make their manuscripts more commensurate with the clientele they are supposed to serve (Scully, 1974).

For years it has been a common practice among elementary and secondary school people to use readibility formulas to determine the level of difficulty of textbooks. Moreover, reading clinicians and textbook committees in public school systems which have reading clinics have field-tested and validated reading materials to make sure that students for whom they are designed can master them. Similarly, teachers in developmental education in some colleges have been "rewriting" the textbooks they use with their students. For example, Betty L. Pollard, chairwoman of the developmental program at Forest Park Community College in St. Louis, Missouri, advised publishers a decade ago that the materials they were producing to work with high-risk students not only were too difficult to read, but did not convey the intended ideas.

On the subject of needlessly murky prose, Newman writes, "A large part of social scientific practice consists of taking clear ideas and making them opaque" (1974, p. 146). As an example of his observation he cites the following passage from a social science publication: "The social ontogeny of each generation recapitulates the social phylogeny of Negroes in the New World because the basic socio-economic position of the group has not changed in a direction favorable to successful achievement in terms of conventional norms." Newman's simple translation: "Each generation of American Negroes, like its predecessors, makes less money than whites."

Some scholars suggest that writing books and articles in their disciplines at a lower level of difficulty is "watering-down" the content and is, therefore, lowering the standards. Yet unnecessarily

confusing material does not cause standards to be maintained. Difficult composition, for example, may indicate that standards are already low; that is, such writing may be used to conceal the fact that little is being said, as Newman's example demonstrates. Obscure composition also blurs meaning and violates the principles of simplicity and brevity—two components of good writing. Overwriting by the use of extensive and even profound prose also tends to confirm what some observers suspect: that when some professors publish, their motives are self-serving. They are seeking promotion, tenure, recognition, money, and other rewards. And students—those for whom their publications are intended—are of secondary concern.

To get at the heart of the matter, high-risk students are capable of handling complex ideas which they are incapable of understanding when these ideas are presented in the sophisticated language of a university professor. Instead of the textbooks facilitating a student's acquisition of knowledge, it is often one of the barriers. Unfortunately, most community college teachers do not write the text they use with their students. And of the few who do write, most follow the examples set by faculty members in four-year colleges.

The Learning Laboratory. Some type of learning laboratory* has been established in more than 80 percent of the community colleges in the nation. It may be a very valuable resource in that the variety of educational media it houses may significantly enhance learning possibilities. The real attributes of such a facility, however, are not well known. A few things have been written about the acceptance of mechanical modes of instruction by community college students (Gaddy, 1971; Gold, 1973; Gooler, 1972), but Berchin (1972) found no consistent pattern when comparing conventional and audio-tutorial means. In like manner, Belzer and Conti (1973) found no differences between the grades and attrition rates of students taught with technological media and those of students taught by conventional methods. Gold (1973) and Lesser (1970), however, found that some form of multi-media in a given course may be palatable and useful to the students. Although the instruments used to measure the effects of mechanical media on learning are imprecise, learning centers continue to proliferate.

*Learning laboratory, skill center, learning center, remedial center are terms used interchangeably here.

Entire volumes have been written describing the types of audio-visual aid programs in operation, and how to set up multi-media centers (Bannister, 1970; Berchin, 1972; Brick and McGrath, 1969; Evans and Neagley, 1973; Johnson, 1966; Johnson, 1972).

The learning laboratory in most community colleges is used primarily as a remediation center. Reading clinics, writing labs, and other such learning resources are designed for low-achievers. To limit the use of the center to only those students who have poor skills, however, is not to extract the facility's maximum potential. Students who are more proficient often can make more profitable use of the center than students who need much individual attention and direction. The available hardware may help a higher achiever to move faster in his chosen subject and enrich his learning by allowing him to extend himself beyond what is required and to progress at his own rate where his abilities and skills will take him.

