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ABSTRACT

Comparative studies of education, discrimination, and poverty in cross-cultural context are held as contributing towards a better understanding of the social nature of poverty and the complex processes of cultural transmission, continuity, and change. Seven strategies or models of research are suggested: (1) study of secondary and tertiary socialization in schools; (2) inquiry into the relationship of minority group language and conceptual styles to learning; (3) consideration of education's relationship to needs of the adolescent in societal initiation and personal identity; (4) study of patterns of minority group interaction with school; (5) systematic description of options and requirements for diversity offered through the schools, such as counseling, discipline, vocational-academic curricula, and bilingual and bicultural schooling; and, (7) study of education as a social problem, i.e. how the school fails, instead of how students fail. (KG)

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CROSS-CULTURAL APPROACHES
TO RESEARCH ON
MINORITY GROUP EDUCATION

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The recently expanded interest of American anthropologists in educational institutions and process has been stimulated in part by the belief that formal education can be instrumental in achieving social justice for disadvantaged minority group youth. We know, however, that schooling has often contributed to, rather than diminished, the disadvantage of certain minority group youth. (Kozol 1967, Wax, Wax, and Dumont 1964) It is, therefore, appropriate, I would suggest, that we study carefully the institutions and processes through which we would work to achieve our objectives of social justice.

It is the purpose of this paper to suggest some strategies for research on educational institutions and processes which directly affect the members of minority groups in complex modern societies. The suggestions are drawn from anthropological research reports and models and are based on values and points of view that I consider to be especially representative of our professional culture in anthropology.¹

Three such points of view are:

- 1) that all interacting human groups have uniquely integrated systematic ways of experiencing and knowing their environment,
- 2) that cultural difference is to be valued, even after the hard knocks that have been taken by cultural relativism, and
- 3) that totalitarian missionaries in traditional religious or modern secular guise are inevitably suspect.

These values, it should be noted, are quite consistent with those of a professional educator who accepts Dewey's thesis of education as experience. As he said,

The history of educational theory is marked by opposition between the idea that education is development from within and that it is formation from without; that it is based upon natural endowments and that education is a process of overcoming natural inclination and substituting in its place habits acquired under external pressure. (1938:1)

He obviously identified himself with the idea that education is based upon natural endowments of the group as well as the individual. Unfortunately, this has not been a common model in schools for minority group children. The current experiments with bilingual, bicultural approaches to formal school education in Rough Rock, with some Spanish-speaking children in the Southwest, and with some black children in Washington, D. C., are, I hope, important exceptions to this picture.

Recent discussions by Valentine (1967), Liebow (1967), Hannerz (1969), and others, of the constructs used by ethnographers and social researchers to depict poverty subcultures in urban American society has emphasized the ways in which they influence policy recommendations for development programs designed to ameliorate the effects of poverty as well as their importance for an understanding of the social organization of modern complex societies. Valentine's suggestion that we systematically test the several available constructs through ethnographic field work in a variety of poor communities makes very good sense. He suggests a typology of three models: 1) the self-perpetuating subsociety with a defective, unhealthy subculture, 2) the externally oppressed subsociety with an imposed, exploited subculture, and 3) the heterogeneous subsociety with variable adaptive subcultures. (1968:141-144)

In ethnographic tests of the available models, the roles of schools and formal education will be especially important because of the models' differentiation by patterns of cultural transmission--not only our educational and social welfare policies will be affected by this research.

Our models and understanding of cultural process, transmission, continuity, and change will be molded by what we find. This is an area in which educational anthropology has a contribution to make to anthropological theory as well as to enlightened educational practice. Specifically, we need ethnographies of education, discrimination, and poverty in the range of contexts where socially disadvantaged minority groups are incorporated in modern complex social systems.

By "socially disadvantaged minority groups," I am referring to those socially recognized groups which are subject to systematic discrimination in dealings with the larger society. I am not talking about "cultural deprivation" but about a research strategy to illustrate the perniciousness of such a concept.

Because I am interested in cross-cultural comparison as a research method as well as a framework for viewing minority-majority group relationships in modern urban societies, I will suggest some applications and examples from two modern societies, Japan and the United States. In truth, I am developing a research proposal in which Japanese and American anthropologists together should systematically study the cultural interaction of educational institutions and specific socially disadvantaged minority groups in the two national societies.

