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Migration of the culturally disadvantaged from the South, Southwest, and Puerto Rico to urban areas in the United States has revealed that their education and culture are inadequate to cope with modern urban life. The education of disadvantaged youth, made difficult by their mobility, is further impeded by home and community life, lack of educational funds, and inappropriate curriculums. The school must attempt to modify the home and community as well as expand the mental and physical horizons of the students. To counter the specific effects of migration, reading readiness should be developed in kindergartens throughout the country, student records should be kept ready for transfer, and student placement should be immediate. The school should feature small classes with specialists and teachers who respect the students, an administration which is free to encourage experimentation, and after hours use of facilities for study and recreation. Yet to realize equal opportunities for all people, the public must back the schools by providing jobs and ending discrimination. (LP)

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## Introduction

Equality of opportunity is fundamental in the American tradition. Progress toward its fulfillment has marked the history of the nation. But not all Americans have shared in this progress.

Some Americans developed ways of living in virtual isolation from the rest of the society. They either remained apart voluntarily or were kept apart. Now the ferment of America has reached them, producing large-scale migration and bringing them into direct contact with modern life. Many have been unable to make a successful transition, for their ways of living are not attuned to the spirit and practice of modern life. They are placed at a severe disadvantage by their cultures. The inability of these culturally disadvantaged persons to adapt to new lives results in grave problems both for them and for the society at large. The problems are great, but if America can meet them, the rewards will be greater.



## The Roots of Cultural Disadvantage

Today the United States, like the rest of the world, is remaking itself. It has changed radically before: when the Republic was founded, when the West was claimed, and when the agrarian-commercial society was urbanized and industrialized. Today, as the technological revolution continues to transform America, the prerequisites for a constructive and independent life are constantly raised. Among Americans of all backgrounds there are individuals who do not rise to the challenge. This inadaptability is most widespread in those areas of the United States that are technologically least developed, and most conspicuous among those who migrate from such areas to the cities.

The South was the last major region in the United States to experience industrial organization, accompanied by urban growth and a decline in the relative significance of the agrarian system. The conversion came late to Puerto Rico as well. Similarly, many Spanish-speaking Americans in the Southwest and American Indians on reservations long remained isolated from the major changes in American life. Cultures in these areas were less challenged to change than were other American cultures. Until World War II, pockets of underdevelopment were found

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most often among the sharecropping and tenant farmers, mainly Negro, who worked the better soils of the deep South; the independent subsistence farmers, mainly white, of the Appalachian uplands; the landless Puerto Rican and Spanish-American farm workers; and the reservation Indians. These people were generally poor and inadequately educated, and their opportunities for advancement were severely limited.

Although some of these disadvantaged persons were able to overcome their handicaps, many did not learn, for example, to understand elementary economic processes, and were not prepared to profit from a developing technology. Neither experience nor schooling introduced them to the modern world of crop insurance, credit, scientific farming, or the rational use of machinery. Geographical isolation and class structure tended to confirm the ignorance and inertia of these disadvantaged Americans, denying them the opportunity and discouraging the will to express or alleviate their ills. Yet until recently they were able at least to pursue their accustomed modes of life, because they lived in uncomplicated societies unlike the present urban complexes or mechanized rural areas.

Such modes of life are rapidly becoming impossible. Increasing competition in the market for agricultural commodities, together with such governmental policies as acreage restriction, has placed pressure on producers for more efficient production. The rewards go to those who can use and maintain the new machines and methods and who can manage and market as well as farm. No longer can the marginal producer retain his land. No longer can the landowner profitably hire unskilled help, except during the brief harvest periods when the drudgery of migrants is still competitive with machines. Depletion of the soil has driven others from the rural areas. And, as knowledge of the many possibilities in life has spread, great numbers of farm workers have abandoned their accustomed homes.

From these factors a large-scale migration has resulted, dispersing an important share of the rural population to urban centers. The agrarian South, Southwest, and Puerto Rico are at one end of a channel, the urban areas at the other.

In this migration the tragic inadequacy of old cultures for new needs continues to exact its toll. In the cities as on the farms, jobs for the unskilled are decreasing, and the migrants are less able than are better educated persons to be trained for skilled positions. They have little of the understanding required of wise consumers. Often they and their children reject schooling. Inferior and overpriced housing further handicaps their health, education, and ability to support themselves. By misuse of property, they may further impair their living conditions. Their residential concentration multiplies their problems and retards the learning of new ways. Mistrust of government and civic apathy also hinder their adaptation. Racial discrimination compounds the difficulties of many. Poverty and disease continue to plague them; delinquency and crime rates rise; and the society at large appears remote and uninterested.

Thus, mobility often fails to relieve misery. Indeed, mobility becomes a way of life for many of the disadvantaged, who move from place to place within the city, seeking to better themselves. Nor is the lot of those who remain in the rural areas necessarily improved in the long run by the departure of the others. Depopulation and the growing inadequacy of old ways to the demands of the new agriculture reinforce the processes of social deterioration in the rural society. They demoralize the people and weaken the church, the school, and even the home. For these reasons, and because of the considerable migration yet to take place, even those disadvantaged Americans who have not yet moved are of increasing national concern.

The disadvantaged, then, are doubly handicapped. Unable with reasonable success to remain on the land, they are often

equally unable to establish a new life elsewhere. While many are victims of prejudice, much of their difficulty in adapting to urban life—or in remaining attuned to rural life—stems from the true inadequacy of their cultural background for the modern environment, urban or rural.

When the first Negroes, hill whites, or Spanish-speaking migrants move into an area of a city, others are likely to follow and to settle nearby. Americans of other backgrounds often react with hostility to their coming, and tension develops. When the newcomers are Negroes, the tension is usually attributed to race. Racial prejudice certainly increases the tension, and in many cases is an important cause of tension, but the disadvantaged of any race are considered undesirable neighbors by persons of the same race. Middle-class Negroes have severe problems when in contact with disadvantaged Negroes, as do middle-class whites with disadvantaged whites. Thus tension stems also from critical differences in ways of life, regardless of race.