As I have mentioned, some instructors use specific equipment housed in a learning center, such as cassette tapes, as their *sole* medium of instruction. In this case a center becomes one more barrier to contact between student and instructor. Although this strategy may provide the instructor with some additional free time, this is only one of the subsidiary benefits of the center. The teacher must always be the pivotal person who guides the learning activity. No tool is any better than the skill of the person who uses it, the function it is supposed to serve, or the task it is supposed to accomplish.

One of the inescapable observations one can make about learning laboratories is that there is little or no knowledge about their effectiveness. Most of what is known about these "learning resources" was written by the manufacturers and retailers. Although boards of trustees have authorized the money spent on them, and administrators and teachers have justified the expenditures for them and insist on their value, there appears to be no evidence to support their claims. Community college educators like to describe a learning center's hardware and capability and to stress the number of continuous hours each day that the facility remains open and available to students, but only infrequently will they speak about its effectiveness. The student feedback I have had certainly fails to endorse the claimed success of skill centers. And though there is a general absence of research, we do know that whether the centers are utilized or not in working with high-risk students, the attrition rate among these students remains about the same. We also know that most of the remedial students who use the facility do so

because it is required and in many cases because the college is making no remediation efforts outside this setting.

Tutoring. Even individual tutoring should be examined. Although there is much that is positive in this approach, it is rarely systematic. Tutors in two-year colleges who work with high-risk students often turn out to be persons who may simply have knowledge of the subject and are in need of part-time employment. Typically, tutors are graduate students from nearby colleges, second-year community college students who are high-achievers, housewives who work in their spare time, high school teachers who are moonlighting, and others. To be sure, these can be valuable human resources, but if they are to be well utilized, they need considerable institutional support.

Tutors should have diagnostic information about the students' learning difficulties. Similarly, they must be apprised of the goals and objectives of both the course(s) and the student. And the same institutional resources available to the classroom instructors should be available to the tutors. Frequent conferences between the instructors and tutors are advisable in order to discuss student progress and problems.

The institution has to make sure that a tutor has the skill to do what he is hired to do. In twenty-three colleges I visited which had developmental programs, eighty-one tutors had been hired to help with remedial reading. Yet, only three of them had special knowledge about or experience in teaching remedial reading. These three were elementary school teachers who worked part time for the colleges.* Half of the tutors (forty-three) did not know how to use all the equipment in the learning centers. A third of the tutors performed their tasks in facilities located away from the learning centers. Sixty-five (80 percent) of the tutors had never used (or even heard of) a readability formula. I am not necessarily saying that every tutor needs to be an experienced reading teacher, but I do believe he should know something about it, or at least be able to work with a trained teacher who can guide and direct him.

Tutors should have opportunities to visit the instructors' classes often in order to observe such things as teaching style and

*Of the thirty-one regularly appointed teachers working in the developmental programs in these twenty-three schools, nineteen had never taken a course in the teaching of reading. And those who were experienced reading instructors only had knowledge of the techniques for teaching reading to little children.

method, the thrust of the course, and so on. He should be able to examine how the instructor(s) constructs tests, grades, and makes assignments. No orientation of the instructional staff which focuses on high-risk students should exclude the tutors. Course outlines, syllabi, examination schedules, and other pertinent information about the course(s) should be available to the tutors. In short, the tutor cannot operate effectively if he is academically isolated.

The institution also has other responsibilities with regard to its selection and preparation of tutors. First, many tutors demonstrate the same negative attitude toward high-risk students as that shown others in the academic enterprise, and the institution should not hire anyone who exhibits such an attitude. In another vein, institutions have sometimes hired persons who come from the same racial and/or ethnic group as the students to be tutored on the premise that such persons may be more effective in reaching the student. This concept that "it takes one to teach one" can be counter-productive. High-risk students are sometimes "ripped off" as much by persons from their own racial and ethnic group as they are by others. It is more important to select a competent, sensitive person than to simply choose one who matches the student's background. At the same time, the institution should make every bona fide effort to find tutors who represent all groups. It cannot be denied that a student will probably have an easier relationship with a person from his own group—at least until he discovers that such a tutor does not meet his needs.

