

Social Class, Race, and Psychological Development

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With a preface by

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This book
is
dedicated
to
the memory
of
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

*And I assert at this time that once again
we must reaffirm our belief in building a demo-
cratic society, in which blacks and whites can live
together as brothers, where we will all come to see
that integration is not a problem, but an oppor-
tunity to participate in the beauty of diversity.*

From the address of Dr. Martin Luther
King, Jr., to the American Psychological
Association, Washington, D.C.,
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Preface

The conscience of America has become aroused by problems of inequality. Why we should have been so laggard in the public recognition of these problems, which have been with us all along, is a task to trouble the social historian. Perhaps our pervasive optimism and the doctrine of inevitable progress made us feel that all would soon be better. Perhaps a certain smugness and self-righteousness allowed us to enjoy "the highest standard of living in the world" without being aware that many among us have not had, and do not now have, access to their just share of the world's goods and opportunities. The social scientists were not unaware of these problems. We need think only of *Recent Social Trends* (1938) or Gunnar Myrdal's *American Dilemma* (1944). Still, it took the events of the last decade—sit-down strikes, marches, violent protests, even the tragic death of Dr. Martin Luther King—to move an aroused public to want to do something important, and soon, to relieve the inequities with which we had learned to live all too complacently.

What is the role of the behavioral and social scientist at the present time? Obviously social inequality lies within the areas of inquiry of these fields of knowledge, but it does not necessarily follow that the behavioral scientist has workable solutions to the problems of inequality, or that, if he has the solutions, he knows how to get them adopted. The government has stepped in to aid him, however, granting funds through the Office of Education, the Office of Economic Opportunity, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and other agencies. These funds, and those from private foundations, provide an opportunity for the behavioral and social scientist to be of service, if he is ready.

There are essentially three things that he can do: First, he can contribute to an understanding of the situation as it exists, examining our social structure, social classes, social mobility, the causes and consequences of poverty. Second, he can look to his research data and his theories to see what might be done to correct the effects of poverty on children, and he might also look for ways in which his science might help to ameliorate conditions that have resulted in poverty in the first place. Thus he looks to the body of theory and data in his science for suggestions that are relevant to the problems at hand. Third, he can move directly toward the solution of the problem in steps that are the equivalent of research and development in other sciences. That is, he

takes his laboratory directly to the field (as in Head Start programs) and does a kind of “quality control” study to see whether his ideas, when put into practice, do indeed achieve the intended results.

All this seems so obvious that obstacles in the way of following it are not likely to be appreciated by those who have not faced them. In recent years there has been such a celebration of “basic research” that the criterion of relevance to important problems has receded, and many behavioral and social scientists find satisfaction in building elaborate theoretical models around precise but somewhat irrelevant data. Hence when colleagues who attempt to face up to social problems look for relevant data and hypotheses, they often do not find much that they can use. Not unrelated to the emphasis upon basic science is the tendency to specialize. Even within psychology, the subspecialties of behavior genetics, physiology of learning, social psychology, clinical psychology, and educational psychology become encapsulated and thus less accessible to the kind of team effort that is essential to the solving of social problems. Finally, actual applications in the field meet with a number of barriers to proper science—particularly prejudice, romanticism, and haste.

The present book is timely in its bearing on all the foregoing considerations. It is at once analytical with regard to the underlying problems, hence avoiding the urgency that something be done now; scientific, in that it seeks for laboratory evidence regarding development; and practical, in that it looks toward actual educational procedures that may correct deficiencies due to poverty in early childhood.

We see here all the dilemmas of current behavioral and social science. There are points at which the authors cry out for new data, in order to be sure that their conjectures are applicable. There are occasions to complain that educational reforms have not gone far enough. Throughout, however, there is a high concern for relevance—a useful corrective of the plea for indulgence until psychology evolves more highly.

The contributors cover a wide range of the subdisciplines within psychology, including behavior genetics, experimental psychology, social psychology, and educational psychology. That all are psychologists is somewhat to be regretted, in that the problems faced are anthropological, sociological, psychiatric, political, and economic, as well, and we need to learn the full interdisciplinary approach to them. The limitation of the book to psychologists is not a severe handicap, however, in part because psychologists of such diverse interests are included, and in part because the developmental emphasis belongs more to psychology than to its sister disciplines.

The text is not easy; it is not watered down to make psychology palatable to the activists. As scientists, we need to avoid the stance of the “expert witness” who gives immediate solutions to pressing prob-

lems. The authors of this book keep a proper perspective on the problems they treat, and they know the difficulties of solution, so that the scientist here plays his proper role of treating answerable problems with the tools at his disposal rather than making premature prescriptions. Still there is no retreat from responsibility, and this is perhaps the book's greatest lesson: it is possible for the behavioral scientist today to deal responsibly with pressing social problems without relinquishing his role as an objective investigator.

The Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues was wise to undertake this venture, and its members can take satisfaction in this book produced by their editors and authors.

Ernest R. Hilgard

April 1968

The editors acknowledge with gratitude the goodwill of all the contributors to this volume. Not only have they worked diligently and willingly revised their contributions, but they have waited patiently for the final production of this volume. The contributions reflect the thinking of their authors; the editors have seen their role as one of checking for errors of fact, omissions, logical coherence, and stylistic clarity. In this we have been encouraged by the editorial staff of Holt, Rinehart and Winston. We are particularly grateful to Carol Stanwood and Peggy Newton, who coordinated the compilation of the manuscript and carried on an extensive correspondence and discussion with all the contributors and editors.

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INTRODUCTION

MARTIN DEUTSCH

IRWIN KATZ

Perhaps the most fundamental domestic problem of latter twentieth-century America is the persistence of gross inequalities in the life opportunities of youth from different social classes and racial groups. A critical component of the problem is the failure of most poor children to master the basic knowledge and skills that are necessary for assimilation into a highly technical and industrialized economy. The scholastic achievement gap that separates pupils in the slums from those in affluent neighborhoods remains tragically wide. This was shown in a recent nationwide survey conducted by James Coleman and others (1966) for the United States Office of Education. In every region of the country about 85 percent of Negro elementary and high school students scored below white averages on objective tests of scholastic ability and achievement.

Identifying the causes of academic failure in depressed-area schools is an issue of intense controversy among school officials, political leaders, spokesmen for minority group parents, and other interested groups. Even the views of social scientists concerned with the problem are widely divergent—ranging from Kenneth Clark's (1965) telling criticism of black ghetto schools to Bruno Bettelheim's (1964) psychoanalytically inspired contention that lower-class homes inflict irreversible damage upon the personalities of children even before they enter kindergarten or first grade. Unfortunately, in the current national debate over the causes of unequal opportunity, basic assumptions about class and race differences in psychological development continue to rest more upon conjecture and subjective impressions than upon the findings of scientific research.

Accordingly, it is altogether fitting that the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, an affiliate of the American Psychological Association, should sponsor a book which seeks to clarify the present state of knowledge about social and biological influences on intellectual development. Most of the chapters that follow were written specifically for this volume; the rest are more or less extensive revisions of significant papers that were first published elsewhere. Each of them makes a unique contribution to an understanding of the larger subject.

Part One on "Biogenetic Perspectives" offers an objective exposition of research dealing with the traditional nature-nurture problem, particularly as it impinges on the issues of social-class and racial differences in intelligence. As Arthur Jensen observes in his introduction, many of the polemics in the field have issued from misconceptions about genetics and failure to think in terms of interactive effects of heredity and environment. "When the wrong questions are posed," he remarks, "the answers tend to be sought in the realm of argument rather than in scientific research, which by its very nature does not lend itself to answering ill-framed questions." It is hoped that the discussion of genetics will indicate to social scientists and educators both the legitimacy and importance of this topic, and the need for greater theoretical and methodological sophistication in research on biological factors in class and ethnic characteristics.

Until the 1960's very little scientific research was done on the causes and types of intellectual impairment of children coming from low-income homes, and most of it was narrowly concerned with the description of group differences in IQ. There has recently developed in American psychology a trend toward studies of the processes that underlie children's intellectual growth.

In Part Two, three chapters dealing with the topic of "Basic Processes in Intellectual Development" delineate various specific processes whereby the home environment influences psychological development. The discussions reflect recent efforts by behavioral scientists to move beyond simple correlational studies of indicators of socioeconomic status, on the one hand, and such global characteristics as general intelligence and academic achievement, on the other. In the past, most of the social-class variables examined, such as income, occupation, and physical condition of the home, were essentially nonpsychological in nature and thus did little to expose the causal factors underlying observed differences in the measured intelligence of poor and affluent children.