The effect is the gradual withdrawal of the middle class—Negro, Puerto Rican, Spanish-American, and white. Entire sections of cities, and of some suburbs and small towns as well, often come to be occupied almost exclusively by the disadvantaged newcomers, while those who can best provide leadership leave the areas that need leadership most.

Furthermore, the disadvantaged are unlikely to find within their own ranks the funds or the leaders they badly need. Those who make a successful adjustment leave for better parts, either voluntarily or in accord with public housing regulations which specify income limits for tenancy. More seriously, the disadvantaged are a poor source of public and private funds, for they have difficulty providing even for their own subsistence. Lacking the skills which would qualify them for employment and victimized by prejudice, many are chronically unemployed. Attracted by the installment credit system, they often have insufficient under-

standing of the obligations it entails. They are exposed, with few safeguards, to all the dangers of the market place. The disadvantaged are the last to be hired, the first to be fired, and the least able to manage the financial resources they may have.

Some of their basic cultural institutions and attitudes not only fail to help but actually impede their adjustment. Family customs, particularly those of some rural Negroes and hill whites, are of this type. For example, rural Negro families usually constituted a stable work group, with specific and understandable roles for each member, even when the family was matriarchal and the men did not fill the role of breadwinner. So long as the rural society was stable, a boy could learn his own life role by observing men at work in the fields, whether or not he recognized one of them as his father or as head of his family. Girls, too, could learn an adequate adult role by observation. But such learning is difficult in the cities. There the child cannot observe the occupational role of male members of the family group, who, when employed, work away from the home; and often no man lives regularly with the family. Nor does family tradition fill the gap, as it does for many children, by providing the concept that the father is provider and head of the family. The mother is often incapable of providing for her daughters a model of homemaking appropriate to successful city living. And the playmates of the migrant child, who are likely to be as disadvantaged as he, are unable to compensate for the failure of his home.

Often the adult models are not harmful, but merely fail to inspire emulation. Family ties may be strong, and fathers may wish to discharge their financial responsibilities. But if the societies from which they come have failed to provide appropriate education and skills, the parents will have serious employment difficulties, perhaps compounded by a language barrier, and will earn little respect in the community. The children are then likely to seek their models outside of the home.



Civic attitudes of the disadvantaged raise additional obstacles to improvement. The disadvantaged do not accept—and are given little opportunity to accept—responsibility for the well-being of their immediate community or the larger society. Neither experience nor training enables the disadvantaged to participate in—or even to sympathize with—community efforts to solve problems of urban living. Rarely have they acquired the notion of organizing to achieve group purposes; they often lack even an awareness of group needs. Concern for individuals may be highly developed: elder children often assume more responsibility for the care of brothers and sisters than do children of other backgrounds. But the concept of civic contribution is generally absent among the disadvantaged. Their experience in the city does little to increase their sense of civic responsibility. They may develop gratitude toward a community agency which helps them or acts in a spirit of understanding. But often their civic experience is limited to sometimes questionable contacts with political machines and to unsolicited intrusions of public services. Ironically, the services designed to help them most—education, public health, police and fire protection, sanitation, and public welfare—often appear arbitrary and undesirable to the disadvantaged.

Thus, local government seems foreign to the disadvantaged. It is operated by persons with whom they have no sense of identity. Their past experience offers no explanation of its operation. They mistrust its purposes and look on it as essentially hostile or oppressive, and it sometimes is. The disadvantaged citizen tends to look on the police not as the protector of law and order but as an armed enemy.

Indeed, the society as a whole appears unconcerned. This sense of exclusion is perhaps the greatest obstacle to successful adjustment of the disadvantaged to urban life, for it frustrates growth of civic responsibility and generates indifference and hopelessness.

The problems of the new migrant differ greatly from those of earlier immigrants. The European immigrants of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also had to adapt to an America that was in the throes of change. They faced inevitable difficulties in adjusting to a new life and a new language. But a rapidly growing economy generally needed their labor, skilled or unskilled. Generally they were motivated by the expectation that they could improve their lot and that the principal requirements were education and their own hard work. They developed the capacity to assist later immigrants in adjusting to the new surroundings. They brought values and loyalties conducive to the development of leadership. Thus they enjoyed a solid basis from which to move into American life, and the American school greatly accelerated the process of assimilation. The second and third generations have been able to participate fully in American progress.

This adaptability seems not to exist today for the disadvantaged people—though already Americans—who move to urban centers from the agrarian South, Southwest, or Puerto Rico. The difficulties of adjusting to a new way of life are more forbidding than in the past. Racial discrimination is a severe handicap, and when it is practiced it aggravates all the other handicaps of the modern migrant. Though its principal victims are Negroes, other disadvantaged citizens also feel its brunt.

The situation of the modern migrating Americans is more difficult in other ways as well. Many have never learned to value education. They are further handicapped by the lack of a stable cultural base. Their basically preindustrial culture is less well adapted to the modern city—or even to the modern farm—than was the European peasant's culture to nineteenth-century America. The migrants, as a result, often fail to make a satisfactory adaptation themselves and are little able to ease the difficulties of their children or neighbors.

Mobility has been basic to the settlement and expansion of the United States. It continues to be a major factor in the nation's adaptation to changing needs and changing opportunities. But it often results also in spreading decay, displacing former inhabitants, and multiplying the problems of the community. The beleaguered communities turn in need to social services, public hospitals, public assistance, police, and education. But both the cost of these services and the number of people needing them rise as the per capita value of the taxable urban properties drops. Increases in other forms of local taxation and in state and federal contributions fail to keep pace with expanding urban needs. The multiplicity of governmental jurisdictions prevents the most efficient use of even the available resources. Thus cities are ill-equipped to aid the disadvantaged, and maladjustment continues to spread. If present trends are not reversed, half the inhabitants of the large city of 1970 may be disadvantaged—persons unable to participate constructively in their society.