Part-time people working as tutors are not regularly appointed teachers, although some do have teaching experience. They are used to supplement classroom instruction, not to replace it. The instructor is still the first resource available to the student experiencing academic difficulty. He normally has at his disposal information and knowledge about the student that the tutor does not have. The student must see the instructor on a regular basis, be evaluated by him, and on many occasions ask him for recommendations. In sum, the techniques used for remediating low achievement may not be successful because many of them tend to minimize the student's contact with his teacher. Even when a teacher is present, it is possible, as we have suggested earlier, that there is a real problem with instruction.

THE PROBLEM OF INSTRUCTION AND LEARNING

The community college is supposed to be a teaching institution. Yet most instructors in two-year colleges have taken a minimum of education courses and few of the colleges they attended offered courses in the discipline of instruction. They also have spent very little time studying the community college itself (Brawer, 1973). When a community college is reported as an "innovative" teaching institution, it is almost always a self-definition.

Pleas for greater teaching know-how and skill among two-year-college teachers are hardly new. Koos (1947a, 1947b, 1948, 1949, 1958) has been stressing teacher preparation for a generation. A quarter-century ago (1949), the American Council on Education identified specific skills which should be developed by junior college teachers. More recently, Maul (1963, 1965), O'Dowd (1967), Kiernan (1967), Mallan (1968), Gleazer (1967, 1968), Singer (1968), Cohen and Brawer (1968), Dawson (1971), Cross (1971), and Moore (1970, 1971) have suggested that universities develop special programs for prospective community college instructors.

It does not require much sophistication to see that the teacher's instructional techniques need to be as nontypical as his students. In addition to becoming a scholar or craftsman, the two-year-college teacher also needs specific preparation and training in the art and science of teaching his subject (Kelley and Wilbur, 1970; Garrison, 1968).

Instructors appear to know a great deal more about their discipline than they know about teaching its content to marginal students. And while academically able students do manage to learn much of the content, *there are no available data which indicate that mastery of subject content is a result of instruction.* But even if we assume that mastery is the result of good instruction, defining what is useful for high-risk students is difficult. When one converses with teachers about instructing academically weak students, many ask: How do you do it? Faculty members are often reminded that "regular" instruction for high-risk students must be supplemented with alternative instructional materials, methods, and procedures. Yet most of them end up teaching the way they were taught, even in programs which are considered somewhat effective with marginal students (Vaughn and Puyear, 1972).

There does not appear to be any agreement among educators on what good teaching is, although individuals know—or think they know—when they have had a good teacher. Notwithstanding,

two-year-college people insist that instruction is what they do best. Still, if one used the quantity and quality of the achievement of high-risk students as two of the indices of effective instruction, he would conclude that students other than marginal students get the benefit of the quality instruction. The literature contains many "cookbooks" on helping teachers teach better, on the various methods, materials, and techniques, but with few exceptions (such as the work done by Roueche, 1968, 1972, and Cross, 1971) the literature does not explain how to instruct high-risk students in particular. Most writing on these students is definitional, descriptive, and evaluative—not designed as a strategy for instruction.

When a prospective student reads the college catalogue, he is informed that there is something for everyone. Implicit in such a pronouncement is that the institution has the means, both human and institutional, to diagnose his learning difficulty and to prescribe what is necessary to improve him academically.

What is the reality? Few instructors in the community college have the expertise to diagnose learning problems, and probably many do not know how to apply the results of certain tests that are administered to students. The interpretation of tests is normally left up to the counselor or some other person from the office of student personnel or institutional research. Even when test information is available, it is not always disseminated to the instructors. Counselors are seldom members of the instructional and curriculum committees that can provide important information about students to help the instructor plan his teaching strategies. In sum, a complete diagnosis is what the student has a right to expect. It is illogical, however, to expect instructors to do what they do not know how to do.

