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Because it is felt that a conceptual framework for teaching disadvantaged students should be derived from an educational rather than a sociological viewpoint, the model which is offered is based on the student's learning deficiencies. This model focuses the teacher's attention on the learning situation and suggests the kind of action which is needed to deal with the school performance of the disadvantaged student. Within this pedagogically oriented model, the teacher would seek to ascertain why the child is not learning well. Diagnosis would help in providing information on the factors impeding learning and would pinpoint the handicap which is most disabling to the learning process. After categorizing the child in terms of his shortcoming, the next step would be to determine the appropriate remedial effort. Among disadvantaged children, language inadequacy is the most common learning deficiency, with "pure" cultural disadvantage being a residual factor to be approached as a separate issue. Selected annotated bibliography follows this discussion. (NH)

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Robert G. Publicover

There is a population explosion of journal articles and books about the culturally disadvantaged. The most prolific family of the population consists of those arguments which result from the question, "Who are the disadvantaged?" Perhaps the next most populous family derives from the question, "What do we do about teaching the disadvantaged?" With a few notable exceptions, these families of questions have been breeding unproductive answers. Perhaps it is time we instituted some controls to limit the population in favor of quality rather than quantity.

The basic point of this article is that educators have been asking the wrong questions because their questions have often been formulated in the terms of a discipline which is alien to teaching. The field of study called "the culturally disadvantaged" is heavily influenced by sociology. Although the goals, the structure of knowledge, and the mode of inquiry of sociology are not at all the same as those of pedagogy, they have often been accepted as the basis for instruction, or at the very least, have introduced incompatible approaches to the problem.

Teachers find that they cannot transfer sociological findings in any meaningful or useful way into classroom practice. The sociological description of effects, and the sociological hypotheses about causes of cultural disadvantage provide many clues for pedagogy. But the clues must be used within a different conceptual scheme to be effective in teaching.

Education needs a conceptual scheme which, while it makes use of the findings of the various disciplines, is specifically made to guide the teacher in remediating problems of the disadvantaged. One of the conditions of the problem is that the remediation must take place in the formal school setting in which the teacher operates. I shall propose, quite tentatively, such a conceptual scheme.

I have called my viewpoint a "model", fully aware of both the positive and negative connotations the audience may attach to the word. Some people may be bemused by the connotation of mathematical precision. Others may be irritated by my effrontery in using such a term. Nevertheless, I feel that the term is appropriate. By "model" I mean a conceptual framework which helps us to focus our thinking and action. I am using the term to label a speculative, non-quantifiable concept--a well-accepted usage.

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To be useful, an organizing concept should be simple, should take into account the findings in the field, and should point the way to further effective inquiry and action. The concept which, I believe, does just this is learning deficiencies. This term is not to be confused with "learning difficulties" or "learning disabilities" or "specific learning disabilities", all of which have special contextual and conceptual meanings in special education. By "learning deficiencies" I mean simply shortcomings in learning, shortcomings in both the skills of learning and the content of learning. This concept is in pedagogical terms, not sociological.

While the teacher as a citizen should be concerned with better housing, improved employment opportunities, racial problems, and social work (and should consider their educational implications), the teacher, fulfilling the role of teacher, must consider his main task to be the fostering of the intellectual growth and development of the child in the school setting. This viewpoint certainly does not eliminate the need for the teacher to be concerned with such things as the physical nourishment and mental health of the child. Quite the contrary. But, the reason for such concern is not some vague sentimental or guilty feeling associated with charity and compassion. Instead, the reason for concern is directly connected with the performance of the child in the school setting.

The concept of learning deficiencies brings the teacher's attention back to the learning situation, provides him with a focus on what is wrong, and implies the kind of action which needs to be taken.

Of course, a model does not consist of only a brief phrase. To become a model, a concept must be filled out to show sequences, interrelationships, and extra-model connections among the various included concepts. These important details can only be hinted at now, but further experience and research, following this scheme, may be able to fill them in.

Nor does the concept operate in a vacuum. It must be, and is, supported by the findings of sociology, psychology, linguistics, and other disciplines. But the findings of those disciplines are, with this concept, redefined in economic class, we ask the question, "What are the learning deficiencies." After that we might look at economic position for clues. We would pay particular attention to the aspects of learning skills and content which the schools are prepared to handle. We might look at the children in terms of their language learning, instead of their social class, since language is a matter in which the schools are concerned, and a field in which they are presumed to be competent to operate. And, of course, this is the viewpoint taken by those experts who are making the most useful progress in the field.