Even where the impoverished, ignorant citizen does no apparent harm to his community, his plight is of grave and growing concern to thinking Americans. The unrealized promise in the ignorant mind disturbs not only the idealist and the humanist; increasingly it haunts as well those concerned with the grim demands of national survival.

Cultural incompatibility and educational inadequacy are not new phenomena, nor are they more repugnant to American morality today than in the past. But mobility has brought the problem to the fore and has made its solution more urgent. Current efforts to help the disadvantaged American are inadequate. The society must find ways to help him overcome his handicaps and find the opportunities which the American tradition promises him.



## The Challenge to the School

The problem of the disadvantaged arises because their cultures are not compatible with modern life. One of the greatest challenges facing the United States today is that of giving all Americans a basis for living constructively and independently in the modern age. The requirement is not for conformity but for compatibility. To make all people uniform would be as impracticable as it would be inconsistent with American ideals. To give all people a fair chance to meet the challenges of life is both practicable and American.

Equality of opportunity cannot be guaranteed by any single institution. But the school can have a profound influence in this direction. It reaches nearly all Americans; it reaches them when they are young and most subject to important changes; and its very reason for existence is to help them develop. Therefore Americans, in matters of equal opportunity, have relied heavily on their schools.

The schools face an exceedingly difficult challenge in educating disadvantaged children. The educated man, in the American ideal, possesses the motivation and the developed mind to dignify his life and to contribute to his society, and he views learning as a life-long process. Some children are so far from

this ideal as to raise doubts about their ability to approach it. For several reasons these doubts arise most often in reference to children from deprived backgrounds.

Ideally the family provides for the physical and emotional well-being of children and raises them to levels of understanding, expectation, and aspiration which support the school's effort to promote intellectual growth. But these foundations are often lacking in the case of the disadvantaged child.

The educative process is greatly complicated for the child whose home is characterized by poverty, disease, instability, or conflict. Such homes tend to produce children who are tired, hungry, ill, and emotionally unstable. Where physical punishment is common—as it is in many disadvantaged homes—the children may learn that violence is their best weapon and often their only defense. Disadvantaged children suffer from some or all of these handicaps. They therefore often have difficulty in concentrating on learning and show indifference or outright hostility to the school.

The disadvantaged are the least effective producers in the society. Many are incapable of effective employment in a modern economy. Job discrimination hampers many, even when they are skilled. Consequently, they are the least able to pay the taxes that support high quality in education, and the schools in their neighborhoods rely more heavily on outside revenue than do schools elsewhere. Furthermore, they have unusually costly welfare needs. Legislatures tend to give priority to these needs, paying more to treat public ills than to prevent them. For these reasons, the schools with the most urgent needs are often the least able to meet them.

The modern public school often bases its efforts on assumptions which are not valid for all children. The values of the teacher, the content of the program, and the very purposes of

schooling may be appropriate for middle-class children but not for disadvantaged children. These children's experiences at home and on the streets do not prepare them for a school established for another kind of child. If the school reinforces the sense of personal insignificance and inadequacy that life may already have imposed on a disadvantaged child, he is likely to benefit little from schooling. If the school insists on programs or standards that he regards as unrelated to his life or that doom him to an unending succession of failures, he is likely to leave at the first opportunity.

The forces that cause pupils to drop out of school are especially strong among the disadvantaged. The need to earn money, family mobility, and lack of academic ability are among the important causes. Sometimes pupils are discouraged from pursuing their studies by the inability of members of their race, regardless of educational level, to find employment. But often the impetus to leave school can be traced to the failure to establish effective contact between the school and the pupil. In these cases the school alone cannot develop in the pupil a new vision of his potential and, through that vision, new aspirations to motivate him. Schooling is cut short because it is, for the student, a fruitless activity, involving continual indifference and frustration.

Thus, in working with disadvantaged children, the school is itself handicapped by home and community conditions and often by its very inheritance of a traditional concept of schooling. There are notable exceptions, but in many communities the problems are grave. Rates of absenteeism, failure, and dropout are frequently high, achievement low, and classroom response inadequate. Classes tend to be large, and half-day sessions are common. Staff and student turnover is often high and morale low. The often-obsolete school buildings are costly to maintain; yet they tend to be unattractive and to lack necessary teaching facilities.

The difficulties confronting these schools are formidable. But, as experiments\* have demonstrated, schools themselves can do much to overcome them.

\* Virtually all school systems to which disadvantaged children have migrated have been making intensive efforts to meet the needs of these pupils. Examples of two different experimental approaches are the Great Cities Gray Areas School Improvement Program and the Higher Horizons Program. It is too early to evaluate either program in full, but most educators involved in them are enthusiastic about the results so far achieved.

The Gray Areas Program embraces the school systems of ten of the largest cities in the United States. It is designed to accelerate the achievement of all disadvantaged children, to identify and assist the talented among them, to heighten their aspirations, to develop in them the competencies necessary for successful living in the modern world, to increase parental responsibility, and to mobilize community resources to help them. It seeks to accomplish these goals

through adaptations in curriculum, organization, use of personnel, teacher education, instructional materials, and equipment. The Gray Areas Program includes a clearinghouse and consultation service for the participating school systems and for school systems throughout the country. Projects conducted under the Program are supported by the Ford Foundation.

The Higher Horizons Program is an attempt by the Board of Education of the City of New York to discover ways to raise the educational and vocational aspirations of all disadvantaged pupils. It began by assigning extra teaching and guidance personnel and experimenting with new methods in the third grades of 31 elementary schools and the seventh grades of 13 junior high schools. While maintaining the project at the third- and seventh-grade levels, Higher Horizons is moving forward with the children through high school graduation.