INERTIA OF TRAINING INSTITUTIONS

That community college teachers know so little about providing effective instruction to high-risk students is not entirely their fault. Colleges and universities have failed to provide them with excellent inservice or preservice training to deal with these students. One suspects that professors in teacher-training institutions know no more about how to provide the appropriate skills than the instructors seeking them. The development of teacher-training programs in colleges and universities seems always to be bogged down in institutional politics. To cite an example, three teacher-training institutions I know about have been working on curricula for training community college personnel for some time (two to three

years). There is no agreement (at this writing) on a single course in two of the colleges, and only two courses have been developed in the other. The most stubborn barriers are the faculty members themselves. The proposed community college training centers are bogged down in old controversies, protection of departmental rights, demands for individual prerogatives, challenged empires, eccentricities, hidden agendas, power struggles and other familiar aspects of academic life. As time has passed, positions have hardened and only tactical concessions are ever made. Although faculty members are setting the standards; the charge of lowering standards is the perpetual bogey man. As one observes these men and women at work, he is acutely sensitive to the attitudes they conceal behind flourishes of educational jargon as they attempt to prevent exposure and to vindicate their selfish position.

While one should not generalize from the activities of such a small sample of institutions, there is little evidence that the process in other institutions is significantly different. In the meantime the need for training programs continues.

Community college people are quick to talk about the training they need and are not getting. Sometimes they speak in jest, sometimes with sarcasm, even with bitterness, often in frustration. The following personal testimonies serve as illustration:

> Did you ever try to counsel a black kid when you don't know anything about his background? You can barely understand him when he talks, when you perceive his attitude as hostile at worst and contemptuous at best. He wears his hat in the classroom and that drives me up a tree. Can you imagine what it is like trying to deal with these street-educated kids? All black kids are obviously not alike but how do you tell one who is middle-class from one who is not? Around my college the unofficial off-the-record policy is *disadvantaged means black. Shouldn't the college I attend have been responsible for informing me about some of these things?*
>
> Counselor
> American Personnel Guidance
> Association Conference
> Chicago, Illinois

> I had inservice institutes and workshops until they are coming out my ears. *What I need is to find a program which offers a complete, well-designed curriculum for*

the community college teachers, taught by somebody with practice in the field.

Teacher
Honolulu Community College
Honolulu, Hawaii

I recommend that universities preparing personnel for community colleges develop and maintain close relationships with the colleges in their immediate vicinity. *Too often graduate faculties do not keep abreast of the changes taking place in the field, thus running the danger of obsolescence. Universities should use community college campuses as laboratories, perhaps through requiring their graduate students to serve internships therein. However done, it is imperative that the professionals in community colleges have an education which is academically sound, broad in course content, and practical in its application.*

President
Harrisburg Area Community College
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE TO HIGH-RISK STUDENTS

The two-year college is more conventional than we are led to believe. In spite of their egalitarian pronouncements to the contrary, community college educators prefer only those students who are "college material." High-risk students simply do not fit in. And as we have seen, the college can generate many reasons and cite many problems to explain why. In many ways, after the institution has identified the student's problem, it proceeds to aggravate his situation. From the day he is admitted to the day of his departure he must continuously insist on his right to be there.

One aspect of institutional response that some high-risk students notice when they enroll is that they do not see many individuals to serve as role models, especially persons of their own race or background. Few community colleges have a significant number of minority-group faculty members and administrators. Only Caucasian students who fit the high-risk student description are exposed to personnel with whom they can immediately identify in terms of race. And in some communities this identification is thwarted by ethnic and language barriers. For example, few white students who live and attend community colleges located in the Appalachian region are likely to identify with teachers who they perceive to euphemistically characterize them as "Appalachian whites."