In historical and social perspective, such comparative studies might concern several different minority groups in the United States and

Japan. The tribal people of Northern Japan, the Ainu, are an especially interesting contrast with Amerindians, though they have been subjected to acculturational pressures over a longer period of contact with the dominant society. Korean immigrants in Japan are comparable to the Puerto Ricans in the United States, having originally entered Japan while their homeland was a Japanese colony and being identifiable by linguistic as well as subtle racial difference. The economically depressed coal mining communities of southern Japan suggest similar regions of Appalachia.

A potentially productive comparison would be that of the outcaste burakumin communities in Japan contrasted with black urban and rural neighborhoods in the United States. The comparison is especially instructive because of the fact that outcaste status in Japan is not associated with racial difference while the prominent social features of discrimination are quite similar. In contemporary context, the organized social militance of both groups in seeking to ameliorate discriminating relationships with the larger society is especially interesting. Brameld's recent ethnography of a burakumin community (1969) describes the community context of education at both local and national levels for this minority group. Wagatsuma (1966) has described the specific attempts of burakumin pressure groups to influence school curricula.

We might also compare Americans of Japanese ancestry with their Japanese kin (though we do not have a significant reverse parallel case of American immigrants to Japan). This study would be provocative in the context of understanding minority group relations with educational systems because it contrasts with the experience of most U. S. minority groups. The Japanese-Americans have been uniformly successful in beating the

majority society at their own school game, in the same way that Japanese school children have significantly outperformed the Americans and children from 10 European nations in comparable tests of math achievement. (Husen 1967) The Japanese-Americans, for instance, have been shown to be significantly over-represented in the elite levels of California State's highly stratified public system of higher education and the story of their increasingly successful participation in Hawaii's public education is a mass phenomenon in the style of Horatio Alger. Claims for inherited, racially based intelligence, on the basis of this or other kinds of evidence are inevitably suspect--an anthropologist should want to look at the meaning and function of educational achievement in the communities from which these students come.

In order to get on with the job of ethnographic research so far proposed, I will suggest seven strategies or models that I would like to promote in future research. Though they are all general strategies for any educational anthropological study, I believe that they have specific relevance to our needs for better understanding of educational organizations and processes related to socially disadvantaged minority groups.

1) Education as an instrument of socialization. An emphasis on the processes of socialization as they are experienced by children in both school and non-school settings suggests that we might differentiate roughly between 1) primary socialization--the intimate socialization of children to family, sex, and community roles that occurs in familial and primary group contexts, 2) secondary socialization--the development of role attitudes and behaviors identified with school-age children in modern societies which are transmitted by schools, peer groups, religious

organizations, and other social institutions in which such children participate and learn to be children in the larger community context, and 3) tertiary socialization into adult vocational, religious, and social roles.

Careful studies of secondary and tertiary socialization in schools which minority children attend would have to include the ways in which such children are confronted in the school with minority group identity and the conflicts with the majority society that are transmitted directly or indirectly by the school's educational program, learning materials, teachers, and fellow students. Spindler has described, for instance, the subtle way in which a school counselor communicated unintended but highly discriminatory minority group status restrictions to Mexican-American students involved in choosing their high school courses. (1963: 153-155) It would be important to avoid the assumption that education is "an institutionalized form of socialization to adult roles," (IESS: Iv 509) since we ought to suspect that more school effort goes into making children "good" students than "good" adults.

This typology would help us to make sense of such statements as Fisher's that the school is "the major socialization device of the industrialized urbanized segment of the Canadian population." (1969) It means that the school is the major instrument of generally accepted secondary socialization and implies that the processes of tertiary socialization are significantly included in the schools. As he points out, this is not true for the Canadian Indian population in the same way. The secondary socialization of the school is not accepted by the Indian community in Alberta in the same way as it is in the cultural mainstream communities of Canada.

Studies of secondary and tertiary socialization might well proceed in as highly organized forms as the cross-cultural studies of primary socialization carried out by the group under Whiting but would have to include comparisons of minority and mainstream cultural patterns.

2) Language, conceptual style and learning. In a very provocative paper, now published in the American Anthropologist, Rosalie Cohen (1969) has brought me to a new level of awareness of the systematic and patterned ways in which the schools actively discriminate against a large group of children on the basis of the conceptual style with which they relate to the stimuli of their environment. Analytic and relational cognitive styles, which she describes, would seem to be associated with linguistic and cultural difference though she emphasizes their correlation with specific characteristics of family and friendship group organization.