## A Response for American Public Education

The basic concern of the school is with pupils, but for this very reason its concern must extend to home and community. In developing the potentials of disadvantaged children, efforts within the school alone are insufficient. As it strives to overcome children's handicaps—and, indeed, in order to overcome them—it must attempt to modify the home and community environment responsible for cultural disadvantages.

Schools are useful only for children who are able physically, mentally, and emotionally to respond to them. To assure these conditions ought to be the role of the family or, in the second instance, of agencies established for this purpose; yet in many places the failure of home and community services thrusts this role onto the school. The school can serve as a social-service agency only at the cost of slighting its main functions.

### SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL PROGRAM

The successful school program attacks the problem of the culturally handicapped on three fronts simultaneously. It demon-



strates to pupils a close relationship between school and life; it includes the remedial services necessary for academic progress; and it arouses aspirations which can alter constructively the courses of young lives.

Often the school must strive to overcome children's hostility to the school environment, helping them to develop a sense that education is related to their lives and purposes. It can then go about its main business of developing those potentials on which independent and constructive lives are based.

To achieve contact with each child, the school must make every effort to help him sense that the school is important to him. It must provide activities to which he can contribute, through which he can earn the respect of others, and in which he can improve his performance. His learning activities should be challenging, but if they are beyond what he can accomplish with reasonable effort, they become meaningless frustrations. Many of these experiences—including classroom activities, clubs, field trips, and sports—should be designed primarily to establish and strengthen contact between the school and the child, and to help him achieve the status he needs if he is to learn. Many children are not quick to develop motivation or ability in academic work. Intellectual development is of central importance, but some of the early steps along this road may not be directly concerned with it. The teacher must judge the need for such steps and must be free to provide a program based on his understanding of the pupil.

Ability to read is basic to success in education. But it is as complex to develop as it is basic. It requires, in addition to a certain level of physical and emotional maturity, a sense of what reading is and a motivation to read, which disadvantaged children often have little opportunity to develop at home. These handicaps must be overcome in the pupil's early years, for the price of

failure in reading, as in no other area, is deepening pessimism and discouragement with schooling.

For disadvantaged children, kindergartens can be an especially valuable aid in the development of reading readiness. In the primary years, efforts in the teaching of reading must be so concentrated that the child and the school will be spared the necessity for more difficult remedial work later on. These efforts must be exerted throughout the United States, so that mobility will not cause one school to pay for the inadequacies of another. In anguish, time, and money, prevention costs less than cure.

The speech patterns of many disadvantaged children differ so sharply from accepted English as to impede their learning to read. Their chances for success improve when speech therapy precedes or accompanies reading instruction. Such programs would ideally be concentrated in the primary years, before the pupils' pessimism can crystallize, but in many school districts there are children who need help at all grade levels. Even high schools must sometimes offer regular classes in elementary English. The curriculum should be so organized that children can progress at their best individual rates, and the over-all organization of the school should be flexible enough to allow this kind of progress.

Reading materials and visual aids should take account of the backgrounds of the children who will use them. The texts and illustrations should not refer exclusively to the middle and upper classes. In addition, special attention to the history, culture, and contributions of Negroes and of Spanish-speaking peoples in the United States can foster self-respect, mutual respect, and a sense of identification with the school and the nation among children who are now largely ignored in school materials. Moreover, learning about progress in Puerto Rico or about contributions of American Indians and Negroes is appropriate for children of all backgrounds. And children who have lived in other



places can often teach the class something about their earlier homes.

The school must seek to expand the mental and physical horizons of children through planned activities, not only in the school but also in the community. Many of them in the city, as in their earlier homes, have never ventured beyond their immediate neighborhoods. Often, they have no concept of civilization other than their home, school, church, and street, and perhaps the world of television. Fear of embarrassment from new experiences hinders exploration, as do inertia, lack of interest, or practices of segregation; many disadvantaged children feel insecure outside their neighborhoods. Visits to factories, farms, zoos, movies, plays, and concerts, if adequately prepared and followed up by the pupils, are helpful. Important secondary benefits may be obtained by inviting parents to accompany the class.

A strong program of vocational education can serve several important purposes. Opportunities to learn job skills are relatively easy for the pupil to value. They can increase his interest in school. They can help him to consider himself a useful and respected person. They can develop the initiative and sense of responsibility that are basic to preparation for college as well as for new jobs. And they can be designed to introduce or incorporate lessons in science, economics, or other subjects.

Programs of part-time work and part-time study are advisable for many children who are likely to benefit little from an almost exclusively classroom-oriented education. Such programs hold out the hope that many pupils whose handicaps the schools have not otherwise been able to overcome will become contributing, self-supporting adults. The planning of work-study programs demands considerable flexibility and close contact between school and community.

A program based upon an understanding of each pupil is a program which challenges each to try and within which each can

experience a fair measure of success and failure. Success encourages self-respect, stimulating the pupil to further progress and to a higher level of aspiration.

### SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL STAFF

The heart of the educational process is found in the skill, dedication, and personality of the teacher. Foremost among the needed qualities of the teacher is respect for the pupil.

Respect for the pupil is important in all types of education, at any level, anywhere. But children used to a drab life, conflict, and failure—children whose parents and friends often do not expect them to succeed—are particularly responsive to the genuine interest and respect of an adult. And with respect for the child, the teacher can become an effective model and inspiration. He is then in a position to further the cause of learning and cultural change.

If children sense that they have a chance for success, they are motivated to try. The teacher's respect can give them that sense. True respect for pupils requires persistent confidence in their potential. It is based on the knowledge that just as the behavior and attitudes which hinder individual development are learned, so they can be replaced.

Despite their better judgment, people of another background often feel that disadvantaged children are by nature perverse, vulgar, or lazy. Children sense quickly the attitudes of school people toward them, and they retaliate against condescension or intolerance with hostility, absenteeism, and failure.