This is not to say that nonwhite students cannot identify with white teachers. Rather, the implication is that only those minority students who are enrolled in colleges in urban, near-urban, or specific ethnic and racial communities are likely to have identification figures from their own group. Wagstaff and I found that almost half (48 percent) of the community colleges still do not have a single black faculty member or administrator (Moore and Wagstaff, 1974). And of those institutions that do have black instructors, 19 percent have only one and another 21 percent have only two. Goodrich and his associates (1973) found that other nonwhite minorities did not fare as well.

ADMISSION AND SELECTION

Another way we can observe institutional response to high-risk students is to look at admissions and selection procedures. Immediately we discover that community colleges *are* selective. Though they have opened their doors to all comers, the selection process is not abandoned. It is simply going on outside the

admissions office, often hidden under some institutional policy or in some divisional or departmental procedure. What I am saying here is that the high-risk student who is allowed entry into the community college often will not have access to an education. He may be accepted, included, and counted for his worth as a full-time-equivalent (FTE) student in order to secure funds for the college. But as soon as the state-mandated body count is taken and the funds are in the till, whether the student remains or leaves is of little consequence to the faculty and administration. If the student remains, he is excluded from all but a few remedial courses.

It is difficult to substantiate these assertions with hard data, because administrators only admit the existence of the policies and practices cited here to their colleagues. College catalogues, brochures, and other literature often conceal the selection criteria from the student in the ambiguity of academic jargon. An example is the following excerpt from the college catalogue of a large midwestern community college:

> Entering students planning to enroll for 12 or more quarter credits are requested to have the results of the ACT (American College Test) forwarded to . . . Community College. These results are used for counseling purposes only—to place students in appropriate programs and courses. . . . Psychological tests assessing mental ability, interests and aptitudes are administered on campus as the need arises. Students may arrange with a counselor for such testing.

What is meant by "used for counseling purposes only"? This part of the statement really tells the student nothing. He usually finds out what it means after he enrolls and pays his fees. The second part of the same sentence, "to place students in appropriate programs and courses," is a vague way to state that the test results will be used for tracking—to exclude students from certain programs or to require attendance in others.

The second sentence dealing with psychological tests is equally ambiguous. Who determines need? Student? Teacher? Administrator? What criteria determine whether a psychological test should be administered? Student behavior? Academic performance? Program or course requirements? Student or teacher seeking a complete evaluation in order to make important decisions? All of these things? Any one of them?

The student should be dealt with forthrightly and with candor. The excerpt which follows is an example of an honest approach.

> Open-door admission means that every person in the community can come to this institution provided that the applicant follows the procedures of admissions, pays the required fees or makes the necessary arrangement to have fees deferred. *Admission to the college in no way guarantees that the student will at entry or will ever be admitted to the course or program of his choice. Selection criteria for each program are found under the section describing that program. The ability to do academic work varies among students. We accept this and place our students on the basis of their test results. This means that students can be placed in remedial programs as well as the honors program. While we will counsel with the individual student, we reserve the right to make the placement decision.* [Emphasis added.]

An institution has an obligation to be concerned about how students are chosen for programs, and the student has the right to know how he stands and how decisions are made before he enrolls. What has to be strongly emphasized, however, is that the right to select students for a specific program carries with it an obligation to provide a bona fide and effective program of instruction for students who attempt to enroll in the program but are refused admission and who, with additional time and assistance, could be successful.

FACULTY ADVISING

The college's support services are another important part of its response to high-risk students, and they require more attention than is provided in many institutions. Advising is one such service of which some faculty members are not overly fond. Yet marginal students require exhaustive academic advising. Providing routine information about prerequisites, course and program sequences, scheduling, degree requirements, and so on is not enough. If the student is assigned only to developmental or remedial courses, the advisor must be able to explain why and to describe all the other options.