Several investigators, thinkers, and compilers of findings have expressed their views along these lines, though none, so far as I know, have had the temerity to present "learning deficiencies" as a concept worthy of elevation to a guiding principle, conceptual scheme, or model for the entire field.

Typical of the more effective pedagogical viewpoints is the book entitled Language Programs for the Disadvantaged, edited by Corbin and Crosby, and published by the National Council of Teachers of English. Another recent book which emphasizes a learning viewpoint is Loretan and Uman's Teaching the Disadvantaged. Bereiter and Engelmann's Teaching Disadvantaged Children in the Preschool is excellent. Many articles by such people as Havinghurst, Ausubel, Passow, and Deutsch—to name a few—have cut through sociological descriptions to the basic learning problem.

Although these writers have not specifically stated their viewpoints as being based on "learning deficiencies", they have operated as though that concept had been their guide. And they have produced the most useful ideas and practices. Their ideas also invite further inquiry, which is generally considered to be a sign of being on the right track.

The writers I have mentioned, plus a few others, have come, sooner or later, to the conviction that an attack on learning deficiencies is the most profitable course of action. Experience bears them out. In other words, the findings in the field support the concept of learning deficiencies as being a useful conceptual generalization.

Learning deficiencies is a phrase which describes a condition. It invites diagnosis, strongly implying the question, "Just what is the learning deficiency?" In seeking the answer to this question, one should seek out causes. But, having learning deficiencies in mind as the guide, one does not stop at causes. After all, the teacher is concerned with effects. Effective researchers place causation in its proper position, and bring to the forefront, at the operating level, ideas and practices based on an implied or stated concept of learning deficiencies.

The concept has the added advantage of being in the family of concepts which are the focusing and action models for special education. Anyone who has worked with the disadvantaged realizes that the children who are so labeled are often in their disabling condition for a variety of reasons. They may be either gifted or retarded, as well as being educationally disadvantaged, for example, and these additional problems make it not useful to treat all alike. Too often the approach characterized by a heavily sociological rationale has resulted in the lumping together of children on the basis of

their socio-economic class, or their race, or some other non-pedagogical classification. Such actions have been self-defeating.

How should this concept be applied to facilitate the identification, diagnosis, and remediation of the handicaps which are thought to result from learning deficiency?

The diagram on the next page plots a process which should cut down the variables to a manageable number.