The effective teacher of disadvantaged children is constantly aware of the circumstances that affect his pupils. He has

the understanding and sympathy that prevent him from being repelled by deviations from his own standards. Instead of being struck by the shortcomings of his pupils, he is encouraged by their ability, despite their handicaps, to do as well as they do. The small successes of his least privileged pupils are praiseworthy in his eyes, and his praise is an invaluable motivating force for the children. The teacher's respect is the secret of contact between child and school.

To provide the basis of that respect and awareness must be a major purpose of teacher education. Observation in disadvantaged areas is an important element in teacher preparation. But observation is not enough, for superficial experience may confirm stereotypes rather than produce understanding or respect. Teacher education should provide the insights of psychology, sociology, and anthropology and of the science of human development regarding the influence of environment. It should help teachers understand the impact of their own background on their personality and behavior. It should help them to examine the relationships among their values, attitudes, and actions. It should cause them to examine their attitudes toward culturally different children. Above all, it should develop in them a dedication to teaching for the unique opportunity it offers to give children hope.

Yet the qualities that mark the successful teacher do not guarantee the opportunity to take advantage of them. That opportunity depends primarily on the number of children with whom the teacher must work. The growing use of such mechanical aids as television and the appearance of new teaching devices may permit a redistribution of teachers and teachers' time. As yet there is not sufficient evidence to evaluate satisfactorily their effectiveness. One thing, however, seems certain: every child should have the attention of a skilled and understanding teacher. This need is especially marked in the case of disadvantaged chil-

dren because their background prepares them poorly for formal education. When experimental programs for educating these children have seemed to give evidence of best progress, they have incorporated smaller-than-normal classes. Although classes of twenty-five children have long been taken by most professionals as a goal for children whose home background is favorable, it appears that classes of twenty—or even fewer—are better for disadvantaged pupils. If sufficient professional attention were given to every disadvantaged child in the early elementary years, the effect would probably be to reduce the need for specially small classes and other remedial measures in the high school.

Teaching involves many problems that cannot be handled by the teacher alone, particularly in disadvantaged areas, where the problems are many and severe. In these circumstances the school has special needs for remedial teachers, guidance counselors, psychologists, psychiatrists, nurses, and school social workers to observe and work with children and to provide specialized advice and help to teachers.

There should be enough guidance counselors to help teachers provide general guidance throughout the school year and, along with social workers, help parents take a greater and more constructive interest in the schooling of their children. The guidance and clinical staff should be large enough to help parents and teachers relate academic and behavioral problems to their roots in the child's life, and to help identify and treat health or physical defects, emotional problems, or potential delinquency.

The role of the principal is crucial to the success of the entire staff. Persons appointed to principalships in disadvantaged communities should have particular competence for working with the disadvantaged. The skills in human relations and the respect for people of different cultures, which are required in administering these schools, may not be adequately reflected by results of written examinations or by lists of courses taken.



The specialized and administrative personnel, like the teachers, must have preparation designed to promote understanding of the children and parents with whom they will deal. In addition they can learn from each other. The sharing of knowledge and experience by staff members can contribute greatly to their success in working with disadvantaged children. The principal should encourage this sharing and should foster the willingness of teachers to consult with specialists on the staff.

In many large school systems consideration should be given to developing a new type of educator—a specialist in the problems of relationships among different American subcultures. This person would attempt to relate anthropology and sociology to education. He would need intensive preparation in these three areas and practical experience in disadvantaged neighborhoods. He would help to build contacts between school and home, conduct an in-service program for all the members of the staff, and assist the staff in the solution of individual problems.

Upper-grade pupils can help the school staff. A big-brother or big-sister program can grow naturally from a cultural pattern, common among disadvantaged children, in which older children, even at an early age, accept considerable responsibility for their younger brothers and sisters. Such an older-younger relationship can benefit all participants. The younger partner in each pair can be helped in his studies and in his adjustment to school life, and the older child can benefit from the need to serve as a model and from a gain in self-respect. The success of the program depends on careful pairing, preparation, and counseling, and on the senior partner's awareness of the importance of his responsibility.

One of the gravest issues in education is the proper size of the staff. In another connection (*An Essay on Quality in Public Education*, published in 1959), the Educational Policies Commission asserted that an adequate staff size was at least fifty professional persons per thousand pupils. If such a staff is evenly

distributed and includes appropriate numbers of professionals other than teachers—administrators, librarians, counselors, psychologists, and others—it might provide classes of about twenty-five pupils per teacher. As was stated earlier, however, the school system which has disadvantaged children must provide for them classes with twenty or fewer pupils per teacher. Therefore, the number of teachers alone should average at least fifty per thousand disadvantaged pupils. Yet in no large American city does total staff, including professional personnel other than teachers, come close to averaging fifty per thousand.

Increasing the staff would demonstrate its value even before children reached the dropout age or employment age. Many children who receive proper educational attention in the early years will not require remedial measures later. Their disadvantages in learning will have largely given way to that receptivity to learning which should characterize all children.

#### SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

Where schools face special problems, administrators must deal with special demands on school staff, facilities, and organization. In disadvantaged communities especially, the school should make of itself a neighborhood institution, for its success depends to a considerable degree on the parents' attitudes and the staff's knowledge of family circumstances. These depend in turn on the administrator's awareness of the conditions in which his pupils and their parents live, and on his freedom to make adjustments to those conditions.

Large-city school systems should be so organized that staff services are available in the neighborhood of each school, rather than at only one point in the city. In addition, the administrator of each school should be given freedom of action consistent with

his responsibilities. His independence and initiative should be encouraged and rewarded. He should have funds whose disposition he can decide, opportunity to purchase special materials as needed, and the power to assign staff to special duties. He should be free to turn to civic-minded residents of the neighborhood for advice on the day-to-day adaptations that make his school effective.