These students expect academic advisors to acquaint them with information which describes the course's difficulty. They do not always know that they can go directly to the instructor to obtain course syllabi, outlines, and further information. In like manner, they want to be advised about such things as the attrition rate of certain courses and which instructor is "easy" and which one is difficult. Simply, some of them want to know whom to avoid. These

students may attempt to avoid two different groups of instructors: those who make rigorous and sometimes excessive academic demands and those who demonstrate biases and prejudices toward certain students. Faculty advisors, on the other hand, are not willing to make such judgments.

High-risk students also want an advisor to make explicitly clear what is expected of them, what the consequences are for failure to follow certain institutional and faculty directions and where to go in a department or division when they have difficulty. An advisor should be *assigned* to the high-risk student in the program where the student is enrolled, and he, along with the counselor, should keep up with the student's progress. In this way, the academic advisor is not simply a person with whom the student has an infrequent encounter or one of the instructors that the student will subsequently meet in the classroom, but one who acts as an academic resource person.

All students in the community college are supposed to receive adequate advising. Yet students who can attend college classes only at night may never have an opportunity to get good academic advice. In the first place, evening courses are likely to be taught by part-time instructors or adjunct faculty, most of whom have neither the time, resources, nor sufficient knowledge about the college to help the students plan their college experience. There is nothing wrong with hiring part-time instructors. In fact, it is the only way many institutions can financially maintain night programs. But students who attend evening classes ought to be aware of observations such as the following:

> Typically, part-time professors and other such teaching personnel neither have the personal investment in the institution nor enjoy the benefits of the regularly appointed. Most of them are moonlighters. They do not have committee assignments, keep office hours, advise students, . . . attend faculty meetings, or involve themselves in collective negotiations. On the other hand, they neither get tenure, insurance, [and] retirement benefits, . . . involve themselves in the decision-making of the institution, nor enjoy the camaraderie of stimulating colleagues [Moore and Wagstaff, 1974, p. 58].

Besides academic advising, most of the other support offices and services of the institution are closed and unavailable to the student during the evening hours.

Faculty members often are puzzled about why marginal students do not utilize the obvious resources which are available to

them. Because there are both human and institutional resources which students either ignore, are unaware of, or reject, faculty members tend to believe that the students do not want to be helped. Teachers often ask, for example, why high-risk students who are having difficulty with subjects do not come to them for assistance before their problem is irreversible. A number of things can cause this type of student behavior:

1. The student may have to reveal some specific academic weakness of which his instructor is unaware; for example, the student cannot read the textbook.

2. The student does not know what questions to ask when he comes, or if he knows what his question is, he does not know how to formulate it for the teacher.

3. The student feels uncomfortable with the instructor, or he perceives that the instructor is ill at ease with him.

4. The student avoids the instructor who spends the conference time complaining about the college, the administration, other colleagues, his personal biases, his family life, pleasures, problems, and possessions. The student would rather have the instructor listen to his problems and recommend courses of action.

5. Students who are irresponsible themselves attempt to avoid conferences with good instructors who follow-up, keep their portion of a bargain, and so on, when they know that the teachers are going to confront them about their responsibility.

6. Students avoid meetings with instructors who tend to measure their instruction in terms of the difficulty of their courses.

7. Some students have difficulty scheduling conferences during the day because of employment obligations.

8. Students avoid an instructor when the word is out that he is "bad news," "a dink," one with whom it is difficult to establish rapport and to communicate.

9. The student knows that the instructor sees through the facade the student presents.

10. Students avoid teachers who they consider unfair or racist.

11. Students do not go to faculty conferences where they are repeatedly reminded of their weak academic backgrounds.

12. Students recognize that there are personality conflicts which prevent their seeking advice from some instructors.

13. Peer pressure may keep the high-risk student from seeking faculty advice; the student does not want to be accused of "brown nosing."

There are many reasons why students do not respond to institutional efforts. I have cited just a few. On the other hand,

students note the lack of response of the academic bureaucracy to them, and the need for flexibility in it.