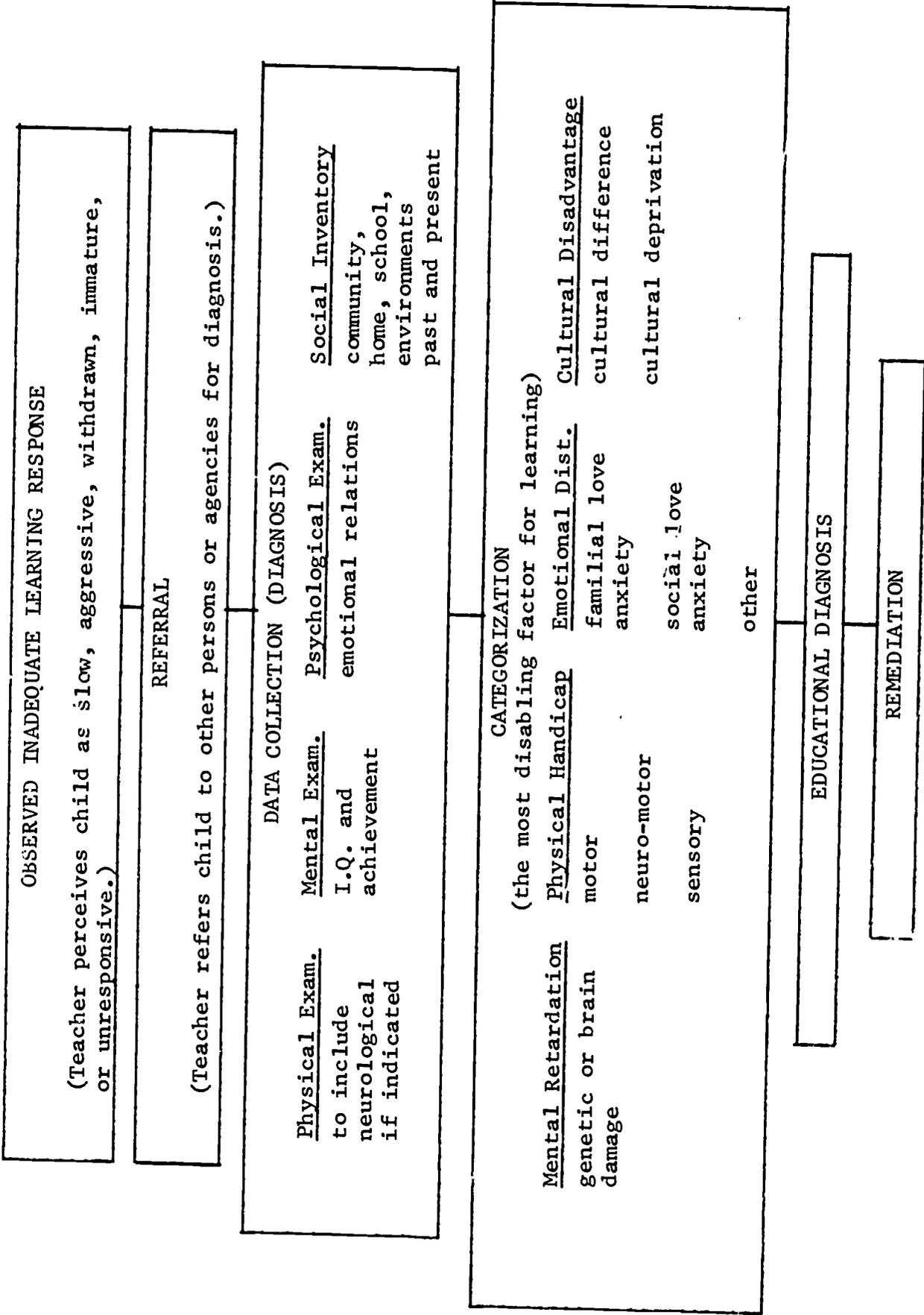
From the teacher's point of view, there is a discouragingly large number of children who do not do well in school. Extreme cases of lack of learning ability or efficiency are screened out before school age, but large numbers (some people estimate up to 30% of the total school population) are perceived by the teachers to be problem children.

Teachers may describe children as slow, aggressive, withdrawn, immature, or unresponsive. This, then, is where we must start--at the point where the teacher perceives inadequate response by the pupil in the school situation. It would be well to recognize at the outset that there are varying cut-offs between what is considered adequate and what is considered inadequate learning behavior. It depends on the teacher, the dynamics of the particular classroom and school, and upon the community's standards. These variable criteria are real and should be heeded. Their presence in no way invalidates the principles of the process.

The teacher who, for a variety of reasons, perceives a child as presenting non-positive or non-productive attacks on learning should refer the child to other qualified persons or agencies for diagnosis. Here again, one must recognize that in some situations there is nobody to whom the teacher can make referrals. In such a case, the teacher himself must do as much diagnosis and other actions as he can. The model for action should help direct his actions, though they may be less than ideal in their results. But, increasingly, there are qualified persons to whom to make referral.

Regardless of the facilities which may be available, the most urgent and basic problem is diagnosis. When we abandon the sociological viewpoint, we take on the educational viewpoint, which at this stage is expressed by the question, "Why is the child not learning well?"

The ideal diagnostic examination would call upon a team of well-equipped experts who would administer a thorough physical examination (not just a chest-thumping); an IQ examination plus some achievement test; a psychological examination to derive emotional patterns; a social inventory to get a picture of the environmental influence in home, school, and community, past and present. All of the examinations should be



guided by the question, "What is impeding learning?"

After the data is collected, the child should be categorized in terms of what handicap or shortcoming is most disabling to the learning process in the school setting. There are four broad categories--mental retardation, physical handicap, emotional disturbance, and cultural disadvantage. For example, the examinations may have resulted in a diagnosis of educable retarded, moderate emotional disturbance characterized by withdrawal, very low language ability, lowest socio-economic group. In which category should such a child be placed?