Administrators must also pay special attention to the morale of pupils and staff. Any school should have about it an atmosphere of dedication to the interests of its children, and the pupils must see in the school a worthwhile and achievable challenge. But the formidable obstacles pupils and teachers must overcome in disadvantaged neighborhoods are constant threats to the morale of both the staff and the student body. Special administrative efforts are therefore required to sustain morale—rewarding good performance and encouraging experimentation.

Administrators must recognize, and must show that they recognize, the exceptionally demanding nature of teaching disadvantaged children. Recognition is best shown by measures that facilitate the work and improve the working conditions of the teacher. Many of these measures can be taken only if the public provides the necessary funds. Foremost among these steps is a sharp reduction in class size. But even so simple a thing as provision of safe parking facilities in an unruly neighborhood can make teachers aware that administrators understand their problems and support their interests.

By communicating with the public, the administrator can support his staff in another important way. He can foster public understanding of the peculiar problems which his staff face, of their achievements, and of the fundamental truth that their task requires nothing less than overcoming obstacles that the entire society has failed to overcome.

Direct recognition of the staff's work is also advisable. A teacher who successfully teaches the disadvantaged puts excep-



tional energy and devotion into that task. A part of his reward must be the certainty that his efforts are prized. This can be shown by the administrator personally and by the efforts of the administrator to achieve public recognition for the teacher through awards, ceremonies, and publicity.

So complex is the process of promoting the development of human beings that every school, even the best, is in constant need of adjustment and improvement. A school should be a vibrant, changing place. For the flexible, creative administrator there are ample opportunities—indeed challenges—to change. In addition to the ever-present need for better use of existing knowledge, facilities, and methods, there is a steady procession of new books, new programs, new mechanical devices, new suggestions for division of responsibilities among teachers, and new knowledge about learning.

The benefits drawn from change can be increased if pupils are aware that their performance under the new conditions is to be carefully evaluated. It has repeatedly been demonstrated that when people are conscious of participating in an experiment, they respond to the increased attention with increased effort. This phenomenon often confuses and obscures results of educational research. But this bane of the researcher can be a boon for the educator. It is necessary only that due consideration be given in the evaluation of results to the influence of improved self-respect and motivation.

A recurring problem of administrative policy is posed by the public availability of school records. Full records are essential to the success of an educational program. Their importance is particularly evident in the case of children who move so frequently that successive schools have little time to understand and help them. Cumulative records must therefore be complete enough to enable professionals to begin to help new pupils on

first contact. Thus all significant data must be included in the records. But this requirement often leads to problems when records are revealed, because the pertinent data regarding a pupil or his home life sometimes appear derogatory to the child or his parents. Therefore, some material required for guidance must be kept confidential, and policies governing disclosure of information must be carefully formulated.

It is useful to consider the information collected about pupils in three general categories. One category consists of objective data about the child's academic performance, honors, attendance, health, athletic accomplishments, school activities, and similar matters which are easily understandable and not controversial. These should be available to parents and to all school personnel.

A second category consists of information which, although objective, cannot be understood or evaluated without professional knowledge. It includes both results of intelligence, achievement, and college-entrance tests and data regarding vocational aptitudes and preferences. These records may be made available to parents, provided that the school system simultaneously furnishes the professional advice needed to interpret the data.

A third category consists of notes or memoranda, often incomplete, concerning the child's background, personality, and behavior. This category necessarily includes subjective judgments by teachers and counselors which are useful to professionals trained to evaluate personal information and to sift the relevant from the irrelevant. But these data are sometimes only temporarily or partially valid; later developments may alter or negate them. Consequently, information in this category should not be included in the permanent public record which follows the child from school to school and into later life and should not be made available to parents or even to school personnel other than those directly involved and competent to use it well.

Schools in changing neighborhoods and schools with large numbers of disadvantaged children have an acute and constant problem of placing pupils who transfer from other schools. Grade standards vary from school to school and from region to region. Schools face the conflicting necessities of learning enough about children to place them properly, of placing them rapidly enough not to delay their normal progress or adjustment to the school, and of permitting classroom teachers to continue their work for all children without devoting an undue share of time to any single one. One way to deal with this problem is to enroll new pupils in an ungraded reception class pending decision as to their proper place in school. They may be stimulated to greater effort if they realize that, while no decision is final, much depends on their performance.

School systems, especially in changing neighborhoods, should also encourage flexibility in assigning teachers. For example, some elementary school teachers are capable of outstanding service in high schools in working with children whose achievement level is seriously retarded. Elementary school teachers normally deal with the early stages of learning. The high school principal or school superintendent should be allowed to test their effectiveness with older children. Such teachers might advise their colleagues on the high school staff, and might themselves teach in experimental situations.

### SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR FACILITIES

Extended use of regular facilities is required in schools with large numbers of disadvantaged children. The homes of these children rarely offer appropriate places to study. Suitable arrangements should be made in the school for independent study, recreational reading, and similar activities, with adult assistance when needed during the late afternoons, evenings, and

weekends. Similarly, the school's recreational and athletic facilities should be open after school hours and during vacations.

Public nursery schools and kindergartens are particularly useful in deprived communities. They can go far in providing the experiences that contribute to educability and are otherwise lacking in the lives of many disadvantaged children. For example, it is not uncommon for disadvantaged children, if they come from illiterate or semiliterate homes, to reach school age without learning what reading is; no adult has ever read anything to them. The difficulty of teaching them to read is manifest. Kindergartens or nursery schools can provide a significant service to such children merely by having an adult read to them from books they can understand. Such experiences can raise the level of children's aspirations before it is firmly set and can promote learning readiness before setbacks convince them that they cannot learn.

Children who are psychotic, seriously disturbed, or delinquent cannot be kept in regular day schools. The parents of many of these children cannot afford private care for them. Public hospital-schools for mentally ill children and training schools for adjudged delinquents must be established in adequate numbers to prevent overcrowding and must have the staff and facilities to carry out the required therapy. Under present conditions in many cities, existing institutions have long waiting lists, and children must often be discharged prematurely to make room for new arrivals. Such procedures make a mockery of sound therapy, affecting adversely both the children who are released and their associates in the neighborhoods to which they return.