So discrepant are the analytic and relational frames of reference that a pupil whose preferred mode of cognitive organization is emphatically relational is unlikely to be rewarded in the school setting either socially or by grades regardless of his native abilities and even if his information repertoire and background of experience are adequate.
(1969:830)

She goes on to point out that the relational conceptual style is not only dysfunctional to the child in the school setting, but that school experience is disabling to the child as he moves back into his home and community. This is especially poignant when we realize that the relational conceptual style discouraged by the school is closely related to creative ability.

Other studies have shown similar differences of cognitive style which should suggest relevant questions for educational ethnographers. Maccoby and Modiano (1969) described rural-urban differences in cognitive style in two Mexican communities. Gay and Cole (1967) concentrated on

conceptual differences in mathematical relationships and suggested their relevance for developing school curricula cross-culturally.

In the context of minority group education, it would be important to determine the differences in cognitive style associated with minority group identification, the differential patterns of participation and success in the schools which might be attributable to such difference, and the ways in which schools might adapt to develop rather than discourage such skills.

The systematic study of minority group language patterns is, of course, one major and important approach to the study of cognitive or conceptual style. As Valentine suggests,

In view of all the academic and popular interest in the supposed verbal disabilities of the poor, and the many policy implications, particularly with respect to education, this could be a most important contribution of ethnography among the poor. (1968: 185)

Differences of conceptual style imply different patterns of learning. Cohen suggests that schools must abandon the assumption that there is a single method for knowing and to go on to devise multiple-method learning environments.

Cultural patterns of learning would also seem to deserve some intensive exploration. In the proposed comparison of the United States and Japan, the contrasting mainstream cultural learning patterns, as well as those of the minority groups involved, would be important.

3) Adolescent initiation, identity, and education. The important contrasts between pre-pubertal and post-pubertal educational patterns in some primitive societies has been suggested by Hart. (In Spindler 1963) Sharp contrasts in regulation, personnel, atmosphere, and curriculum

underscore the fact that adolescent children were typically taught in initiation schools "the whole value system of the culture, its myths, its religion, its philosophy, its justification of its own entity as a culture." (1963:419) Citizenship, rather than technology, is the prime subject matter and involves a restructuring of the participant's identity from child to adult. Some primitive societies, like our modern educational systems, stretch out the period of initiation training for many years. Our difference is in considering such training to be vocational rather than cultural induction.

When minority group youth participation in post-pubertal schooling of modern societies is studied, we ought to consider the variety and intensity of identity conflicts produced, as Wintrob and Sindell have done for the Cree Indian children in Canada. (1968)

The conflicting patterns of cultural identity which minority group children face in their post-pubertal schooling and the ways in which they resolve this conflict, if they do, are worthy of central concern. The intensive study of Japanese students who have sojourned in the U. S., higher education, which Bennett, Passin, and McKnight carried out some years ago (1958), finally focussed on the student's search for identity as its integrating construct.

Discontinuities in educational experiences and expectations associated with social definitions of maturation and those associated with minority group status intersect in patterns which must be especially difficult for adolescent minority group youth.

4) Differential patterns of participation. We know that some minority groups, like blacks in the U. S. and burakumin in Japan, are systematically under-represented in higher, non-compulsory levels of

schooling. We should suspect, however, even where compulsory schooling brings everybody into the school, that minority group children will interact with the school in systematically different ways. An ethnography of minority group education should seek to describe these patterns, their effect on the life of the student, and their implications for socially defined standards of success in both the minority group community and the larger mainstream society. An excellent example of this type of study has been reported in preliminary fashion by Gallimore, Boggs, and MacDonald (1968). Their study of education in an economically poor Hawaiian community focussed on the effects of minority group cultural difference on the patterns of children's participation in the public school.

In this context it is also important to delineate differential participation by minority group teachers in the system, differential relations with the school by minority group parents, and the effects of minority group school administrators. Even studies of non-disadvantaged ethnically distinguished groups in the system will be important. Like Spindler's comparison of teachers', students', school administrators', community, and school boards' values on a traditional-emergent scale, (1963:132-46) we must look to minority group or ethnic patterns of values that affect the ways in which students, teachers, and other school roles interact in school-related settings. It is obvious, for instance, that the interaction of Jewish teachers with black and Puerto Rican children in Harlem classrooms involves the cultural patterns of at least three American minority groups compounded in interaction with school roles of the participants and a mainstream cultural ideology represented by the

school system. We can only untangle the patterns as we dig into these complex settings with all the ethnographic tools we can bring to bear.