We see here the necessity for a conference of the examiners and an intergration of their findings. There must be an experienced teacher included in this conference because the categorization, however tentative it may be, will be made on the basis of classroom adaptability. In the case being considered, the fact that the child comes from the lowest socio-economic group and demonstrates low verbal performance should alert the conference members to the possibility that this child is not truly retarded, that is, retarded because of genetic or brain damage reasons, but retarded operationally because of cultural disadvantage. The decision would be tentative, subject to repeated review until effective remedial procedures have been found.

If a child has such a gross motor handicap that he cannot be handled efficiently in a regular classroom, or is seriously handicapped in one or more of his sensory organs, then it is obvious that this handicap is the most disabling. The fact that he may also be culturally disadvantaged would be taken into account, but the criterion of what is most disabling in the school learning situation should determine his primary assignment for remediation.

If a child is seriously emotionally disturbed, no learning can take place (or at least no desirable learning) without that factor being considered. If other disabilities he may have are considered less disabling than the emotional disturbance, then he should be categorized as emotionally disturbed.

Finally, we come to the category of cultural disadvantage. I have divided this into two sub-categories which I have called "cultural difference" and "cultural deprivation." Often the two conditions go together, sometimes not. By "cultural differences" I mean languages, values, and experiences which are different from the American norm. By "cultural deprivation" I mean undeveloped learning skills, lack of information and low quality language characterized by limited vocabulary and emotional and directive usage with little or no usage of language for the communication of information.

Having made the gross categorizations on the basis of the

most disabling learning handicap, the making of an educational diagnosis is the next step. Here the question is asked, "What are the specific learning deficiencies and what are the specific learning deficiencies and what are the specific steps one should take to remediate those deficiencies?" This is a crucial step, and must be made by a very skilled teacher who would refer to diagnostic findings.

As to the specific attack on the learning deficiencies of the disadvantaged, it is clear that language inadequacy is the common factor. Accompanying this, especially for those I have characterized as culturally deprived, is an inadequacy of thought processes.

The diagnostic process outlined above is designed to take care of more disabling factors, leaving "pure" cultural disadvantage as a residual factor which can then be attacked effectively. Methods of attack will be the subject of later articles.

I have attempted to present a viewpoint which holds together logically, is in agreement with the findings in the field, implies both teaching methods and research directions and may be used as a criterion for diagnosis, categorization, remediation, and administrative organization. That concept is "learning deficiencies", the hallmark of the culturally disadvantaged. I believe you will find it advantageous in either teaching or research, and regardless of the race, class, or religion of the child, to approach the problem with this viewpoint.

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## ANNOTATED SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY -- CULTURALLY DISADVANTAGED

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This is a compilation of especially prepared articles, well edited. The emphasis is on theory and practice in the classroom, including curriculum ideas for the elementary school in all content areas. There are separate chapters on the preparation and role of the teacher, principal, and community.
- Bereiter, Carl and Engelmann, Siegfried. Teaching Disadvantaged Children in the Preschool. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1966, 312 pp.  
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- Bloom, Benjamin S., Davis, Allison, and Hess, Robert. Compensatory Education for Cultural Deprivation. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1965, 179 pp.  
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- Frost, Joe L. and Hawkes, Glenn R. The Disadvantaged Child: Issues and Innovations, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1966, 445 pp., paperbound.  
This is a collection of articles from professional journals.

It is suitable for developing a broad background in the field.

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While not about culturally disadvantaged children specifically, this remarkable diary of a perceptive teacher has many insights to offer all teachers (though some may deplore the occasional sentimental, romantic approach).

Loretan, Joseph O. and Uman, Shelley. Teaching the Disadvantaged: New Curriculum Approaches. New York: Teachers College Press, 1966, 242 pp., bibliog.

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Three years old--which is really old in a fast-moving field --this paperbound book is still pertinent and includes much valuable thought-provoking material which is not found elsewhere.

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Webster, Staten W. The Disadvantaged Learner. San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co., 1966, Published as one clothbound volume of in three paperbacks entitled: Knowing the Disadvantaged, Understanding the Educational Problems of the Disadvantaged, and Educating the Disadvantaged Learner.

The (or these) volume (s) consist of readings covering the entire field, though not in great detail.