## THE SCHOOL AND THE HOME

The special educational problems of disadvantaged children generally have their roots in infancy and early childhood. They continue to be reinforced in the home after the child begins school-



ing. By comparison with the time spent in the home, the school hours are few. The school can make little headway with a child if his home is reinforcing inappropriate attitudes and habits. Consequently, the school must find ways to overcome parental hostility to education and must help parents to support the school's efforts.

Inadequate staffing limits some schools to seeking out parents only when pupils need to be punished. Moreover, many underprivileged adults believe, often with good cause, that school people look down on them. When experience has given little basis for self-confidence, condescension—real or imagined—merely deepens the gulf between home and school. The result is likely to be increased conflict between the influence of the home and the influence of the school on the child.

On the other hand, a community of interest between teacher and parents can in some cases do more to improve a child's school work or behavior than all the remedial and punitive measures at the school's command. This community of interest can be developed when parents sense that the school is genuinely interested in the welfare of their children, that meeting with school people can be pleasant and useful, and that respect for all human beings is, in fact, the hallmark of the public school. By home visits for the purpose of commending or discussing rather than complaining, by personal invitation to parents to visit the school, by the presence of Spanish-speaking personnel for Spanish-speaking parents, the school can demonstrate its concern for the individual parent. Schools may also set up meetings between parents and teachers to deal with such subjects as nutrition, discipline, or the school's organization and requirements. A sample lesson may be highly effective as a demonstration of what the school tries to achieve. For example, parents often respond enthusiastically, themselves taking part in the learning, when a skillful teacher demonstrates how the children are being taught.

Parents develop new self-respect and readiness to assume responsibility when they realize they are important to the school in the education of their children. Parent attendance at meetings where educational plans and problems are discussed as genuinely mutual concerns of the home and the school can be an important step in this direction.

The importance of parent education cannot be overstressed. For example, it is largely home influence that dictates the necessity for exceptionally small classes for disadvantaged children. Only the improvement of home influence can eliminate the continuing necessity for such classes as the children grow. The school should therefore encourage parents to enroll in adult education courses of interest and use to them. A public school program of adult education is important whether it improves parents' effectiveness in caring for children, speaking English, or baking cakes. It provides an opportunity not only to spread knowledge and skills but also to deepen awareness of the value of education and to bring parents closer to the school and to the society at large. So great is the impact of parents on the attitudes and aspirations of children that parent education must be considered a primary public responsibility.

## THE SCHOOL AND THE COMMUNITY

The school should establish cooperative relationships with community agencies. Uncoordinated fragmentation of the family's affairs among various agencies—such as settlement houses, housing departments, public hospitals, juvenile courts, youth boards, attendance offices, and relief agencies—limits the usefulness of each. Because of the nature and universality of its function, the school has a more continuing interest in, and greater knowledge of, more children than does any other institution. By cooperating with other agencies, it can put this knowledge to use without

constantly assuming responsibility for following through with its own personnel.

The approach that most needs to be avoided is that which involves treatment of a symptom followed by disposal of the case. For example, an attendance officer, for lack of time, may have to limit his activities to returning children to school. If he is so limited, he can do little to improve the situation which is responsible for the truancy and to which the children will return. A coordinated approach, on the other hand, can help to attack the causes that prevent families from helping their children. School authorities, therefore, should take the lead when they can to help disadvantaged families to avail themselves of the full range of social services provided by other community agencies. School social workers who understand both the tasks of the school and the procedures of other agencies can often provide the necessary coordination of efforts.

A new sense of identification with the general American culture would foster in many disadvantaged parents a more mature sense of responsibility for the well-being of their children and the society. The prolonged interest of any person of more favored background can be for adults what the school can be for children: a genuine contact with the modern culture.

This contact is important, for one of the severe obstacles to the desirable cultural changes of the disadvantaged is the lack of models of the more sophisticated culture. The teacher's role is severely limited when all of the child's other models are less helpful or even damaging. One central element of the cultural changes which must occur, therefore, is the involvement of children, outside the school, with persons of advanced education and background.

Every community where disadvantaged persons reside should compile statistics on population density, mobility, disease, and



delinquency, relating these basic factors to income per family and per person, employment, education level, race, and school expenditure per pupil. Statistics on individual urban neighborhoods and rural counties where the disadvantaged congregate would be especially revealing. They would show the degree and concentration of problems in cities and rural areas, as well as the distribution of local leadership and public funds. They would force thoughtful Americans to re-examine the meaning, especially in relation to minority groups, of the American ideals of equal opportunity and human dignity. They would bring home the urgency of the need for action.

The problem is so urgent and its impact on all Americans is so great that it is the responsibility of all Americans to seek ways to solve it. Industry, government, the professions, higher education, business, and labor unions—all have an important role to play, and the room and need for initiative on the part of all of them is vast. The school in a disadvantaged district should seek to enlist, as regular advisers, local representatives of these groups. Their cooperation can provide an accurate basis for adapting the curriculum to the realities of the economy. They can provide guides and plan tours of their facilities to broaden the horizons of pupils and to introduce them to the nature of the American economy, the adult world of work and education, and the personal qualifications required for employment. They can help to locate and create part-time jobs for pupils, and to organize work-study programs. They can help to find summer work for young people. And the awareness they achieve in their work with the schools can give impetus to needed public programs and policies.

## Public Policy and the Education of the Disadvantaged

Some of the indispensable elements in solving the problems of the disadvantaged are beyond the power of educators alone. Educators cannot assure, for example, adequate employment or wholesome group relations. Yet these factors influence deeply the environment in which children learn, and hence their ability to learn. Similarly, financial support must come from the public. If education is to give all children opportunities adequate to their needs, the public must be dedicated to the schools and must match its dedication with action.