FLEXIBILITY

Community colleges are said to be able to meet the needs of all students, to change if necessary to handle the prevailing situation, and so on. Moreover, community college people take pride in being less punitive—than other institutions—especially toward the marginal student, who is thought to be somewhat irresponsible—and many are. Yet some unnecessary punitive measures still exist. Take, for example, the rule of official withdrawal. In many colleges, if a student wishes to voluntarily withdraw, he must fill out an official form. If the student fails to do this, he is awarded an "F." In some cases, he may have reported to his class only one or two times. This "F" grade is obviously not given because of failing academic work, but because he did not officially withdraw from the class. As a result of the "F" grade(s), the student may not be able to reenter the college, enter another, or gain employment. In any case, his academic record, which someone may examine, does not always reflect his performance.

Most college administrators will admit that they do not know why a student withdrew. They do not know whether the student dropped out, dripped out, or drained out: that is, whether the student left permanently for some reason (dropped out), only gradually removed himself and plans to return (dripped out), or has failed consistently and for so long a time that institutional policy and administrative directives exclude him (drained out). Cosand (1973) has asked, "What do we know about why our students drop out, or do we really want to know?" Administrators rarely know whether the withdrawing student is ill, dead, in jail, in the army, or employed full time. This type of follow-up is seldom attempted. Yet one obvious and available resource which could be enormously helpful in locating students is never used: other students (Hecht, 1970). Whatever the student's reason for leaving, if he did not withdraw officially, he is punished.

Lack of administrative information about why students withdraw is sharply focused in the following case. In one community college, large numbers of Chicano students had a history of unofficial withdrawals. The administration was at a loss to determine why so many of the students who withdrew did not take the official action of withdrawing and avoid the failing grade. It took a student who served as a peer counselor to provide the answer: the

students could not afford the three dollar fee the college charged to officially withdraw them.

There is a better way to handle the problem of withdrawals. Every student, on the day classes begin, should be asked to fill out a withdrawal slip in every class, sign it, leave the date blank, and give it to his teacher to file. Then, if he did not show up after a stipulated number of consecutive class meetings, the instructor could fill in the date and send it on through the official channels. Using this method would benefit the student and the institution in several ways: the student would be withdrawn officially, the letter "F" would not appear on his transcript, a service would be provided to the student, the student could return to the college if he wished and the computer would be provided with the necessary data so that administrative and other institutional decisions could be made. Such a procedure would demonstrate the kind of flexibility of which two-year colleges could be proud.

THE NEED FOR RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP

More than two hundred colleges and universities offer courses on the community college. Yet there is not a single comprehensive textbook on the two-year college as a field of study. No volume on this institution includes a chapter on the board of trustees, and only Richardson and his colleagues (1972) have taken a definitive look at governance. The literature does not reveal a single delineated theory of curriculum in the community college, although Reynolds (1969) and Cohen (1969), among others, have discussed some "theoretical" curriculum issues. There is no research which will definitively establish the extent to which the open-door concept is actually carried out in practice. In fact, a number of authors (Cohen, 1969; Cohen and Associates, 1971; Knoell, 1968; Roueche, 1968, 1972; Roueche and Kirk, 1973; Moore, 1970, 1971) constantly remind us that the open-door concept is not yet a reality.

Research is needed to determine the effects of instruction, teacher attitudes, institutional climate, attendance, the materials and equipment used, and peer pressure on the achievement of high-risk students. And to what degree do the lack of role models, the racism perceived by minority group students, the method of management, the administrative style, full- or part-time student employment, financial support to the remedial program, and the specific techniques of remedial instruction affect achievement? I suggest that almost every facet of the community college—students, faculty, administration, program, mission, philosophy, and practices—is in need of in-depth research. More than anything else, we need to study the myths about the community college.