One of the chapters in this part analyzes recent theory and research on the developmental aspects of perceptual functions, the role of experience in their formation, and their relation to reading and problem-solving skills. Another contribution reports early findings from an

extensive survey of linguistic skills, intelligence test scores, and social background factors in a balanced sample of Negro and white boys of both middle-class and lower-class status. The study concentrates on those aspects of environment which are most likely to be causally linked to language ability and mental proficiency, that is, on qualities of the parent-child interaction and the family constellation. An empirically derived "Deprivation Index" predicts more of the variance in educationally relevant traits than do the usual indices of socioeconomic status. Current thinking gives language a central place in problem solving and in cognitive processes generally. Bernstein's work in England highlighted a general relationship between language structure and particular social milieus. The third paper in this part employs a wealth of data from verbal learning experiments to suggest numerous ways in which social-class variations in language usage, hence in the early verbal stimulation of children, inexorably shape children's later intellectual ability.

Social factors that influence the disadvantaged pupil's will to learn are emphasized in Part Three, titled "Social and Psychological Perspectives." Certain characteristic deficiencies in the academic motivation of minority group children are glaringly obvious to anyone who observes typical fourth- or fifth-grade classrooms in urban ghetto schools. At the same time, it is equally clear that there are gross inadequacies in the educational services offered in nearly all these schools. Elsewhere, one of the present authors (Deutsch, 1960) has reported observations made in predominantly Negro public schools in Harlem which revealed that 50 to 80 percent of all classroom time was devoted to disciplinary and other essentially nonacademic tasks, as compared with only 30 percent of classroom time given to such activities in schools attended mainly by white children of roughly similar economic status. What the comparison conveys about the behavior and attitudes of socially disadvantaged students is poignantly elaborated in a recent article by a young, Harvard-trained teacher in a Negro ghetto school (Levy, 1966). She writes:

What impressed me most was the fact that my children (9-10 years old) are already cynical and disillusioned about school, themselves, and life-in-general. They are hostile, rebellious, and bitter. . . . They are hyperactive and are constantly in motion. In many ways they can be compared with wild horses that are suddenly fenced in (pp. 430-431).

A common theme of the chapters in this part is that discrimination tends to create in its victims those very traits of "inferiority" that are mentioned to rationalize its practice. Even in the absence of the more blatant forms of discrimination, traditional stereotypes about the low ability and apathy of Negroes and other ethnic minorities can operate as self-fulfilling prophecies. Thus the belief that Negroes are intellectually

incompetent can cause both whites and Negroes to behave in such manner as to yield confirmatory evidence.

The ways in which expectancies about others and about oneself develop, and their relation to academic performance, are explored from various perspectives. There is a review of studies dealing with the general topic of Negro self-concepts. Another contribution reports a series of intriguing experiments on human and animal subjects which support the hypothesis that the expectations of power figures, regarding the behavior of those whom they control, importantly influence the latter's behavior. The main experiment utilized an entire elementary school as a natural laboratory for a full academic year. Pupils from whom teachers were arbitrarily led to expect strong intellectual growth (the teachers were given fictitiously high intelligence test scores for the children involved) actually showed such growth during the ensuing year.

The primary thrust of the third paper on "Social and Psychological Perspectives" is toward motivational factors that favorably or adversely influence the achievement behavior of minority group children in biracial classrooms. Drawing upon evidence from a wide range of studies on the effects of stress and isolation, as well as from several experiments on Negro adolescents, the author suggests a model for predicting Negro performance in desegregated schools. The reactions—both real and anticipated—of white peers and teachers, and the Negro child's expectancies of success or failure on particular scholastic tasks, figure prominently in the conceptual scheme that is outlined. It is proposed that the racially mixed environment has greater potentiality both for academic success and failure than does the all-Negro environment. Whether the outcome for the individual pupil will be favorable or detrimental depends in large measure upon the specific social conditions that prevail in the classroom.

Part Four, the final section of the book, "On The Education of the Disadvantaged," describes the recent contributions of psychology to educational theory and practice, contributions that have been stimulated in part by the overturning of the concept of fixed intelligence and the concomitant rediscovery of the importance of experiential factors in cognitive development. The opening chapter elaborates the notion of intrinsic motivation, conceived as an autonomous urge toward novel experiences, and toward the exploration and manipulation of the physical environment. Presumably intrinsic motivation, which is essential for cognitive growth, requires for its own development variety of stimulation in early life. As Piaget has put it, "the more a child has seen and heard, the more he wants to see and hear." The obverse of this—that monotonous and restricted environments produce apathy—appears also to be true, though systematic evidence as yet is scarce. It is suggested that by the third year of life the physical and social conditions of low-

income homes—with their crowding, dearth of manipulable objects, and restricted adult language patterns—are no longer adequate for the proper growth of intrinsic motivation. Hence, early enrichment of the disadvantaged child's environment is essential for satisfactory cognitive growth.