5) Out-of-school schooling. As we study minority group education in the U. S. and Japan, it is especially important that we not limit ourselves to the public schools. Minority group members participate in various kinds of schooling or organized programs of teaching and learning. Anti-poverty programs have often been based on schooling for new jobs, Black Power advocates have organized programs for teaching a new kind of black ethnic identity to children. Churches, YM and YWCA's, boy and girl scouts, and other organizations typical of the mainstream society recruit minority group members into educational programs. I am personally impressed by a foundation-financed Pittsburgh program for black ghetto youth, Urban Youth Action, which has effectively organized high school students for paid community development activities and turned over the administration and leadership of the program to the students themselves.

In considering the history of special educational programs for Amerindians, it is important to go back to the Civilian Conservation Corps of the depression--a seemingly successful program never repeated.

In Japan, likewise, socially structured out-of-school schooling is very common with special schools for traditional Japanese arts, English conversation, homemaking skills, and cram courses preparing for high school and college entrance examinations. Social or adult education is a well organized field and vocational retraining has a special relevance to minority group members there in the same way that OEO-sponsored vocational programs like the Job Corps have been important to U. S. minority groups.

Formal and informal schooling for vocational induction, as conducted by labor unions, the employing institutions, employment agencies, or professional associations, must be studied from the inside. Since some minority groups are disadvantaged by their systematic exclusion from such programs, entrance restrictions as well as the experiences of those accepted should be studied.

The range and variety of schooling open to minority group youth should be an important part of every community-centered educational ethnography. The systematic description of such opportunities and the patterns of minority-group participation could also be, I am suggesting here, the focus of particular studies.

6) Management of diversity. Social diversity, rather than uniformity, characterizes modern society. The social management of diversity then becomes an interesting and relevant question in considering integration and separation of minority groups from mainstream society.

Patterns of schooling are obviously instrumental in managing diversity just as they transmit some of the symbols of cultural unity. In studying minority group education, we might well accept the diversity-management model of schools and systematically describe the ways in which options and requirements for diversity are transmitted to children. Counseling, discipline, and vocational-academic curricula separation are traditional methods of diversity-management. Bilingual, bicultural models of schooling are new experiments in U. S. education to transmit diversity.

Community-centered ethnographic studies of such innovative school models are badly needed for a better understanding of their relation to stability and change in the community. Anthropologists have applauded

the models but I know of no systematic ethnography in such a context. Who among us will learn Navajo in order to study Rough Rock?

7) Education and a social problem. While the study of social problems is the traditional realm of the sociologist, the new anthropological concern for social relevance suggests that we might try out such a model.

The importance of looking at education as a social problem is the transfer of concern from the minority group student as the problem to the school as the problem. How the school fails, rather than how the student fails, becomes the focus of ethnographic attention. Such a model must take for granted the explicit social goals ascribed to the school--in the U. S. and Japan, for instance, the goal of furnishing equal educational opportunity to all students. The ethnographer must seek to determine the ways in which it does or does not achieve such goals. Both Americans and Japanese are noted for their semi-religious faith in education, meaning public schooling, as the instrument for solving otherwise unsolvable social problems in their own and other societies. Reversing the model may suggest the social limitations of the school. Some militant minority-group spokesmen in both countries have already suggested this point of view. We might take it from there.

In summary, I would suggest that comparative studies of education, discrimination, and poverty in cross-cultural context should help us to better understand the social nature of poverty and the complex processes of cultural transmission, continuity, and change.

As we apply our research to the problems posed by educational policy makers, it will not be enough for us to denounce the educational implications of the slogans of "cultural deprivation," "cultural disadvantage," or "culture of poverty" used to justify the failures of schooling for socially disadvantaged minority group members. Our research should lead to:

- 1) better understanding of the social advantages of cultural difference,
- 2) better ability to make common schooling a multi-cultural enterprise for all its participants, not just for minority group members,
- 3) more realistic views of what the school can accomplish as an instrument of social goals, and
- 4) hard-nosed unromantic analyses of educational innovations to see if they are indeed meeting the goals they proclaim.

FOOTNOTE

¹Some of the strategies and models in this paper have come from discussions and papers presented at the conference on "The Study of Japan in the Behavioral Sciences" organized by Edward Norbeck at Rice University, April 11-12, 1969. The three-level model of socialization and the diversity-management model were both suggested there by David Plath. Kazukimi Ebuchi has helped me develop some of the approaches presented here.

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