As I stated earlier, the colleges' claim to superior teaching is unconfirmed. There is *no evidence* that community college teachers are any better or worse than any other group of teachers. Community college educators have not defined good teaching and have not empirically compared their teaching with that which takes place in four-year institutions. Similarly, no standard of instructional competence or evaluation has been established.

The widely circulated idea that the counseling in the community college is outstanding when compared to that in four-year colleges or in high schools is likewise unsupported by evidence. If the attrition rate in two-year colleges reflects at all the effectiveness of the counseling, one would have to conclude that counseling is less successful in community colleges than in four-year colleges since the attrition rate in the former is higher than in the latter. In either case, we do not have an empirical answer.

Another belief is that the best remedial programs for high-risk students are in two-year colleges. This is not necessarily the case. Though there are more community colleges which house remedial programs, the most effective and best-supported remediation programs are located in four-year colleges. The developmental program at The Ohio State University is a case in point. The predominantly black four-year colleges also have a long history of providing effective remedial instruction to high-risk students.

Community colleges are reported to be unique and innovative among higher education institutions. Yet in spite of every opportunity for each new two-year institution to develop and establish a new governance and organizational configuration, the overwhelming majority of community colleges are organized bureaucratically and are governed from the top down. Likewise, in practice, structure, curriculum design, instructional development, and educational format, the two-year college is more like the senior institution than it is different in response to high-risk students.

Still another myth is that there is "something for everyone" in the community college. This lack of specificity is why Bird (1975) says that the function of these well-meaning institutions is fuzzy at best.

It is said that the community college minimizes athletics. Yet some colleges with large numbers of high-risk students and no developmental programs widely recruit students for varsity football and basketball teams.

Community college advocates maintain that the institution is student-centered, whereas the evidence indicates that it actually favors faculty and administrators. Teacher unions have included in their negotiated contracts provisions which not only emphasize the interests of teachers, protect their rights, guarantee them participation in governance, and secure financial compensation, but curtail their services to the students, and reroute financial resources originally earmarked for students into their own pockets. And some of these provisions have precluded the participation of parents and members of the community in the affairs of the institutions which their taxes support. Although the evidence is inconclusive, it appears that places where teacher unions are strongest, the achievement of high-risk students is lowest.

There is a myth that two-year colleges are geographically accessible to most students. In fact, national leaders agree that there should be a community college within commuting distance—thirty-five miles—of every potential student in every geographic area of the country. But it will take ten years to accomplish this goal, and even then many potential students in urban areas will not be served. For

some of these students, thirty-five miles is the same as two hundred miles if no means of transportation exist.

The majority of community colleges have been built in the suburbs over the past decade—still within thirty-five miles of the community they are supposed to serve. Yet many are still too far from the inner city areas which need their services most and where community resources are least. It would seem more logical to build the colleges in the urban areas and have the suburbanites commute, since they appear to have better resources for transportation.

We are told that holders of the Ph.D. and former military personnel do not make good instructors in the two-year college. We have absolutely no data to support such a proposition. While such ideas may be true, investigation is needed to confirm them.

In sum, the myths about community colleges and how they operate are legend. I have indicated just a few of them. All of these ideas should be investigated to determine which of them are indeed myths and which ones can be moved into the realm of reality. This effort has particular significance for the marginal student.

While there is a sizeable body of knowledge, a growing bureaucracy, and many other characteristics which make the community college worthy of scholarly study, the philosophy, mission, techniques for teaching and problem solving, policy-making activities, administrative behavior, decision-making apparatus, and other organized functions of the institution remain unanalyzed.

Only when we know can we predict. When we do not know, we must observe, experiment, investigate, and learn. There is a tendency to make working with high-risk students sound like a tale of intrigue or a sentence to oblivion. Both positions are untenable. The way is not simple, and there are too few tested paths. But we can never have all of the solutions we need to solve the problems of high-risk students. Resources and options are infinite. Community college educators, like others among us, must make choices.

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