All the chapters in the final part discuss new or recently rediscovered approaches to the education of the disadvantaged. In a few instances the methods and rationales of particular enrichment programs—for example, those of Montessori and Bereiter—are discussed in some detail. In addition, fairly comprehensive surveys of compensatory projects for children of different ages are presented. Regrettably, few of the efforts that have been instituted above the preschool level have been genuinely innovative with respect either to instructional methods or curriculum content. Nor have these efforts usually been based upon well-established pedagogical principles. Moreover, very few of the programs have had evaluations of sufficient scope and objectivity to establish whether they were really effective over the long run.

While each chapter in this book has a specific focus, and each was written independently of the others, several themes emerge from the book as a whole. One such theme is the complexity and multiplicity of factors that influence psychological traits and govern their development. While emphasis is mostly on social and interpersonal influences, biological factors are not neglected. But those factors related to negative living conditions receive the most emphasis. In one way or another, all the chapters of the book are concerned with the deleterious effects of poverty on children's development. Another major theme is the search for psychological variables which mediate between the child's social background and his intellectual and school performance. One might begin with race or class as a kind of encompassing description of a social milieu, and one might end with academic competence as a criterion measure. But unless the intervening processes are specified, so that cause-and-effect relationships can be understood, sound bases for social and educational action programs will not result.

This book illustrates the current involvement of behavioral scientists with important social problems, especially in the field of education. Its contents show that, contrary to the tenets of some psychological systems which were influential in the past, research on urgent practical problems can also have basic scientific value, by providing effective tests of existing theories and by generating new ones. The editors hope that the volume will provide a useful assessment of what is known, and what still needs to be known—from the standpoint of providing equal educational opportunities—about the biological, psychological, and social factors governing the achievement of students from different types of home background.

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PART ONE

Biogenetic Perspectives

INTRODUCTION—*Arthur R. Jensen*

The present volume, which deals so largely with environmental determinants of behavior, would leave the reader with an unbalanced picture indeed were it not for the following chapter. The fact that only one chapter out of the eleven in this book deals with the genetic basis of individual, class, and race differences should by no means be construed as belittlement of the importance of biological inheritance as a source of variance in psychological traits. The presentation of a balanced, objective exposition of the research dealing with the so-called nature-nurture problem—particularly as it impinges on the issues of social class and racial differences—has been a rare achievement throughout most of the history of American psychology. American social scientists have traditionally approached the subject less dispassionately than Europeans, except perhaps in the Soviet Union, where both behavior genetics and intelligence testing have been officially opposed by Marxist dogma.

A history of American psychology would not be complete without an account of the vicissitudes of the nature-nurture controversy. Many of the traditional polemics in this field have issued from early misconceptions about genetics and failure to think in terms of the interactive effects of heredity and environment. When the wrong questions are posed, the answers tend to be sought in the realm of argument rather than in scientific research, which by its very nature does not lend itself to answering ill-framed questions. A classic example of such a question is: (a) Which is more important in the development of intelligence—heredity or environment? Unfortunately, too many psychology textbooks, even recent ones, have tried to answer this question, with the result that they never get around to asking the question to which we would really like to know the answer and which, in fact, is empirically answerable. The customary answer to Question *a* is: Neither heredity nor environment is more important, since both are absolutely essential for the organism to come into existence and to survive. Therefore, it is impossible to say one is more important than the other; it is like saying that length or width is more important in determining the area of a rectangle. All this, of course, is both obvious and trivial. But it does not answer the very different (and answerable) question asked by geneticists and differential psychologists: (b) What are the relative contributions of genetic and nongenetic factors to *individual differences* in measured intelligence? Or, to be more technical, what proportion of the variance among phenotypes is attributable to variance among genotypes?

The second most common polemic has been the result of an unwarranted and misconceived expectation that there should be some absolute or “true” answer to Question *b*, like the answer to “What is the ratio of a circle’s circumference to its diameter?” The researches of investigators such as E. L. Thorndike, Sir Cyril Burt, Newman, Freeman, Holzinger, and others, have yielded answers to Question *b*. Though the answers to this question arrived at by most investigators are not in perfect agreement, they are in close agreement. But the reason for this agreement is not that all these investigators are trying, more or less successfully, to discover the true *nature-nurture* ratio or other quantitative expression of the relative importance of heredity and environment. There is no single correct answer. This is not to say however, that the answers that have been obtained in various studies are not without importance, both theoretical and practical. The very nature of the problem precludes the possibility of an answer of the type “The ratio of the circumference to the diameter of a circle is 3.1416.”

It is axiomatic in genetics that the relative contributions of heredity and environment to the variability of a given trait in the population are a joint function of the genetic variability and the variability of trait-