### GROUP RELATIONS

The educable person has a sense of self-respect. The disadvantaged are the main victims of practices that frustrate the development of self-respect. Racial discrimination, whether by law or by custom, gives its victims ample evidence that they do not enjoy the society's respect. The resulting sense of inferiority and exclusion is most severe among Negroes, but it is seriously felt among Puerto Ricans and Mexican-Americans, whom other whites commonly regard as nonwhite.

Good teaching gives pupils a sense that they are respected. But after school hours the child returns to his home and community, and eventually he leaves the school for good. Even the best teacher must fail if the child knows that the school is only a temporary respite from the realities he must ultimately face. The respect that makes a true education possible cannot come from the school alone. If the problem of the disadvantaged is to be solved, the society as a whole must give evidence of its undifferentiated respect for all persons.

Desirable models are basic to learning. The example of the teacher alone is rarely adequate. When laws, regulations, or customs prevent contact between cultures, they deny access to the models needed for effective education. Statutory devices no longer prevent increasing contact between ways of life in the United States. They can merely prevent those types of contact—in schools, for example—which could do the most good. They do not insulate cultures; they only prolong incompatibility.

The effort to increase respect and provide models, however, ought not take the form of moving children far from their homes; merely for the purpose of achieving some planned composition of various groups within given schools. Especially with disadvantaged children, contact with the home is essential to full understanding of the needs of the pupil. The farther children are transported from their homes, the more difficult it becomes to establish the close contacts which make the school effective.

Clearly the schools have a large stake in America's success in developing genuine compatibility among all its cultures, but the entire society must participate in the process. Contact between cultures has been a major basis of progress in human civilization. Laws and regulations that narrow the base on which the needed cultural changes may be built undermine the ability of the society to progress and to live in harmony with itself.

## EMPLOYMENT

Unemployment is high among the uneducated, the unskilled, the young, and among victims of discrimination.

Concentration of unemployment in a neighborhood is a pathological condition with ramifications affecting all citizens. It leads to severe social disorganization, violence, crime, and disease. It makes more difficult all constructive efforts. It has an adverse effect on the individual's desire to help himself. It also harms the education of children. Children cannot be motivated to stay in school when they believe that schooling is not relevant to getting jobs. Thus schooling seems pointless if jobs are scarce, and a farce if racial discrimination denies jobs even to skilled and educated graduates.

Ways must be found to eliminate racial discrimination in employment and thus to end a widespread injustice. But eliminating discrimination would not alone solve the basic problem of inadequate job opportunities for the unskilled and semiskilled.

If growth of the economy does not keep pace with the need for employment, the unmet need may become a public responsibility. Public efforts can substitute useful activities for idleness. They can furnish opportunities for employment without racial discrimination. They can tide out-of-school youth over the period during which their age handicaps them in the search for a job. It is a public responsibility to find employment opportunities for the disadvantaged unemployed.

But the fact remains that the economy has less and less need for the poorly educated. As the technology becomes more complex, it becomes harder to help the poorly educated to develop marketable skills. When the society fails to develop an American's potentials, it is limiting his chances for productive employment to a disappearing segment of the economy. A public works



program can merely compensate for the failures of a society; it cannot correct them. The long-range solution is an increase in the length and effectiveness of schooling.

## FINANCIAL SUPPORT

It has already been noted that schools could be more effective if discrimination were replaced everywhere by respect for all the people, whatever their social or ethnic background, and if there were employment enough for all the people. It has also been noted that disadvantaged children need exceptionally small classes and extra personnel and that adult education must be expanded to reach many more parents than are being reached today. In addition, if excellent teachers are to be found in sufficient numbers, teachers' salaries must be high enough to attract and retain many of the best college graduates. These improvements would entail, in most places, a considerable increase in per-pupil expenditures. But pupils with an unfair share of obstacles must be given a fair chance to overcome them.

Local and state governments must do their best to help the schools meet the higher expenditures. But the communities, rural or urban, most directly affected by the problem often encounter the most difficulty in financing a solution. The same applies to states in which the highest percentage of the population is disadvantaged. The federal government must therefore play a larger role in helping the states support an adequate education for all Americans.

There must be an increasingly broad base of planning as well as of financing. Because of population mobility, the shortcomings in one locality produce all but insurmountable difficulties for the citizens of another. Until now public policy has tended, in dealing with the disadvantaged, to treat local symptoms while ignoring their geographical origins. The problem of deterioration



in the large cities has been thought of as the responsibility of those cities. Yet the sources of the problem are generally elsewhere, and migration to the cities is probably still in its early stages. Municipal governments and city schools are powerless to attack the problem at its geographical sources. In addition, solutions on a metropolitan basis are often handicapped by the preoccupation of each governmental jurisdiction with its own problems and by the attempt of some to insulate themselves from matters which they erroneously identify as their neighbor's problems.

The problem of the disadvantaged affects all parts of the nation. Cherished American values are at stake, and the economic well-being, the stability, and the security of the nation are undermined by the present waste of human potential. Here is a national responsibility that cannot be met by localities or states acting individually.

The need to face the problem is generally accepted, for the disadvantaged return society's indifference in a form to which the society cannot remain indifferent. Their lack of opportunity is expressed in incompetence and in misdeeds for which the rest of the society must—and does—pay. American cities today spend more for indigence, delinquency, and crime than for education. But the society has not yet demonstrated a willingness to deal with the problem thoroughly enough at its roots to avoid the continuing necessity of dealing with its manifestations.

## Conclusion

Millions of disadvantaged Americans are congregated today in congested sections of the large cities and in the rural areas. It is valid to ask what America means to these millions of people. Certainly it has not been for them a land of equal opportunity. The schools present the best hope for overcoming their cultural handicap. This has been demonstrated repeatedly wherever the efforts of skillful educators and the support of an understanding community have combined to make of schools the mighty instruments which only schools can be. If the public fully backs its schools—and only if it does—the time may come when no American is culturally disadvantaged.